

TANTRUM & EMOTIONAL OUTBURST MANAGEMENT GUIDE

- **Establish calm-down steps**

Strategies for helping children of all ages manage big emotions
1) Name the feeling, 2) Take deep breaths, 3) Choose a calming strategy (hug a stuffed animal, squeeze a stress ball, etc.), 4) Talk about it when calm.

TODDLERS (1-3 YEARS)

- **Read books about emotions**

Use children's books that address feelings and emotional regulation. Discuss the characters' emotions and coping strategies.
"I see you're feeling really upset. It's okay to feel angry." Naming emotions helps toddlers develop emotional awareness.

SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN (7+ YEARS)

- **Offer simple choices**

Giving toddlers limited choices helps them feel in control: "Would you like to put on your red shoes or your blue shoes?" This redirects energy toward making a

- **Create an emotion thermometer**

Help children gauge their emotional intensity on a scale of 1-10. Discuss strategies for each level: "What helps when you're at a 4? What about when you reach 7?" This builds self-awareness and proactive regulation.

- **Create a calming space**

Designate a comfortable corner with soft items, books, and sensory toys. Guide your toddler there when emotions run high: "Let's go to our cozy corner until you feel better."

- **Establish a cool-down protocol**

Create a step-by-step plan for intense emotions: 1) Notice feelings, 2) Take three deep breaths, 3) Move to a quiet space, 4) Use a calming activity, 5) Return when ready to talk. Practice and refine this together.

- **Use distraction strategically**

For young toddlers, sometimes redirecting attention is the most effective approach: "Look at this interesting toy!" or "Can you help me find your teddy bear?"

- **Teach problem-solving language**

Help children express needs assertively: "I feel ___ when ___ happens. What I need is ___." This framework helps them communicate effectively rather than melting down.

- **Maintain routines**

Many tantrums stem from hunger, fatigue, or overstimulation. Consistent meal, nap, and bedtime routines can prevent many meltdowns before they start.

- **Develop emotional awareness**

Help children recognize physical signs of emotions: "When you're angry, where do you feel it in your body? What happens before you get really upset?" This

PRESCHOOLERS (4-6 YEARS)

- **Teach calming techniques**

Introduce simple breathing exercises like "smell the flower, blow out the candle" or counting to five. Practice these when your child is calm so they can use them during upsets.
Work with your child to identify strategies that help them calm down: physical activity, journaling, listening to music, etc. Create a physical or mental "toolbox" they can access when needed.

- **Use emotion coaching**

Help children identify and express feelings: "You're stomping your feet. Are you feeling frustrated because your tower fell down?" Then problem-solve together: "What could we do to make it stronger next time?"

PARENT SELF-CARE DURING TANTRUMS

Remember that your calm presence is the most important tool. Try these strategies:

- **Create a feelings chart**

- **Take deep breaths before responding**

Use pictures showing different emotions. When your child is upset, refer to the chart: "Point to how you're feeling right now." "We'll get through this!"

- **Use a "Point to how you're feeling right now." "We'll get through this!" vocabulary**

and self-awareness.

- **If safe to do so, step away briefly to collect yourself**

- **Remember that tantrums are normal developmental behavior, not a reflection of your parenting**

- **Debrief with a supportive person after difficult episodes**

