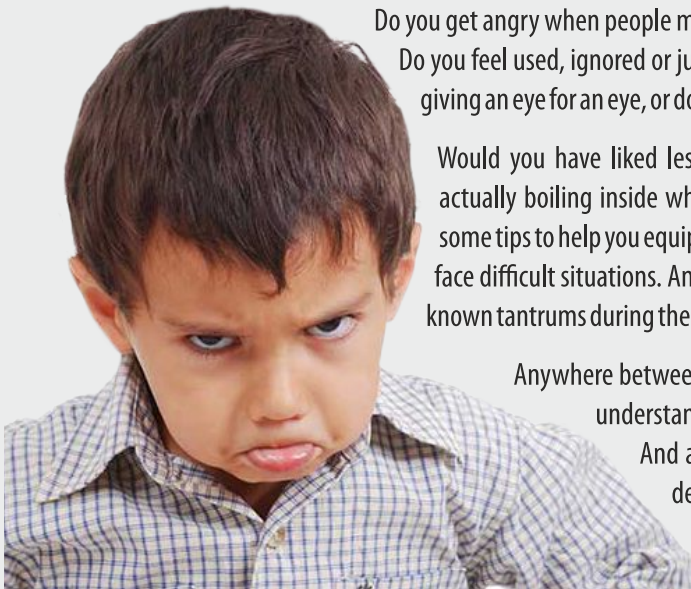


# Dealing with Temper Tantrums

By Usha Lamba

“ I came to realize that if people could make me angry they could control me. Why should I give someone else such power over my life? ”

- Ben Carson, Gifted Hands: The Ben Carson Story



Do you get angry when people make mean comments that are uncalled for? Do you feel used, ignored or judged? What do you do? Do you respond by giving an eye for an eye, or do you remain calm?

Would you have liked lessons on how to stay calm when you are actually boiling inside when you were a young child? Well here are some tips to help you equip your child with skills that will help him/her face difficult situations. And, believe it or not, it begins with the well-known tantrums during the Thrilling Twos.

Anywhere between the ages of 1 to 5 years children begin to understand that things don't always go their way.

And as parents, we can help them learn how to deal with their emotions of anger, hurt, or guilt and teach them how to make amends.

Such situations can sometimes be upsetting for a parent too, and at times

you may not realize that your child's reaction is actually a cry for help. They are overwhelmed by the situation and need your support to calm them down.

There are many ways to avoid tantrums in the first place.

A child may throw a tantrum simply because he/she is bored, hungry or tired. Be prepared. Carry a small bag with simple games and some favourite snacks, especially if you expect your child to wait patiently while you run your errands.

As your children grow, teach them to label their thoughts, feelings, and intentions. The better their ability to communicate is, the fewer chances of a tantrum. Help them with the labels – “I wish I could stay longer”; “I want some orange juice right now!” Being able to express their thoughts helps them regulate their responses. This has a calming effect on them as now they can express their desire.

For young children, the world is largely a mysterious place, where things are difficult to understand and even scary at times. Being able to feel safe at home, where they can predict what is going to happen and they feel in control, makes them happy and contributes to their sense of well-being and security. This can prevent many temper tantrums. Here are a few more tips that are simple and very helpful.



- ➔ Make clear and consistent routines—for waking up in the morning and getting dressed, for meals, for indoor and outdoor play, for transitions, for getting in and out of the car. Follow these routines, particularly when there are other upheavals in life (a new baby, a relative visiting, the start of school).
- ➔ De-clutter your child's play area. Invest in some open shelves (not expensive but good ones), and display only a small number of toys, each one should have a clear spot on the shelf. Teach your child to take one toy, play with it, and then return it to the shelf.
- ➔ If your child throws a tantrum, take time to observe and reflect. Was a step in a routine omitted in haste?
- ➔ Prepare your child for changes in routine. If you're going to have dinner out with friends or relatives, mention that in advance, and if possible involve your child in a transitional activity such as helping to choose what clothes they will wear, or choosing the gift you will take with you.

And please remember that what you do is much more important than what you say. Your child is always watching what you do – how you handle problems at home, how you treat other people and how you deal with your feelings. We have heard a two-year-old at TLC sharing with friends how stressed she is and has a headache! Do you remember saying something like that when you were 2

years old? I certainly don't. Children are like sponges that soak in all the information floating around them, so it is essential to be alert and aware of all your actions and become a positive role model for your child.

It may be quite hard for you to follow all the rules that you yourself have set in the house, and be a model of appropriate behaviour all the time, but you need to try. If you watch television all evening but tell your child that it is bad for her, the message does not match your action, and your child is then not likely to take you seriously.



Similarly when you are faced with a difficult situation, (your child misbehaving, the helper at home not doing her work, a colleague calling you at home and giving you disturbing news), be alert. Consider your reaction. Your child is watching you, so remain calm and rational. If you stay calm, in most situations, your child will too.

This does not mean that you will not take appropriate action when required, but it should not be a knee jerk reaction. You need to take a deep breath, think first and act later. Allow your child to discuss fears, anxieties, and other feelings. Listen and do not dismiss their feelings, or give them examples of the bigger problems that you are facing. Let your child feel secure in the knowledge that you are always there to lend an ear, or a hand. Physical show of affection helps, so don't shy from giving your child plenty of hugs. Snuggling up with your child to read a favourite book, sharing a snack with a glass of milk, watching television together, or doing a fun activity can be an effective way of keeping the atmosphere at home happy and nurturing. This would yield much better results than a long lecture on acceptable or unacceptable behaviour to a 2 year old!

