

Dealing with Tantrums

Star Five-point System

10-14-93 (1:16pm)

Point	Description	Tools and examples
SAFETY FIRST	Ensure <i>everyone's</i> safety.	Remove, isolate or restrain child if she is hurting anyone.
Avoid problems	Many problem can be avoided by reducing stress, by changing things or the schedule, or by offering choices.	<p>Reduce child's stress so anger does not become a problem. For example, get enough daily exercise by taking kids to the park or running. Arrange regular child-directed "focus time" each day.</p> <p>Change things & schedule. Choose your battles. Reduce the number of situations that cause conflict to a manageable number.</p> <p>Offer choice. Head off problems by offering choices rather than giving orders. "Do you want to wear you red sweater or your blue jacket today?"</p>
Reward cooperation	Decide <i>how</i> you want your child to express his or her feelings and encourage that behavior by looking for it, giving the child time to cooperate, and rewarding the desired behavior.	<p>Give attention to desired behavior: (Non-verbal) Ignore inappropriate behavior (as long as everyone is safe). Smiling when the child begins to calm himself. (Verbal) "Wow, you were upset and you found a way to calm yourself."</p> <p>Give child enough time to get himself together. (Record tantrum lengths so you know if their getting longer or shorter.)</p> <p>Reward behavior: Use the <i>natural</i> rewards inherent in the situation. "When you are calm we can decide how to handle the situation." <i>External rewards</i> acknowledge the child's effort. "When you calm down you can have a sticker."</p>
Acknowledge feelings	Children need to know that their feelings are accepted (not judged or fixed). Often simple acknowledging their feelings will reduce objectional behavior.	<p>Use simple acknowledgement: (When the child complains about what happened respond non-committally.) "Un-hun," "okay," "really?," "Oh," "yeah," "hummm," "tell me more," etc.</p> <p>Active listening: "Looks like your frustrated. You asked to use the toy and Molly said 'No!'" or "You're mad you can't play with the toy right now."</p> <p>Grant in fantasy: "I wish I had another ...(toy) for you. I wish I had ten. I wish I had a whole basket of them you could use?"</p>
Set limits	Providing the clear, reasonable rules kids need. Back up rules with consequence and dependable follow through.	<p>Offer two yeses. "No hitting. If you want the toy your sister has, you may trade for it or wait for a turn."</p> <p>Give (Carry out) consequences. You may touch gently or play alone." (Take the child to her bedroom if she hits.)</p> <p>Find A Better Way. A <i>Better Way</i> is an idea both parent and child like. To child how is furious, "My way is 'be mad' quietly, your way is to scream and kick, what is a better way?"</p>
Teach new skills	Teach new skills (Such as anger management or how to solve problems) by modeling the desired behavior, dividing the task into small pieces and by making practice fun.	<p>Model desired behavior: "I'm so mad, I'm going to walk around the block to calm down before I decide what to do.</p> <p>Make tiny steps. If your sister won't give you her toy, you can (1) calm yourself, (2) think of three things she might like, (3) offer her them one at a time. If that doesn't work, (4) come get me.</p> <p>Practice play. Ask "What would you do if ... your friend couldn't come over?" ... Molly wanted to play with your new truck?" ... You wanted to look at Molly's special book?"</p>