

Toddlers may assert their independence by violently objecting to discipline. They may lie down on the floor, kick their feet, and scream at the top of their lungs. Some have learned the effectiveness of holding their breath until the parent relents. Although holding one's breath may cause fainting from the lack of oxygen, the accumulation of carbon dioxide will stimulate the respiratory control center, resulting in no physical harm. Tantrums are an indication of the child's inability to control emotions; toddlers are particularly prone to tantrums because their strong drive for mastery and autonomy is frustrated by adult figures or lack of motor and cognitive skills.

The best approach toward tapering temper tantrums requires consistency and developmentally appropriate expectations and rewards. Ensuring consistency among all caregivers in expectations, prioritizing what rules are important, and developing consequences that are reasonable for the child's level of development help manage the behavior. For example, a popular time for a tantrum is before bed. Active toddlers often have trouble slowing down and, when placed in bed, resist staying there. Parents can reinforce consistency and expectations by stating, "After this story, it is bedtime." Starting at 18 months old, time-outs work well for managing temper tantrums.

During tantrums, stay calm and ignore the behavior, provided the behavior is not injurious to the child, such as violently banging the head on the floor. Continue to be present to provide a feeling of control and security to the child when the tantrum has subsided. During periods of no tantrums, practice developmentally appropriate positive reinforcement.

Other suggestions for preventing tantrums include the following (Luangrath, 2011):

- Offer the child options instead of an "all or none" position.
- Set clear boundaries and expectations with all caregivers.
- Ensure a consistent response to child's behavior by all caregivers.
- Praise the child for positive behavior when he or she is not having a tantrum or provide a reward system (i.e., sticker chart).

Temper tantrums are common during the toddler years and essentially represent normal developmental behaviors. However, temper tantrums can be signs of serious problems. Temper