



# How to Deal With Tantrums



## THE CHALLENGE

When he is upset, your two-year-old launches into a fit of screaming, stomping, and thrashing about. You wonder: 'Is my child normal? Does he throw tantrums because of something I am doing wrong? Will he ever grow out of this?'

You *can* help your two-year-old to change his behavior. First, though, consider what could be contributing to it.\*

\* Although we refer to the child as a male in this article, the principles discussed apply to both genders.



## WHY IT HAPPENS

Small children have limited experience in handling their emotions. That factor alone can lead to an occasional tantrum. But there is more.

Think about the change that a child experiences at about age two. From the time that he was born, his parents catered to his every need. If he cried, for example, they came running. *'Is the baby sick? Does he need to be fed? soothed? changed?'* The parents did whatever was needed to make things better. And that was proper because a baby is fully dependent upon his parents.

At about age two, however, a child begins to realize that his parents are catering to him less and less. In fact, instead of *their* serving *his* needs, they expect *him* to comply with *their* wishes. The tables have turned, and a two-year-old may not take well to the change without protest—perhaps in the form of a tantrum.

In time, a child usually adjusts to the fact that his parents are his instructors, not just his caretakers. Hopefully, he also comes to see that his role is to “be obedient to [his] parents.” (Colossians 3:20) In the meantime, a child may test every fiber of his parents' patience with one tantrum after another.



## WHAT YOU CAN DO

**Be understanding.** Your child is not a miniature adult. Having little experience in dealing with his emotions, he may overreact when he is upset. Try to see the situation through his eyes.—*Bible principle: 1 Corinthians 13:11.*

**Stay calm.** When your child is having a tantrum, losing your temper will not help. To the extent possible, ignore the tantrum and react matter-of-factly. Remembering why tantrums occur will help you to stay calm.—*Bible principle: Proverbs 19:11.*

**Hold your ground.** If you give in to whatever it is your child is demanding, he will likely throw another tantrum the next time he wants something. Calmly show your child that you mean what you say.—*Bible principle: Matthew 5:37.*

## Remembering why tantrums occur will help you to stay calm

**Be patient.** Do not expect tantrums to disappear overnight, especially if you have given your child reason to believe that his behavior will sway you. If you react properly and consistently, however, the tantrums will likely diminish. Eventually, they will stop altogether. The Bible says: “Love is long-suffering.”—1 Corinthians 13:4.

Also, try the following:

- When the tantrum begins, hold your child in your arms (if possible) and, without hurting him, restrict him from thrashing about. Do not shout at your child. Just wait for the storm to pass. Eventually, the child will realize that the tantrum has got him nowhere.
- Designate an area where you can put your child when he has a tantrum. Tell him that he may come out when he has calmed down, and then leave him there.
- If your child has a tantrum in public, remove him from the view of others. Do not give in just because he is making a spectacle. That will only leave your child with the message that by throwing a tantrum, he can get whatever he wants. ■

## KEY SCRIPTURES

“When we were children, we thought and reasoned as children do.”—1 Corinthians 13:11, *Contemporary English Version.*

“The insight of a man certainly slows down his anger.”  
—Proverbs 19:11.

“Let your word Yes mean Yes, your No, No.”—Matthew 5:37.

## BE CONSISTENT!

“I chuckle inside whenever I hear a parent complain that a certain child ‘can’t take no for an answer.’ I’m amused because the comment always says more about the parent than it does the child. A child who can’t take no for an answer always has parents who can’t really say it. It’s not that the child can’t take no, it’s that he or she has no reason to believe it.”—John Rosemond, *New Parent Power!*