



5 Tips to Stop a Tantrum *Before It Even Starts*

A FREE GUIDE FROM BIG LITTLE FEELINGS



We have great news for you! Tantrums? *Yeah, they're totally normal.*

In fact, if your toddler loses it on the regular, it means they're right on track, developmentally speaking.

It also means your kid's tantrums have *nothing whatsoever* to do with how "good" of a parent you are. We suspect you've wondered about that. (Parenting guilt is the worst.)

Now, here's a tiny bit of bad news: We can't make meltdowns go away *entirely*. **But fortunately, with the five tips you're about to learn, you can prevent a whole, whole lot of them.**

Enough of them to regain your sanity.

Enough of them that you won't completely dread bedtime or bathtime or *any of the times*.

Enough of them that you'll *enjoy* your kid again!

Can you even imagine? We're talking peace. Calm. *No chaos*. (OK, maybe a little chaos still, but *much less of the chaos*.)

Ready to learn these magical tips? Let's do it!



#1 Be Clear Ahead of Time

Many tantrums are triggered by transitions—ending one thing to start another. That’s because toddlers’ brains do *not* appreciate being surprised.

And, as it turns out, *surprised* means something different to toddlers than it does to us. Because their brains don’t yet get the whole idea of time, they’re shocked by the most ridiculous things. Liiiiike even though bathtime has followed dinner *every day for their entire life*, they will be 100% blown away when you start filling the tub. NOOO! IT NOT BATHTIME!

You’re right: They *shouldn’t* be surprised by that. And yet? They are.

That’s bad, because when toddlers don’t know what’s going to happen next, the world feels a bit unsafe... which sends them into *survival mode*, aka meltdown mode.

But when kids know what’s going to happen before it happens, their world feels secure and predictable, and their likelihood of having a tantrum goes way, waaaaaay down.

Remember: This applies to *everyday things that shouldn’t be surprises*. For instance, going to school happens five days a week, most weeks. Doesn’t matter. To avoid a tantrum, you’ll want to give ‘em a heads up.

Here’s a simple hack you can use to avoid transition-based tantrums: **PREP**.

- First, **plan** in advance. For example, if you need to leave for school at 8:15 am, don’t wait until 8:11 am to get all your stuff together. If you do, you’ll feel stressed and hurried, and your toddler will definitely pick up on that vibe.
- Then, **reveal** the plan. Tell your toddler what’s up: “At 8:15 am, we’re going to leave for school.”
- Next, **explain** the details. Narrate everything your toddler can expect to happen: “We’re going to eat breakfast now, and then we’ll brush our teeth and get dressed. Next, we’ll pack your backpack and go potty. After that, you’ll get in your car seat, and we’ll drive to school.”



- Finally, **put** your toddler in charge of something small. All humans want to feel powerful and valued—even tiny ones. So let your toddler make a pint-sized decision. “Do you want to wear your blue jacket or the purple one?”

This tip is actually Step 1 of BREATHE, our secret sauce for managing meltdowns in the moment. Wanna know the rest of the steps? Check out our online course, [Winning the Toddler Stage](#).

Check this out!

USE PREP TO AVOID TRANSITION-BASED TANTRUMS



Plan in Advance



Reveal the Plan



Explain the Details



**Put Your Toddler
in Charge**





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#2 Give a Choice

Sometimes, tantrums happen in transition moments. Other times, it's all about power. You know what we're talking about: The *NO! ME!* and the *I DO IT!* and the *ALL BY MINESELF!*

Aside: Did you know there was a time in history when velcro shoes didn't exist? Can you even imagine trying to get out the door in less than 87 minutes? Lord have mercy.

The bottom line is your child wants to be in charge. (Don't we all?) Rather than fighting against that perfectly natural desire—which leads you right into a power struggle—try *going with it*. Give them the feeling of positive power by offering age-appropriate choices.

Allow us to emphasize that last bit: **age-appropriate choices**. See, even though your toddler *thinks* they want to be in charge of what's for lunch (making you a short order cook) or when it's bedtime (delaying for 45 minutes), kids actually feel safer when parents make those next-level choices. Plus, as you make decisions with consistency, you'll grow in your confidence as the leader of your home!

So we big people make the big decisions, and our little people get to make some little ones. Here's what that might look like:

- "It's time for bed. Would you like to snuggle with your monkey or with your bear?"
- "It's time for lunch. Today we're having yogurt and granola. Do you want the blue bowl or the orange one?"
- "It's time to go to school. Do you want to wear your cowboy boots or your sneakers? "

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#3 Make a Yes-No Sandwich

Being a toddler means being told “no” approximately 4.3 million times a day. And being told “no” is exactly zero fun. As *adults*, we don’t like it, so why are we surprised when our toddler can’t handle the 467th “no” of the day?

And yet, as parents, we *have* to say “no” at times, right? So, the next time you have to deny your kid’s request, do so *gracefully* by making a Yes-No Sandwich. Instead of just giving a flat-out “no,” simply sandwich that bummed news between two “yes” responses.

Here’s what it looks like:

- “You want to see grandma. That sounds like a great idea. Yes! We have school today. Let’s call grandma and ask her to come over tomorrow!”
- “You’d like to color together. That will be so much fun! Yes! When I’m finished emptying the dishwasher in 5 minutes, then we can color. I can’t wait!”

The Yes-No Sandwich takes a little creativity and practice, but sooner than later, it’ll become second nature. You’ve got this!

Heads up: Your toddler may not welcome your Yes-No Sandwich with a broad grin and an “OK! I’ll wait right here—patiently and angelically!” In that case, the next tip will be helpful.

Keep reading!





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#4 OK the Feeling

Ever have a bad day and in the middle of venting to a friend or partner, they say something remarkably validating like, “Wow... what’s the big deal? Aren’t you kinda overreacting?”

That feels super sucky, doesn’t it?

Well, friends? When your kid starts to cry because you won’t let them put ketchup on the dog’s food... and you respond by rolling your eyes and telling them to get over it? Yeah... *that feels super sucky to them, too.* And so they crank up the volume and they throw themselves to the floor and *wail*—as if the fate of the universe depends on this dog food ketchup thing.

This is exhausting. So before your toddler comes completely unglued, simply say, “Aw, buddy. I can see you’re upset. It’s OK to be upset.” Your toddler might just nod their sweet little head and put the ketchup back in the fridge. Or they might still have a tantrum, because DOG! KETCHUP! But when you see your kids and *hear* your kids, their meltdowns will become shorter and less intense.

It sounds too good to be true, but it *works*—in all sorts of situations:

- When they can’t find their favorite stuffed animal: “I can see you feel sad. It’s OK to feel sad.”
- When it’s time to leave the park: “I can see you’re disappointed that it’s time to go home. It’s OK to feel disappointed.”
- When their sister takes their toy: “I can see you’re mad. It’s OK to be mad.”

In short, validating emotions is a *wildly* effective strategy for decreasing a meltdown’s intensity and duration—or even stopping it before it starts. Plus, OKing feelings helps your kids recognize, name, and manage their own emotions, which will help them become emotionally healthy adults.





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#5 Boundaries

Buckle up, friends... this is the end-all-be-all, dazzle-all-the-other-parents-on-the-playground tip: **The single most effective way to prevent tantrums is to set boundaries and keep them.**

When your kid asks for a chocolate bar in the checkout line and you say "no," *stick with that no regardless of the dirty looks you get when your kid flips out.* When you tell your kid screen time is over at the end of this show, *turn off the iPad regardless of the wailing and gnashing of teeth that follow.* When your kid doesn't want to leave the playground, *pack up and go, even if they scream bloody murder all the way to the car.*

Why? Because if you make exceptions because of the dirty looks... if you "OK, just this once" because of the wailing... if you "Fine! I give up!" because of the screaming... **guess what they're gonna do next time they don't like your answer?**

Mhm. You got it. Hello, tantrum—and likely a bigger, better one, too!

Remember, toddlers like to know what's going to happen before it happens. So when you say it's time to turn off the iPad, your kid knows *it's time to turn off the iPad*—every single time with no confusion.

When they know what to expect, they feel safe, which allows them to keep it together, even when they're not thrilled about what's going on. Here's what that looks like in the real world:

- "It's hard to leave the park when you're having fun. You're mad, and it's OK to feel that way. It's time to leave now. What toy do you want to play with when you get home?"
- "I know you feel sad that you can't keep watching your show. It's OK to feel sad. We're all done with the iPad for today. Which show should we watch tomorrow?"

When they know they can rely on your first answer to be your final answer, they'll have fewer tantrums—and the ones they do have will be shorter and less intense over time.

Do you hear that? The angels are singing. Other parents are applauding. Your toddler is smiling sweetly in admiration. Aaaaaaah.





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But what about when....?

Wouldn't it be great if raising compassionate, kind, resilient, honest, happy humans only required five little tips? Yeah, that *would* be great. But life loves to throw curve balls. It's just part of the parenting gig.

We created our course, [Winning the Toddler Stage](#), to give parents an action plan to navigate alllllll the tough moments! In five, sanity-saving modules (plus a few bonus lessons!), you'll learn why toddlers act like they do and, most importantly, ***exactly what to do and say in the middle of a level-10 tantrum.***

But that's not all! You'll also learn:

- Magical strategies for de-escalating power struggles *right now*.
- A new model of discipline that protects kids' self-esteem without turning you into a pushover.
- Consequences that actually work to decrease unwanted behavior. (Spoiler alert: It's not a timeout.)
- What the heck to do about hitting, kicking, biting, and pushing.
- Super-practical strategies for dealing with all the toddler drama: bedtime, bathtime, pottytime, mealtime, screen-time... all the dang times.
- Plus the ultimate guide to toddler sleep and so.much.more.

Winning the Toddler Stage will help you calm the chaos and enjoy your kid again.

OMG. I NEED THIS! →



 **big little feelings**

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