

TEMPER TANTRUMS (THROWING FITS)

1. **First**, explain to a calm child that you both will be working together to stop temper tantrums. Explain what temper tantrums mean: screaming, yelling, crying, thrashing about, kicking or hitting, breaking or throwing things, holding your breath, etc. Any behavior (actions) that makes you look very unattractive (ugly) to others and makes other people uncomfortable (any behavior that is used to control other people).
2. **Second**, you will teach them a calming down technique to help them calm down and talk about the problem. Each child may have one that they like. They may like to take deep breathes and blow out slowly. They may need to go to their room and lay on the bed or on a couch or the floor until they stop crying and can talk. They may like to be held until they calm down. Praise them when they calm down.
3. **Next**, tell the child that you will identify the behavior when it happens and ask them to stop and use their words to tell you what they are upset about. You will use a calm teaching voice when this happens.
4. After they tell you the problem, you both can come up with ideas to solve the problem. Other family members may help with ideas and solutions.
5. They can earn stars or stickers for using their words. They can lose stickers, fun things, or stay in their room longer for continuing to scream.

Possible solutions:

- Give a 'No-Yes' answer: "You can't today, but you can tomorrow." "You can't eat candy right now, but you can after dinner." "You can't go outside right now, but you can if it stops raining."
- Give choices that puts the child in charge: "You can play with this one or that one. Which one do you want to play with?"
- You can go to bed now or in five minutes. Which do you choose?" "You can come out of the room or go in the house. Which do you choose." Follow through with consequence if the child decides to do the wrong thing. Remind them that they chose the consequence.
- Trade: "Why don't we do something else that is fun. This object belongs to someone else or this not a toy, but you could play with this other thing. Let me show you how it works." This is redirecting the attention to something else, a toy or activity that is allowed.
- Change the environment: Put the object out of sight. Trade the object for a fun toy or activity. Put something in front of the object to block it from sight.
- Move the child to another place: The child may go to his room until he calms down. The child may sit on a naughty chair until he calms down. You may need to leave a Store. Redirect the child's attention to another place or item that is allowable. For a baby, put him in a playpen or gate to keep him from the forbidden object.
- Ignore the tantrum: Go to another room so the child can not see you. Explain to the child that the behavior is inappropriate and you will not be treated this way. When he wants to calm down and use his words, you will be available. Become busy with something else, listen to music or act like you are not interested in what he is doing. His behavior may escalate until he realizes you are not reacting to what he is doing. He may come into your room and start the act all over again. You just go to another room. **Remind him in a calm voice that when he calms down and talks, you will listen.**
- Compromise: It may be a situation that each one can give a little. The child may want to do something that makes a mess such as remove all the cushions on the couch and play under them. If he used his words after you have said "No.", then you may let him remove one cushion or lift them up a little if he puts them back. He has a choice to play a little or none at all. That way each gives a little. If he doesn't do what you both agreed upon, he doesn't play with cushions at all. It is his choice. He can scream all he wants, but he chose to not play a little.

If a child has gotten their way with temper tantrums for a long time, it will take a while to break them of this habit. You have to continually refuse to give in and work on finding solutions to their anger. **Children can throw a fit for an hour. They may become red in the face, become wet with sweat from crying and screaming, or kick and hit. They will slow down for awhile and just whimper, and then they will start screaming again.** They can last longer than a parent. It is very traumatic and stressful for parents to stand their ground. They are afraid they are causing the child emotional harm. When the child finds out that tantrums do not get them their way, but talking and planning does, they will start to do what works. Give this technique several tries before you give up. Babies need a firm teaching voice to let them know that they are OK, but they are not getting what they are mad about. You can go into the bedroom and calmly tell the child they are OK and that it is time to sleep. Give them a hug, lay them down, and walk out of the room. You may do this every 5 to 10 minutes. Eventually, they will wear themselves out and go to sleep (maybe an hour).