

# Understanding Tantrums

## *Understanding the Behavior & What to Do Instead*

Most common for children 1–5 years old



Tantrums are communication.

For many young children, tantrums aren't about being "naughty" or "manipulative."

They're often a child's way of saying:

- I'm overwhelmed.
- I don't know how to handle this feeling.
- I need help calming down.
- I'm tired or hungry.
- I'm frustrated.
- I don't have the words to explain what I need.



# Common Reasons Children Have Tantrums

Most tantrums happen because a child's brain is still learning how to manage big emotions—not because they're trying to be difficult.



Big emotions



Limited language



Waiting is hard



Tiredness



Hunger



Unexpected changes or transitions



Being told "no"



# How to Respond During a Tantrum

- ✓ Stay calm.
- ✓ Make sure everyone is safe.
- ✓ Acknowledge the feeling.

"You're really upset."

- ✓ Use a calm, reassuring voice.
- ✓ Keep your words simple.
- ✓ Stay nearby if your child wants your support.
- ✓ Save problem-solving for later, when your child is calm.



# How to Help Prevent Tantrums

✓ **Keep routines predictable.**

Children feel more secure when they know what to expect.

✓ **Give warnings before transitions.**

"Five more minutes, then it's time to clean up."

✓ **Offer simple choices.**

"Would you like the red cup or the blue cup?"

✓ **Practice calming strategies during play.**

Teach deep breathing, counting, or taking a break before they're upset.

✓ **Watch for triggers.**

Notice if tantrums happen when your child is tired, hungry, or overstimulated.



# Remember

Children don't automatically know how to:

- calm their bodies
- express big feelings
- wait
- handle disappointment
- solve problems

These are skills children build through guidance, practice, and time.  
Behavior is communication.

The goal isn't to stop every tantrum,  
it's to help your child build emotional regulation.

💛 Progress happens one calm moment at a time.



## Practice the Skill When Everyone Is Calm

The best time to teach emotional regulation isn't during the tantrum—it's during everyday moments.

When children are calm, they can:

- Practice deep breathing.
- Name their feelings.
- Read books about emotions.
- Role-play frustrating situations.
- Learn simple calming strategies.

Think of it like practicing a fire drill. We practice before there's an emergency, so we know what to do when it matters.

Children build self-regulation through calm, repeated practice, not in the middle of big emotions.

### Keep Supporting Your Child's Emotional Growth

Every tantrum is an opportunity to help your child build emotional regulation.

Progress doesn't happen overnight.

It happens through small, calm, connected moments.

You're doing important work.

Explore more free parenting resources:

[AMarshallBooks.com](http://AMarshallBooks.com)

Explore my books

