

What to do when your child throws a fit

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(HealthDay)—You know the scenario—your child has a meltdown, leaving you frustrated, embarrassed and arguing even though your brain says it's a battle you're not likely to win.

Tantrums often start during the "terrible 2's" because little ones can't yet clearly voice their frustrations. But it's never too late to correct the behavior, even if it's a well-established pattern in an older child.

In the heat of the moment, look at the situation through your child's eyes to understand why he or she is acting this way, so you can diffuse the situation.

You might need to start by moving to a more private location, such as a quiet corner of the mall or a bedroom if you're visiting someone's home. You're more likely to respond better to your child—and be better able to assess the true problem—if you don't feel like you're on public view.

If your child is overwhelmed by the surroundings, give a comforting hug. If he's hungry, offer a nourishing snack. If she's tired, a nap might help. If he's upset over something he wants but can't have, use distraction to divert his attention. Some [experts](#) suggest teaching a child the same type of mindful breathing that adults practice to refocus their attention and restore a sense of calm.

To prevent tantrums, try to identify what situations stress your child. Is it being overscheduled, exposed to stimuli like bright lights and noise, or simply being bored? If your child isn't happy tagging along when you run errands, for instance, bringing her on such an outing is asking for a miserable experience for both of you.

Also, identify and look out for any warning signs your [child](#) exhibits leading up to difficult [behavior](#) so you can take action before a [meltdown](#) occurs.

More information: The organization Hand In Hand has more advice for [managing tantrums](#) in public.

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