

6 expert tips for defusing kids' quarantine meltdowns

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(HealthDay)—When kids and teens chafe under COVID-19 quarantine,

how can parents stop the meltdowns and misbehavior?

Start with understanding: Young people miss their friends and their freedom. Younger kids might respond by throwing tantrums. Teens might isolate themselves, ignore social distancing rules or sneak out to see friends.

To curb [negative behavior](#), experts from Penn State Children's Hospital offer their advice.

It starts with this time-honed tip: If your [child](#) has a tantrum, ignore it if it's not endangering anyone.

"It helps a child understand they won't get what they want from having a tantrum," pediatrician Dr. Katherine Shedlock said in a hospital news release.

Ask the child to take quiet time, which is different from a timeout. Pick a quiet-time place, such as a bedroom, and have the child routinely go there to calm down.

"If a conflict escalates, taking a five- or 10-minute break to go to a room, calm down and regroup puts everyone in a better place to restart the discussion," nurse practitioner Lisa Culler suggested.

Reserve timeouts for more severe [behavior](#), such as hitting or biting, Shedlock advised. Have the child sit in a specific spot without toys and base the length of a timeout on your child's age (for example, three minutes for a 3-year-old).

Create [daily routines](#) to give children and teens structure to their days. This includes consistent sleep and wake times, scheduling schoolwork and other tasks, and trying to eat together as a family.

Parents should stay positive, reassure their children that the pandemic won't last forever, and praise [good behavior](#). It's also important to limit children's exposure to news about the pandemic in order to keep their anxiety under control.

If tantrums don't stop or if behavior turns to self-harm or isolation, talk with a professional.

More information: The American Academy of Pediatrics has more on [COVID-19](#).

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