

Fact Sheet—Calming the Storm

How you manage a child's temper tantrum depends on the child's age, where you are when the tantrum occurs and what caused it. Below are techniques for managing tantrums in children of different ages.

Distraction: Distract a toddler (1 and 2 year olds) by calling his or her attention to something else, such as a stuffed toy or a fun activity.

Pay No Attention: Ignore the behavior and allow the child to continue with his or her temper tantrum, if the child does not pose a physical threat or disturb others. Place the child in a safe spot where he or she can be seen and there are no dangers.

Time-Out: A short time-out can work well with older toddlers and preschoolers. Set a specific time period and place the child in a safe spot where he or she can be seen and there are no dangers or distractions. Give no more than 1 minute of time-out for each year of age. For example, a 4 year old would stay in time-out for 4 minutes.

Remove the Child: Send a toddler or preschooler to his or her room until the tantrum has passed. Be sure you still supervise the child at all times. If you are in public with a child who is having a temper tantrum, remove the child from the immediate scene. For example, take a brief time-out in a bathroom before resuming activities.

Comfort: A child who is having a temper tantrum because he or she has been harmed in some way (e.g., his sister smashed his toy) needs comfort, not discipline.