

## How to Handle Public Temper Tantrums

It can be embarrassing for parents when their child has a tantrum in public whether in the supermarket or in a friend's house. Sometimes parents can give in to make the child stop screaming, however if you do this you are reinforcing the behaviour and the child will continue to do it each time you go because they know it works.

### Instead try to follow some of these tips:

- **Stay calm** and don't worry about what other people think. We were all children once and even though some people may have forgotten this I am sure their parents haven't.
- **Don't lose control** just because your child has. Try to stay in control of the situation by remaining calm and speaking in gentle tones. If in a friend's house you may need to excuse your child and yourself for a few moments until you deal with the situation. By doing so, you will not have an audience and the child won't be getting any attention for their behaviour. Sometimes another person may feel they know how to handle the situation but as the parent it is important to take control.
- **Holding your child** until the tantrum has eased can be helpful as it helps the child regain control of their emotions. You may have to leave the supermarket for a few minutes to do this. Offer your child a drink or a snack, as it is not helpful for the child if they continue to scream for an extended period.
- **Talk to your child** if they calm down enough to listen and explain the situation but remember to try and compromise also.
- If you are in a pattern of using **time out** you could put the child on a time out in their buggy if you have it with you or sit in a quiet place for a few minutes so you can both calm down. Maybe go back to your car if you have one with you.
- If your child is older, say over six, they may be seeking attention so sometimes you need to just **ignore the behaviour**. However do not

threaten to leave them in the supermarket or wherever you are. You would then be threatening their safety and sense of security with a meaningless threat.

- Occasionally you may have to return home and **rethink the situation** and look at what led to your child having the tantrum. Were they tired or hungry or were you tired and less tolerant? Were you in a hurry which meant they could not do something they are normally allowed to do?
- You may need to **think ahead next time** – for example, if your child kicks up a fuss because he cannot go on the musical car, agree about this before you go to the supermarket, or go somewhere where there is no car.

Try to put yourself in your child's shoes and think about what you are planning and ask yourself if you were a child would you enjoy this outing or event? Sometimes we expect too much of our children.

Parents may enjoy a day's shopping and lunch with friends but if you are two-years-old and trapped in your buggy all day, how much fun is it? This does not mean you cannot do the things you enjoy, but try building in some fun for your child also. When going shopping involve them in the shopping – put them in the trolley and let them choose some things, like a choice between two cereals or two yogurts. Show them things in the supermarket, which may look interesting.

- Remember to **praise your child** if they have managed to control their temper during the event or managed to regain control after a tantrum.
- When you get home after a temper tantrum, and if you managed to finish what you set out to do, it is good to talk to your child about the incident when they are calm, if they are old enough to understand. Help your child to identify and **talk about feelings**. Give them the words to describe how they were feeling at the time of the tantrum, so that eventually they can tell you rather than having a tantrum.
- **Congratulate yourself** on surviving the tantrum and remember they will eventually grow out of them.

- If you discipline your child later for the tantrum, make sure they understand why they are being disciplined. **Ensure the punishment is fair and fits the crime.** Ensure your child knows they are being punished because they did something wrong and not because you are angry.