



FIVE WAYS TO AVOID TODDLER MELTDOWNS

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Parenting a toddler is *hard*. I remember seeing the scorn on the faces of fellow Target shoppers as my adorable daughter writhed and sobbed on the floor, rubbing her dripping nose into the entryway carpet. Within this world there exists a beautiful array of children where no two are the same. What works for some may not for all – and that's okay.

BE CONSISTENT

Young children crave order. Even the smallest deviations from their usual daily routines can provoke a meltdown. Establishing routines and upholding age-appropriate expectations for behavior will help your child feel secure.

OBSERVE

Take a moment to fade into the background and observe your child with an open mind (when they aren't in the throes of a tantrum). What makes them tick? What gives them the most trouble? Track tantrums. Jot down details, such as time and place, to see if you can recognize a pattern. Use that information to strategize possible solutions.

ENCOURAGE INDEPENDENCE

"Me do it!" Not long after they are born, children begin the journey to independence. Two-year-olds especially are more capable than adults give them credit for. Involving your child as a participant in your household and encouraging them to be as independent as possible fuels this natural desire. Remember, teaching independence requires *you* to slow down. Allot ample time for your child to practice things like removing and putting on clothing and shoes. Allow your child the opportunity to learn to self-soothe.

ENCOURAGE LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Many meltdowns are attributed to typical language development. A child's ability to understand the world around them (receptive language) frequently and temporarily supersedes their ability to effectively communicate (expressive language). Augmenting spoken language with sign language empowers infants to express themselves. Talk to your child from the time they are born. Give them language for their feelings and for the world around them. Engage them in sensory-based experiences. Read to them. Explore the public library together (infants and toddlers are welcome).

BE PATIENT

I know. It's so glaringly obvious, and yet sometimes so excruciatingly difficult. During a tantrum, your child's brain is exhibiting a stress response. Attempting to reason with them

or expecting complete compliance at that moment is futile. Redirect if possible. If not, get them to a safe space until they calm down. Do not allow them to hurt themselves or others. Lastly, developing patience sometimes requires the not-so-obvious. Learn a little bit about child development so you can better understand your child.

It is also important to remember that in order to be mentally and physically present and ready to take on all the excitement that life with your toddler has to offer, it is essential to take time for self-care. It is easier to be your best parent when you feel like your best self.

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