

## Advice Sheet –Tantrums

### What is a tantrum

- Temper Tantrums usually start around 18 months and are very common
- Hitting, biting and screaming are common too.
- Toddler tantrums are not a sign of being naughty, bad or spoilt.
- Tantrums are not an intentional misbehaviour but an involuntary reaction to stress.
- Unplanned and happen when a child is in crisis and struggling to manage their 'big feelings'
- Should be a temporary phase – older children will begin to learn to manage intense emotions and control their behaviour in safe ways.



### What does a tantrum look like

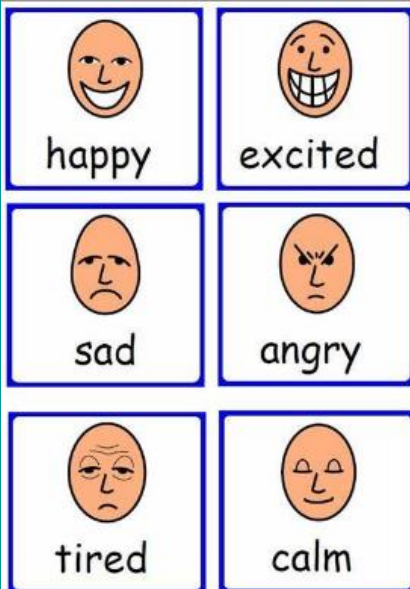
#### Big Feelings

- Toddlers and sometimes older children want to express themselves but find it very difficult.
- Frustration is displayed as a tantrum.
- Inconsistencies, structure, expectations, boundaries
- Overwhelmed
- Intense emotions
- Frustration
- Communicating feelings
- Stress/Anxiety
- Physical - tiredness, hunger
- Acute Trauma
- Over stimulated sensory response

### How to do we support this behaviour

- Tuning into the child and helping them to calm down is much more effective than trying to discipline a tantrum.
- Understand it is an emotional process not "naughty" or deliberate behaviour
- Be mindful that the child's brain and personality is still developing, and they are exploring feelings.
- Understand possible triggers
- Consistent strategies between home and setting/school.

## How to move it on / What's next? Continuing the support



- Help children to **manage their intense emotions** by teaching 'emotional literacy' i.e. naming emotions
- Communicate in a calm way. **Acknowledging their feelings** and 'talk' it through. Reflect after the possible triggers of the outburst. i.e. ABC approach.
- **Teach the language of feelings** using stories, visuals and simple conversational exchanges. i.e. Colour Monster
- **Model play and explain positive behaviours** they can see around them. E.g. "I loved it when you helped XXXX pick up the bricks. What a kind friend you are xxx, that makes me very happy"
- **Label emotions** when interacting with children so they begin to understand their own and those of others.
- **Responding to emotions**, such as a smile, and showing that you share their feelings, such as being excited or pleased.
- **Talking about feelings and labelling** emotions such as "sad" and "happy" as you share books or play together.

- **Sharing stories about emotions**, problem solving and working together.
- **Positively show the children the type of responses you like**, by smiling or giving them a thumbs up sign/"high 5" and verbal praise.
- Provide a range of activities that involve **turn taking**, e.g. board games, as well as sharing, e.g. popular resources
- Practitioners should **model positive behaviour and social interactions**
- **Use different words for feelings** to increase vocabulary, e.g. not just sad or happy.
- A daily **routine** so that the child knows what to expect. Stick to the routine as much as possible, including nap time and bedtime. A child's temper can become short if he or she doesn't have enough rest or quiet time.

### Here are the five steps of emotion coaching:

- Be aware of emotions. Tune in to the child's feelings and your own.
- Connect with the child. Use emotional moments as opportunities to connect.
- Listen to the child. Respect their feelings by taking time to listen carefully.
- Name emotions.
- Find good solutions.

### [\(2\) Emotion Coaching- an introduction - YouTube](#)

- **Plan ahead.** Run errands when your child isn't likely to be hungry or tired. If you're expecting to wait in line, pack a small toy or snack to occupy the child.
- **Let children make appropriate choices.** Avoid saying no to everything. To give to the child a sense of control, let him or her make choices. "Would you like to wear the red or blue apron?" "Would you like to eat strawberries or bananas?" "Would you like to read a book or build a tower with your blocks?"
- **Praise good behaviour.** Offer extra attention when the child behaves well. Give the child a hug or tell them how pleased you are when he or she shares or follows directions.
- **Avoid situations likely to trigger tantrums.** Don't give the child resources that are far too advanced for him or her.

## Further Advice and Further Reading

[Children & early years tantrums | Early Years in Mind | Anna Freud Centre](#)

[Personal, social and emotional development | Early Years in Mind | Anna Freud Centre](#)

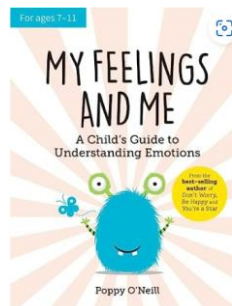
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/babys-development/behaviour/temper-tantrums/#:~:text=Your%20child%20may%20have%20a,are%20not%20being%20very%20loveable.>

[The Family Lives website has more information and advice about dealing with tantrums](#)

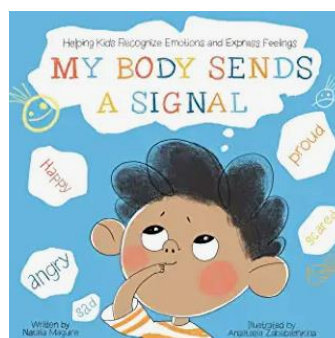
[Coping with tantrum tips by the NCT](#)



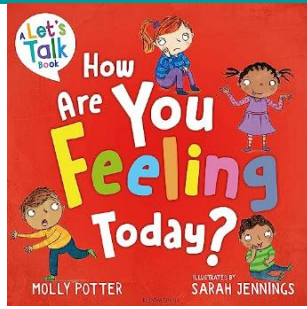
[The Colour Monster: Amazon.co.uk: Llenas, Anna: 9781783704231: Books](#)



[My Feelings and Me: A Child's Guide to Understanding Emotions: Amazon.co.uk: O'Neill, Poppy: 9781800073388: Books](#)



[Amazon.co.uk : my body sends a signal](#)



[How Are You Feeling Today?: A Let's Talk picture book to help young children understand their emotions: Amazon.co.uk: Potter, Molly, Jennings, Sarah: 9781801992275: Books](https://www.amazon.co.uk/How-Are-You-Feeling-Today-Book/dp/1444799227)