

Understanding Your Toddler:

Tips to Cope with Crying Toddlers



Crying

Your toddler is learning to communicate better every day. She still cries, but less often than when she was younger. When she cries, she is telling you that she needs your help.

Toddlers cry for many reasons. They may cry when they:

- Want things they cannot have
- Are not able to tell you what they want or need
- Cannot always move around like they want to
- Want to do more on their own, but still need help
- Get overwhelmed, tired, uncomfortable, afraid, sad, or frustrated

As a parent, you want your toddler to be calm and happy. When she is crying, your toddler will need a little help to calm down. You can find the best ways to help her.

Here are some ways to help your toddler stay calm:

- Respond to her quickly.
- Use distraction to take her attention away from something she cannot do.
- Talk to her about things that interest her.
- Give her time to move and play in safe places throughout the day.
- Help her practice using her fingers by letting her pick up safe foods and toys.
- Use routines to make daily activities go more smoothly.



Tantrums

Between 18 months and 3 years, children sometimes have tantrums. Your toddler's brain is still developing. When she is very upset, she cannot control her emotions. Once a tantrum starts, your toddler really cannot control herself. She will need your help to calm her down.

For most children, there are 2 types of tantrums:

Shorter Tantrums

- Include crying and one other behavior, such as stomping or dropping to the floor
- Last 1 to 3 minutes
- May end with just a little help from you

Longer Tantrums

- Include crying and 2 or more behaviors like stomping, dropping to the floor, kicking, hitting, and biting
- Last longer than 3 minutes
- Are too intense for toddlers to stop on their own
- Can be dangerous – you will need to keep your toddler safe

What can you do?

- Respond early to your toddler's needs. She is more likely to have a tantrum when she is tired or uncomfortable. You can prevent some, but not all tantrums.
- Watch her closely, even if she is calming herself down.
- Protect your toddler from hurting herself during a tantrum. After a few minutes she will feel sad and turn to you for comfort.
- Keep your voice calm and your face relaxed.
- Be patient. She will not have tantrums every day. She will have a better control over her emotions by about 3 or 4 years of age.

