

Helping You Navigate Your Journey Through Parenting

Testing & Tantrums & Tears, Oh My!



BY KIM DEMARCHI

Just when your baby is sleeping through the night and you begin to get your life back, your baby turns into a toddler and guess what? You enter a whole new set of challenges - potty training, new siblings and TANTRUMS! As difficult as tantrums can be, the good news is they are normal and typical between the ages of 2-4 years. When your child throws a temper tantrum, it doesn't mean he's a "bad" child. It only means he's trying to communicate something to you. It certainly doesn't mean BAD CHILD=BAD PARENT. So, let that go right now!

Possible Reasons for Meltdowns & Tantrums

Meltdowns	Tantrums	Considerations
Fatigue	Testing	Diet
Hunger	Feels powerless	Exercise
Illness	Frustration	Screens/Media
Hypersensitivity		Boredom

Temper tantrums and meltdowns can look the same, but they are subtly different. If your child is having a meltdown, meet your child's needs as quickly as possible. Get them

to bed, food, medicine, or maybe 3 days at Disneyland is overloading your child's senses. Meltdowns are a reaction to something and are usually beyond a child's control. If your child is having a tantrum because they are testing the limits, feeling powerless, or feeling frustrated or overwhelmed by something, again, they are NORMAL! Their job is to test the limits; your job to kindly and firmly set the limits and follow through on them. Think about how many demands are made to your child every day. Do this, do that, get this, get that... they are being bossed around constantly and can easily begin to feel powerless. They also want to be in charge of themselves. They want to do everything themselves, but sometimes that can present challenges, therefore becoming frustrated. The end result: tantrums!

What NOT to do – DO NOT:

Overpower your child	Make fun of him
Argue with him	Debate with him
Give in to him	Deal with tantrum in public

These are typically not "teachable moments".

What to do:

1. **Know your child** - First and foremost, it's very important that you take the time to know our child's signals.

2. **Schedule appropriately** - Over scheduling children tends to create tension. Try not to always hurry your child.
3. **Look for patterns** - Does your child seem to throw tantrums at the same time each day? Does it seem to be while running errands?
4. **Teach emotional regulation techniques** - Breathing is the best! Smell the flowers, blow out the candles.
5. **Teach traffic light toolkit** - We all know what red, yellow and green mean... teach your littles too, so they can communicate their feelings and needs.
6. **Make agreements ahead of time** - If your child always want to buy something in the store, tell him BEFORE you go what to expect and make an agreement of what is and isn't happening.
7. **Notify your child of changes ahead of time** - Not knowing things have changed, it makes children feel out of control. Give them a heads up that school is only a half day, or that someone else will pick them up.
8. **Nurture yourself** - Self care = more patience!
9. **Promote routines and rituals** - This builds security when they have routines around morning, meals, bedtime, etc.
10. **Withdraw if necessary** - If your lid is flipped, maybe you should remove yourself. Or, if you see your child watching you for a reaction, remember, no tantrum is as meaningful without an audience.
11. **Give a hug** - Children DO better when the FEEL better.
12. **Validate feelings** - Use reflective listening to repeat what you hear your child saying. Be sincere. We all need to feel heard and listened to.



13. **Use distraction** - If you see a tantrum building, sing, dance, focus on something else.
14. **Give choices** - They need more power! Use concrete choices such as "Do you want to use the Batman toothbrush or the Princess toothbrush?" Use playful choices such as "Do you want to fly like an airplane or hop like a bunny to your car seat?"
15. **Stay calm** - Try not to lose control and say or do something you'll regret.
16. **Model good behavior yourself** - YOU are your child's best teacher! They are watching YOU! If you model yelling, they will too. If you model deep breathing, they will as well.
17. **Simply wait for it to pass** - Sometimes you just have to say, "This too shall pass."
18. **Use humor when appropriate** - Humor melts even the most resistant.

Remember, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Kim DeMarchi, M.Ed., Certified Parent Educator and Certified Family Coach, is a Tualatin resident, married with 18 year old boy/girl twins, and has been an educator for almost three decades. Kim is trained and certified through Positive Discipline, as well the International Network for Children and Families in a program called Redirecting Children's Behavior. Kim is active in supporting her local parenting community by providing workshops, coaching



families and writing articles for our newspaper. Kim is a monthly guest on KATU's Afternoon Live and AM Northwest. She also blogs twice a month for Knowledge Universe's Kindercare online community. Kim's goal for you is to help reduce conflict, foster mutual respect, and create deeper communication and connections with your loved ones. She can be reached through EmpoweredParenting.com.

Strong Voices Smart Choices



Parents who talk with their kids about **Mental Wellness** and **Substance Use** contribute significantly to a child making healthy decisions.



Join Us!

Kim DeMarchi, M.Ed.,
Certified Parent Educator,
Certified Family Coach & Speaker

February 13 @ 6:30PM
Hazelbrook Middle School, Commons

February 20 @ 6:30PM
Byrom Middle School, Library

February 28 @ 6:30PM
Tualatin High School, Library