

TODDLER TANTRUM RESPONSE SHEET

A calm, practical guide for what to do, what to say, and what to avoid when big feelings take over.

THE 5-STEP RESPONSE

Pause → Connect → Set the Limit → Help → Reconnect

You don't have to stop the tantrum immediately. Your first job is to stay calm, keep your child safe, and help them move through the moment.

1 PAUSE

Take one slow breath. Lower your voice. Get down to your child's level.

Remind yourself: "My child is having a hard time, not giving me a hard time."

2 CONNECT

Use fewer words. Name the feeling or situation without trying to make the tantrum disappear.

"You really wanted that." "You're upset." "You didn't want to leave."

3 SET THE LIMIT

Acknowledge the feeling without changing a necessary boundary.

"You want the cookie. We're not having another cookie."

Feelings are allowed. Unsafe behavior is not.

WHEN THE TANTRUM IS IN FULL SWING

Keep your response simple. A child who is overwhelmed may not be able to process a long explanation.

4 HELP THEM THROUGH IT

Stay nearby. Keep your child safe. Reduce stimulation. Offer comfort without forcing it. Wait for the intensity to come down.

"I'm right here." "You're safe." "You can cry. I'm here when you're ready."

5 RECONNECT

Teach after the storm, when your child is calm. Keep it brief.

"That was hard. You were angry because we had to leave. Next time, you can say, 'I don't want to go.'"

Your toddler doesn't need a lecture.

YOUR TANTRUM SCRIPT

Use this when you don't know what to say

"You wanted _____. You feel _____. I won't let you _____. I'm here to help."

Example: "You wanted the toy. You feel angry. I won't let you hit. I'm here to help."

WORDS FOR COMMON TANTRUMS

Short scripts you can borrow in the moment.

WHEN...	TRY...
Your child wants something you said no to	"You really wanted it. The answer is still no."
Your child doesn't want to leave	"You want to stay. It's time to leave. I'll help you."
Your child hits or kicks	"You're angry. I won't let you hit."
Your child throws something	"You're upset. I won't let you throw that. I'll move it away."
Your child screams "NO!"	"You don't want to. I hear you. We still need to do it."
Your child wants to do everything alone	"You want to do it yourself. You can try. I'll help if you need me."
Your child keeps crying after a boundary	"It's okay to be upset. The limit isn't changing."
Your child won't calm down	"You don't have to stop crying. I'm staying nearby."

A SIMPLE RULE TO REMEMBER

Feelings are allowed. Unsafe behavior is not.

You can acknowledge a feeling without giving in to a demand, and you can hold a boundary without shaming your child.

PARENT RESET + REFLECTION

Your response matters too. Give yourself a moment before, during, or after the difficult part.

THE 30-SECOND RESET

S — Stop and pause. Don't react immediately.

T — Take one breath. Relax your shoulders and jaw.

O — Observe. What is happening beneath the behavior?

P — Proceed calmly. Choose the simplest safe response.

Tell yourself: "I don't have to fix this instantly."
"I can hold the boundary without fighting my child."

AFTER THE TANTRUM

What happened?

What might have triggered it?

- ☐ Hunger ☐ Tiredness ☐ Transition ☐ Frustration
- ☐ Overstimulation ☐ Disappointment ☐ Communication difficulty
- ☐ Wanting independence ☐ Other: _____

What helped?

What could I try next time?

ONE THING TO REMEMBER

You don't have to stop every tantrum.

Your toddler is still learning to manage big feelings, tolerate frustration, communicate needs, and handle limits.

Your job isn't to make every difficult feeling disappear. **Your job is to provide safety, connection, and consistent boundaries while they learn.**

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