



Preventing Tantrums

Benjamin Franklin coined the phrase, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,” in regards to fire prevention. If you’ve ever experienced a full fledged tantrum, you see how this advice might apply to tantrums.

What we need is preventative parenting—the art of being able to say “yes” more often while gaining cooperation. Here are a few ideas to get everyone to “yes.”

Plan ahead. Think about the times that are most stressful for your child, and for you. What circumstances try everyone’s patience? Before you start an activity explain in broad strokes what is expected. Off to see a friend and last time there was a ruckus last visit when leaving? State your expectations for behavior before you leave your house. “When we get ready to leave our friends’ house, I’ll give you a five-minute warning. Will that give you enough time to finish up and be able to leave happy?”

Plan to leave before hunger and tiredness contribute to an inability to control emotions.

Let your children plan with you. Sometimes simply asking, “Help me think of how we can leave our friend’s house today happy and with no one losing their temper.” Ask questions until you have a plan and perhaps a ‘secret’ signal to use at the friend’s house if you need to talk in private.

Practice. Do a little dry run on how to leave a friend’s house happily. Let your child role play both the parent and child role as you do a role reversal.

Keep the lines of communication open. Things change and the best-laid plans go awry. A secret signal can help you and your child move to a quiet place to discuss needs without tempers having to flare. You can use the sign. Your child can use it.

Do what you say. Some families have the 30-minute goodbye, where everyone says good-bye, gets their coats on, and then proceeds to talk by the front door or car for another thirty minutes. For a small child, one might understand why a tantrum might emerge in this situation. When it’s time to go--Go. If your child refuses, kindly take him by the hand and, go. Be prepared to kindly and calmly carry him to the car. Say what you mean, and mean what you say.

Help with language. Help your child learn to use language to problem solve. The phrase “Would you be willing to help me come up with a plan to solve this problem?” can help your child learn to see another person’s point of view and help you get to yes and cooperation.

With preventative parenting, if a tantrum does occur, you and your child will have some planning, practice and problem solving skills to help put out the fire.

Kids Talk™ deals with childhood development issues. Maren Schmidt founded a Montessori school and holds a Masters of Education from Loyola College in Maryland. She has over twenty-five years experience working with children and holds teaching credentials from the Association Montessori Internationale. She is author of Building Cathedrals Not Walls: Essays for Parents and Teachers and Understanding Montessori: A Guide for Parents. Contact her at maren@kidstalknews.com or visit www.MarenSchmidt.com. Copyright 2010.

The Oregon Montessori Association
is a group of schools and individuals
who support vibrant Montessori education
in Oregon and Southwest Washington...and beyond.

Visit www.oregonmontessori.org