

## 10 Tactics for Dealing with Tantrums in the Classroom

By [Ashley Brooks](http://www.rasmussen.edu/degrees/education/blog/dealing-with-tantrums-in-the-classroom/) at <http://www.rasmussen.edu/degrees/education/blog/dealing-with-tantrums-in-the-classroom/>

Handling a tantrum isn't just about what you do during a child's meltdown—your actions before and after can make a difference, too! Follow these steps to effectively approach tantrums in every stage, from prevention to aftermath.

**What to do BEFORE a tantrum** ... There are certain behaviors and strategies you can implement to reduce the risk of a tantrum taking place. Take a look at these tactics:

### ***1. Talk about emotions***

The most important thing to do is talk with kids about tantrums and emotions. Try role-playing so the children have opportunities to think about how to handle their emotions in a positive way when they become upset or frustrated.

### ***2. Know your students***

Get to know your students by talking often about their likes and dislikes and what makes them happy or sad. Finding out what triggers them to become upset is the key in recognizing when a tantrum may be looming. Notice their facial expressions, body language, and notice which times of the day are most difficult for them.

### ***3. Pay attention***

Once you know a child's possible triggers, many tantrums can be prevented by keeping a close eye on how they're doing throughout the day. Many tantrums start off because a child is hungry, tired or bored. If you can recognize those signs, you'll be able to offer a child what he or she needs before the tantrum starts.

### ***4. Master the art of distraction***

If you see a toddler or preschooler on the verge of a tantrum, you can step in and try to redirect them with a book or a toy. Directing a child's attention away from the negative emotions can help him or her calm down before a tantrum begins. Even something as simple as asking how the child is feeling can divert the difficult situation.

**What to do DURING a tantrum ...** The time will inevitably come when an outburst ensues. How should you react when a tantrum occurs? Here's some advice:

### ***5. Keep everyone safe***

Some children flail around wildly or throw things during tantrums, so your first job is to keep all of the children safe. Prevent accidents by moving an upset child away from sharp corners or hard edges, and encourage the other children to work on a quiet activity like reading or drawing in nearby area of the classroom, Kuhn recommends.

## **6. Keep your cool**

Child care experts agree that losing your temper and matching the child's anger is the worst thing you can do during a tantrum. Remember that tantrums are normal for young children, and their behavior is to be expected. Tantrums help children to work through their feelings and release stress and anxiety. Many adults have unrealistic expectations of how children should behave, and that can cause behaviors to become more problematic.

## **7. Provide a calm space**

When kids are overstimulated or frustrated, providing a calm place away from the situation can give them space to work through their feelings without becoming even more upset. Having a quiet space gives children a sense of control and a place to disengage from whatever triggered the tantrum to begin with. Designate a calm area that kids know they can visit if needed.

## **8. Talk through it**

When adults are upset, it helps to talk through their problems with a friend who listens. The same is true for children. Get down on their level and quietly let them know that you understand how they are feeling. You can respond if they talk to you, but don't attempt to force a reply. Your most important role is listening.

**What to do AFTER a tantrum ...** After a tantrum disrupts the flow of your day, how do you get the class back on track? Check out these tips:

## **9. Don't ignore that the tantrum occurred**

Adults often want to avoid talking about a tantrum after it happens, but that is sometimes the wrong strategy. This is why it's important to talk with kids regularly about what emotions are and good ways to handle issues that come up when we're upset. Talking about what just happened may not be your first instinct, but it's the best course of action to help children understand how to work through their feelings. It is important to remember that the follow-up conversation should focus on problem-solving and calming strategies and not focus on blame or "bad choices".

## **10. Encourage empathy**

Children need to understand that their friends may have trouble with certain things, like sharing or transitioning from one activity to another. By having regular, honest conversations about why we feel the way we do, they'll be in a position to understand how their friend feels when he or she has a tantrum. An empathetic child will be able to be "kind, respectful and helpful in times of tantrums.