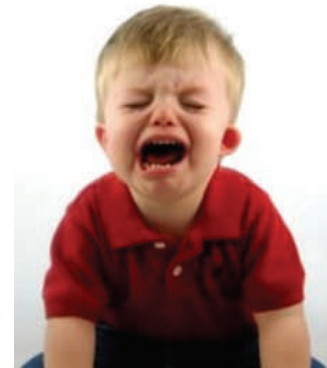


Indiana Association for Infant & Toddler Mental Health

Temper tantrums are one of the most common behavior challenges in early childhood. Parents find them frustrating, embarrassing and often bewildering! As a result, how to handle a temper tantrum may be one of the most frequently asked questions posed to an early intervention or early care provider. First, try to figure out if the child is having “typical” tantrums or a more significant tantrum. In toddlers and children between the ages of 18 and 60 months, a typical pattern is a tantrum lasting on average 90 seconds to 5 minutes, once per day or less. More tantrums happen between age 3 and 5 than at earlier ages. So, First Steps aged children whose parents say they are getting worse may be right! Tantrums that last over 25 minutes or that include injury to the child, hurting other people, or destroying objects are of concern (Belden, et al., 2008). **First Steps mental health professionals can help with tantrum behaviors!**

How to Respond to a Toddler Tantrum:

- * **Be safe: Stop any hurtful or dangerous behaviors.**
- * **Slow down your response—try to figure out what the child needs.**
- * **Be a good model.**
- * **Label feelings.**
- * **Show and tell another way to demonstrate feelings.**
- * **Remember that self-regulation skills develop over time.**
- * **Teach self-calming skills (breathing, self-talk, distraction).**
- * **Have a safe place that a child (or parent) can go for a break.**
- * **For individualized help, consult with a First Steps mental health professional.**



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Adapted from Lerner & Parlarkian, 2009)

Read More: <http://www.zerotothree.org>

<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel/>