



Tantrums and Aggression

Some days can be challenging and feel like no matter what you do, your toddler is unhappy. Your toddler may have tantrums or become aggressive (i.e. hitting, kicking or biting). This doesn't mean you are a bad parent or that your child doesn't love you. These are some common behaviours in many toddlers.

What to Expect

- Toddlers often throw tantrums if they feel you don't understand them.
- Usually there is a trigger to the tantrum or aggressive behaviour.
- Toddlers are not able to regulate or manage their emotions – they are learning.

Challenges

- It can be difficult as a parent when your toddler is expressing themselves through aggression or tantrums.
- To set you and your child up for success, be prepared for any triggers and avoid taking your child out if they are tired, hungry or unwell.

Safety

- If your child is having a tantrum, stay close and calm.
- If your toddler is having a tantrum, ensure they will not injure themselves from their surroundings.

Tips for Tantrums and Aggression

- Try and stay calm when your toddler is having a tantrum or showing aggression.
- Your toddler will learn how to manage difficult situations and their emotions by watching you, so try to be a good role model.
- The CARES diagram below is helpful with challenging situations.

Tantrums

- Try to divert and distract your toddler.
- Stay close and stay calm, offering soothing words e.g. 'Daddy's here if you need help'.
- Ensure that your toddler is safe.
- Once the tantrum is over, offer a cuddle (having a tantrum is scary for your toddler).
- Once they're calm, speak about what upset them.
- Use words that describe how they were feeling to encourage their understanding of emotions.

Aggression

- Try to divert and distract your toddler.
- Be consistent and always address aggressive behaviour.
- If your toddler is aggressive, calmly get down to their eye level, gently hold their hands and say 'no hurting'.
- Turn away and remove eye contact for 3 seconds.
- Make eye contact again and say 'no hurting, gentle hands'. (Your toddler may then need help to move to a different activity).
- Always praise gentle hands or gentle play.



C Come in



A Assist



R Reassure



E Emotional validation



S Soothe

C – Come in calmly and get close to your child

A – Assist your child when they have a problem

R – Reassure your toddler and let them know you are there for them

E – Emotional validation; talk about the emotion they are experiencing

S – Soothe your toddler with your voice and touch

Reprinted by permission from Springer Nature, *PCIT with Toddlers* by Dr Emma I. Girard, et al. (2018).