

Weathering Tantrum Storms

As parents, we have all been there: the 18-month-old who screams at the top of his lungs when he doesn't get his way. The 2-year-old who melts down unless she gets the blue bowl and only the blue bowl. Or perhaps the 3-year-old who flat out refuses to go to bed at night. How in the world are we supposed to calmly handle these situations when we are dealing with a little, persistent person who is driven by emotions, impulses, and not logic? Fear not, strong parents, this section will walk you through some strategies for reducing outbursts and handling your child's tantrums.

What are tantrums?

Tantrums come in all shapes and sizes. They can involve spectacular explosions of anger, frustration and other emotional outburst. You might see crying, screaming, stiffening limbs, an arched back, kicking, hitting, biting, falling down, flailing about or running away. In some cases, children hold their breath, throw things or get aggressive as part of a tantrum.

Why do tantrums happen?

Tantrums are very common in children aged 1-4 years. This is because children's social and emotional skills are only just starting to develop at this age. In addition, children at this age have and feel the full range of emotions, but they often do not yet have the words to express these big emotions. They also want more independence but fear being separated from you. And, they are discovering that they can explore and change the world around them by particular actions.

Think about it from your child's perspective. They have just learned to walk, be mobile on their own, and use their fine motor skills. They want to explore, go everywhere and touch everything. They look to trusted adults around them for safety (exploring new things can be scary), comfort (I'm sad that I can't get into my high chair all by myself), help (I'm frustrated that the food won't stay on the spoon when I'm holding it upside down) and sharing joy (look, no hands!). But in return, all they hear is "No," "Stop," and "Don't do that!" They are trying to figure things out and feel strong emotions that they have not yet learned to control. To add on top of that, they lack the vocabulary to express themselves, which adds further frustrations.

Putting it another way, tantrums are one of the ways that young children express and manage feelings, and in doing so they are also trying to understand or change what's going on around them. Older children can have tantrums, too. This can be because they are still learning ways to express or manage feelings, or some older children may need more time to figure out how to self-regulate.

For children who have been removed from their home, they often need even more help identifying their emotions because they are experiencing the normal developmental changes plus the trauma of not being with their parents and facing unpredictable events, such as a parent not showing up for a visit or reunification plans changing abruptly. This can be an added challenge for resource parents trying to help children manage their emotions without huge outbursts.

How to make tantrums less likely to happen

For toddlers and older children alike, there are things that influence tantrums and can make them more likely to happen. These include:

- **Temperament:** this influences how quickly and strongly children react to things like frustrating events.
- **Stress, hunger, tiredness and overstimulation:** these can make it harder for children to manage feelings and behavior.
- **Situations that children just can't cope with:** for example, a toddler might have trouble coping if an older child takes a toy away.
- **Strong emotions:** worry, fear, shame and anger can be overwhelming for children.

Anything you can do to plan for what's ahead will help in making tantrums less likely to happen. For example, if you know you have to run errands with your child, it might helpful to do that after your child has napped and had a snack. Or, if you know your child gets frustrated by not being able to wash his or her own hands because they're not tall enough to reach the sink, change the environment by keeping a small stool near the sink.

How to handle tantrums

Dealing with tantrums can be very draining. You might feel you need to end a tantrum straight away. But if it's safe, help your child deal with his or her emotion.

First, tune in to your child's feelings. If you're aware of your child's feelings, you might be able to sense when big feelings are on the way. You can talk about what's

going on and help your child manage difficult feelings.

Talk about emotions with your child. When your child struggles with a difficult feeling, encourage him or her to connect the emotion behind the action, what caused it, and name the feeling. For example, when your child throws his or her toy, you can say "I see that you threw your toy. Did you throw your toy because you were mad that it wasn't working? Rather than throwing your toy, can you say 'I'm mad?'"

Develop a strategy for tantrums. Have a clear plan for how you'll handle a tantrum in whatever situation you are in. It helps to have a go-to sentence to say ready in your head so you won't have to search for the right words right in the middle of a tantrum. Try a sentence that identifies your child's feelings, acknowledges that you are aware of those feelings, and redirects your child's actions to name the feelings. For example, if your child is refusing to go to bed, you can say "I see that you're frustrated right now. I understand that you don't want to go to bed. Instead of throwing your books on the ground, can you say 'I'm frustrated?'" Or, if your child is throwing a fit in the middle of a grocery store, you can say "I see that you're mad right now because you want to eat the candy bar. I understand that you're hungry. Rather than kicking, can you say 'I'm hungry?'" Concentrate on putting your plan into action when the tantrum happens, and know that you might have to say your sentence multiple times before the tantrum passes.

Lastly, try to stay calm. Remember that children mimic what grownups do so in staying calm, you are teaching your child how to face difficulties and upsetting situations without losing control of emotions.

The Take Away

Not only are tantrums normal for children, they actually help their emotional development. When handled with care, tantrums can become an invaluable life lesson in regulating emotions for children. So helping children regulate their emotions during tantrums is one of the most important (and tiring) jobs in parenting.

Importance of Smoke Alarms

A home fire is a devastating event and puts you and your family at risk for injury and death so smoke alarms are essential to protecting the people in your house from fires. No matter the cause of the fire or its location, properly functioning smoke alarms are there to help alert everyone to the presence of fire in time to evacuate safely. As an approved resource family, you are required to keep smoke alarm(s) in your home.

According to the RFA Written Directives, every home must have a functioning smoke alarm or smoke detector installed in the hallway of each sleeping area. This means that some homes may require more than one smoke alarm or smoke detector. On top of that, working smoke alarms are key to helping people in escaping to safety quickly. Every year people die because their smoke alarms did not go off during a fire. That usually happens because the batteries were dead or had been removed to stop false alarms, the detector was past its useful life, or it was located where occupants could not hear the alarm. Take a few minutes to ensure your home has the appropriate number of smoke alarms, that they are properly located, and regularly test them to ensure that they are working.

Once a month, press the test button on every smoke alarm in your home to make sure each device is work-

SECTION 11-01: Home and Grounds

(a) (2) Except for a home with a sprinkler system, a home shall have an approved, commercially manufactured, and functioning carbon monoxide detector and smoke alarm or smoke detector installed in the hallway of each sleeping area in the home. A detector and alarm shall be audible in each bedroom.

ing. Gather the children in your home so they know how the alarms sound. Use this time to recap your family's fire-escape plan.

Regularly replace the smoke alarm batteries. Install new batteries immediately when the low-battery warning alarm sounds or at least once a year. Some families prefer to change their smoke alarm batteries on the same day they change their clocks for daylight saving time. Check the manufacture date on your smoke alarm (you'll find it on the back of the device, the face of the electronic horn, inside the battery compartment, or on the top sensing chamber). (If you see a code instead of a date, that means the alarm was manufactured before 1999.) It is important to replace any smoke detector that has been around longer than 10 years because alarm sensitivity decreases with age.

Resource Families United (RFU) will not have monthly meetings during the holiday season (Nov/Dec). We look forward to seeing you on Tuesday, January 28, 2019 (6:00-8:00p) @ 3801 3rd St. Let's start the new year off by coming together to encourage and strengthen one another; as we care the children in our homes!

Our November Champions for Children Samuel and Maria Jones

Samuel's love for taking care of children stems from raising his three children from his first marriage by himself. Early on, he was both a mother and a father for his children, and understood how important it was to be a care for them and be present with them. Since then, he has welcomed many, many children into his home, ranging from newborns born prematurely to providing respite care for other foster parents with children who have high levels of need. Samuel and Maria, his second wife of 32 years, have since had two more children and are planning on adopting two foster children.



Champions for Children

do. Samuel describes that the most rewarding part of being a foster parent is having children that have been in their care come back or call them later on and say to him that they love him.

There are of course challenging parts to being a foster parent. "You get so close to children in your home and you can't help

just to fall apart when they leave," he says. It can also be difficult to balance a relationship with biological parents who

can be bitter about their own situation and want to blame others for it.

Samuel and Maria are fierce advocates for children in their care. In one instance, when a child is their home needed to see the dentist, Samuel contacted the county public health nurse for help because the dentist they took the child to refused to see the child without a physical medical card. Samuel worked hard to advocate for the child and was persistence in his approach. He was eventually successful in being able to get the child seen by the dentist.

Samuel has always worked hard in his life. When raising his biological children, he had two jobs, sometimes working 16 hours a day. He has since retired and admits he likes his job as a foster parent a lot more than his previous jobs. "Only God will retire us from this job," Samuel says of the work he and Maria

There is a high demand for foster parents now a days so Samuel's advice for other parents is that if you have it in your heart to love foster children, then do it! Samuel has found the resources at Alternative Family Services to be very helpful, and especially appreciates the work Dr. Rita has done to support them. "Alternative Family Services has so many resources and they work so hard," described Samuel.

San Francisco Family and Children's Services along with the Parenting for Permanency College applaud Samuel and Maria for their big hearts and strong commitment for caring for children. They are tireless warriors in opening their home and constantly being present for children that need help. Congratulations to Samuel and Maria, our Champion for Children!

K.I.D.S.

Published bimonthly for San Francisco County foster parents, resource families, NREFMs and kin care providers. To suggest a topic, submit an article, promote an event, or provide feedback, email Sharon.Walchak@sfgov.org.

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Newsletter Website: <https://www.sfhsa.org/newsletters>

Helpful Phone Numbers

HSA Operator	(415) 557-5000
CPS Child Abuse Hotline	(800) 856-5553 or (415) 558-2650
Foster Care Ombudsman	(415) 558-2828
Transportation Duty Line	(415) 557-5376
Licensing/RFA/Recruitment Hotline	(415) 558-2200
San Francisco Families Making a Difference	
Mentor Program for Care Providers	(415) 557-5400
Free Foster Parenting Respite Service	(415) 861-4060 x 3035
Community Services	211
Non-emergency Government Services	311

FCS Agency Directory: www.sfhsa.org/174.htm

**Save December 14, 2019 for San Francisco County's,
FCS Holiday "Shining Stars" Celebration. More details to come.
Look for an invitation the beginning of November 2019 with
registration information. We look forward to a festive and fun brunch event.**

Newest Caregivers to complete RFA PreService:

Join me us in welcoming the August English and Spanish and September, 2019, RFA Preservice graduates! Thank you for participation and dedication.



HSA Caregiver Convening Meeting
Nov. 20, 2019 5-7 p.m. — Dinner will be served 3801 3rd St, San Francisco, 2nd floor-Training Room
Quarterly Caregiver Meeting
Oct. 8, 2019 6-8 p.m. 170 Otis St. San Francisco Born Auditorium
Recruitment Meeting
3rd Wednesday of each month 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. 170 Otis St. San Francisco Born Auditorium — lunch is provided

Special Announcements

SA/HIV Infant Program Support Group
English: 3rd Tuesday of the month (Except December)
6-8 p.m.
Spanish: 3rd Thursday of the month (Except December)
from 6-8 p.m.

To attend SA/HIV Support Group, please contact Sharon
at: (510) 282-4658.

RFA Pre-Service Approval Training	
English RFA Pre-Service Training	Nov. 5-14, 2019 (Tuesday/Thursday) 5:30-9 p.m.
Spanish RFA Pre-Service Training	Nov. 9 & 16, 2019 (Saturdays) 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
Placement Training	
CPR (English)	Nov. 2, 2019 9:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
CPR (Spanish)	Nov. 23, 2019 9 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
CPR (English)	Dec. 7, 2019 9 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
CPR (English)	Dec. 21, 2019 9 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
Ongoing Training	
RFA Advanced Training: Parenting in Oz	Dec. 7, 2019 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
Holiday Training Event "Shining Stars" (English/ Spanish)	Dec. 14, 2019 10 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

**To register for training please contact:
Alternative Family Services (AFS) PPC@afs4kids.org
Or through your RFA Worker**