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## How to Manage Temper Tantrums While on Holiday

Our Friends · Thursday, February 6th, 2025

Holidays are exciting times, full of new experiences and late nights. However, this disruption to regular routines can trigger temper tantrums in children. Where possible, try to maintain regular mealtimes, bedtimes and nap schedules. Kids thrive on routine and familiarity. Don't allow the holiday excitement to override their need for sleep and regular meals. This will help avoid overtired, hungry meltdowns. Even shifting schedules by only an hour or two can disrupt a young child greatly. Be mindful of sticking as close as possible to their usual routine.

### Watch Out for Overstimulation

The constant stream of new sights, sounds and activities on holiday can quickly overstimulate kids, leading to cranky tantrums. Be aware of your child's limits and allow ample downtime between activities to recharge. Make use of kids clubs at your hotel or resort to allow kids some independent playtime while you relax. Quiet time back in your room is also important. Keep favourite toys on hand and limit screen time to provide a break from **sensory overload**.

### Pack Familiar Comfort Items

Pack your child's favoured stuffed animal, blanket or other comfort items. Having these familiar things with them provides security and can help stave off tantrums brought on by too much unfamiliarity and change in their routine. Comfort items can be used as part of quiet time or to soothe your child when overwhelmed.

### Validate Your Child's Feelings

Your toddler has a tantrum because the holiday excitement becomes too much. Rather than dismissing their outburst, let them know you understand. Say something like "It's no fun when there is too much going on. You're feeling overwhelmed". **Validating their emotions** will help calm them down. Being understood makes a child feel supported.

### Use Humour and Distraction When Appropriate

For minor tantrums, humour or distraction may work to defuse the situation. Make a silly face or sound or point something fun out – "Look at that airplane!" Laughing together resets negative emotions. But take care not to undermine the child's feelings through improper use of humour or distraction.

## Withdraw Attention for Full-Blown Tantrums

For major tantrums, giving attention can encourage the behaviour. Set the limit, state the consequence, such as a time out, and then withdraw attention until they calm down. It's counter-intuitive but reacting emotionally as a parent prolongs the outburst. Stay calm but firm. Re-engage positively when your child has calmed down. Do not attempt to reason with them in a tantrum state.

## Stay Well Rested Yourself

Parental fatigue on holiday can lead to short tempers. Be sure you are getting enough sleep so that you have energy and patience to handle any toddler meltdowns. Trade off childcare duties with your partner so you each get a break.

## Prepare Kids in Advance

Before the trip, explain what to expect in simple terms – “We’re going on an airplane to a new place with a beach!”. Reading books together about going on holiday can help kids anticipate the journey. If you are **fostering siblings**, remember to ask your foster agency for permission before you book a holiday.

Keeping your toddler well-rested, fed and on a loose routine will go a long way towards preventing holiday temper tantrums. But staying attuned to your child’s emotions, using distraction judiciously and setting limits on unacceptable behaviour will help you manage any tantrums that do arise.

*Photo by Phil Nguyen via Pexels*

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