

A close-up photograph of a young child with dark hair, crying with their mouth wide open and eyes squeezed shut. The child is being held from behind by an adult whose hands are visible on the child's shoulders. The background is softly blurred. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

HOW TO DEAL WITH A TODDLER MELTDOWN AT HOME OR IN PUBLIC

OUR YOGA FAMILY

prenatal. postpartum. toddler. family.

Getting Started w/this Guide

Children need to be taught in a kind but firm way as well as empathized with to learn boundaries, rules + appropriate ways of being in the world.

Toddlers + preschool-aged children are learning + pushing boundaries all the time. They push, because they want to + need to know their limits + are curious of their world. And we are here to help them learn these limits as frustrating as that can sometimes be!

This mini-guide aims to give some examples of how to talk with your toddler in a manner that builds trust, security + moves through any meltdown with a little more ease.

Becca is a Circle of Security-Parenting (COS-P) facilitator who helps parents enjoy safe, fulfilling relationships with their children. Check out our Workshop series for upcoming COS-P classes.

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What To Do When Your Toddler Is Having A Melt Down **At Home**

because it happens ;)

STEP 1: Smile + take a deep inhale followed by a long exhale (someone has to keep the mood light after all)

STEP 2: Realize your child's cup is "empty" + needs "filling" (for whatever reason, it doesn't matter)

STEP 3: Fill your child's cup (see below)

STEP 4: Keep breathing deeply + relaxing your body until your child's cup is filled (then get a hug, text a friend or get a fav drink if your cup needs filling!)

How to Fill A Child's Cup

- Hugs + cuddles for as long as they'd like or as long as you have! (if they'll let you that is... otherwise sit close by + extend a hand) Try to hug for 20 seconds or more until you can feel both your bodies relax
- Lots of eye contact + facial mimicry (especially if they aren't hug ready)
- Empathize with them:
 - "I see your sad we're leaving when you were having fun playing. It can feel hard to leave sometimes."
 - "I hear your angry they didn't share their toy. Would you like some help asking for a turn?"
 - "Ouchie, the toy just pinched your finger! I can tell you need a hug. That must've hurt. May I look at it?"
 - "I know you want candy for lunch. You're frustrated at me for saying no, but we aren't getting it. I know it's hard to hear."
 - "No hitting. I can tell you are angry. We have to go now. So I'm putting your jacket on. You can try it again yourself [when we get back home]. I know you really wanted to do it. We don't have time."
- More cuddles/hand holds/facial mimicry (no talking needed, unless they want to), take this time to enjoy your child at this age! It won't last!
- Sometimes it'll take several long minutes or even a nap to fill a cup, and sometimes just seconds. It'll always be obvious when your child's cup is filled up though, because they will be ready do or discuss something else!

What To Do When Your Toddler Is Having A Melt Down In Public

because it also happens ;))

STEP 1: Smile + take a deep inhale followed by a long exhale

STEP 2: Realize your child's "cup" is "empty" + needs "filling"

STEP 3: Decide if it's appropriate to stop what you are doing or stop where you are at to fill your child's cup (see "at home" side on how to fill)

STEP 4: Fill your child's cup OR move straight to empathizing with them + let them know you'll help them "in X minutes/when you get [to the car] [back home] [off the play equipment]"

STEP 5: If and when needed, scoop them up + let them know kindly but firmly you are leaving + will help them [in the car] [at home] [outside]

STEP 6: Keep taking deep breaths. You got this + are building a secure relationship with your child by being "Bigger. Wiser. Stronger. Kind." Also, this stage won't last forever...

ALWAYS REMEMBER YOUR CHILD FEELS SAFEST WHEN THEY TRUST YOU ARE THE KIND BUT ALSO IN-CHARGE ADULT WHO TAKES CARE OF THEM :)

www.OURYOGAFAMILY.com

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Real-Life Example In-Public

Last time I was at the SLC airport I saw a toddler riding down the long escalator with his mom, dad + older brother. There were hundreds of people in the area, tons of people riding down behind them and going up on the escalators next to them. The sea of humans moving in two opposing directions.

The toddler who had been standing in front of his mom, excitedly got to the bottom of the escalator and turned right around to try + go back up. It was SO FUN of course, how could he not!

His watchful mother knew on the other hand that a) the flow of traffic wouldn't allow him space to do this, b) it probably isn't safe to be running around busy escalators when you are so small, and c) they had a plane to catch... so as he turned to run into the sea of people, she reached out + plucked her son straight into her arms. There were no words exchanged she just kept walking forward, adjusting him in her arms as she walked.

The toddler immediately started kicking + crying. They obviously were upset they couldn't go on the escalator any more. Mom kept on walk though, knowing there wasn't time just then to stop + explain right then. She held him close kept walking.

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In this moment, by showing she was bigger, stronger, wiser + still kind his mom was creating a trusting-secure relationship with her child. I'm sure she explained at some point "there wasn't time or it wasn't safe, and she knows he was upset because he was having fun"- which is an important step to show empathy + give kids words to express themselves - but in that particular moment in a crowded terminal I thought it was the perfect take-charge + protect her child moment as it turned toward a mini-meltdown with a few kicks + cries.