

Mine!

Question ▶

Our young son is extremely strong-willed. He throws temper tantrums when he doesn't get his way. We've read all the books and try to be consistent in discipline. What else can we do?



Answer ▼

Temper tantrums usually first appear during a child's second year, peak between the ages of two and three, and decrease by the age of four — an age when the toddler is old enough to have a sense of "me," but is too young to control getting what they want and when they want it.

At the outset, be aware of where and when the tantrums are most likely to occur. Most children throw tantrums only in a particular place and with a particular person. Be on the lookout for the first signs of a brewing storm.

At the first signs of a tantrum stay aware of your own emotions. Ask

God to help you to respond and not react to the next outburst. We respond out of strength when we remind ourselves that this is a teachable moment for our little one.

We react out of weakness when we choose to set our mind on what others might be thinking of us, rather than how God can use this as an opportunity to model healthy emotions and clear boundaries for our child.

While some tantrums result from organic disturbances or allergies, most are caused by the combination of high energy and low self-control. In many cases, the tantrum is evidence of a power struggle — maybe

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even the result of not setting and/or maintaining appropriate boundaries. Tantrums usually last as long as it takes to get what they want or until they realize that their outburst isn't going to work.

Temper tantrums in a child often lead to unhealthy and reactive expressions of anger in the parent that fuel the fire rather than extinguish it. Thank the Lord for the God-given opportunity to model a healthy response for your child.

Remember that anger is always a secondary emotion caused by hurt and/or frustration and/or fear. Most of the time temper tantrums are caused by frustration, and what you're experiencing is a developmentally appropriate response to your son receiving the devastating news that he isn't the center of the universe. It's an important lesson that some adults haven't yet learned. □

Gary J. Oliver, Th.M., Ph.D., is a licensed clinical psychologist, senior facilitator with Going Deeper Together, a national & international speaker and author of over 20 books, including *It's All About Relationships: Emotional & Relational Intelligence (ERQ)* and *Mad About Us*. Additional resources can be found at goingdeeper.org.