

## 8 Reasons to Be Grateful for Tantrums

How all that kicking and screaming can actually be a good thing

By Dr. Tina Payne Bryson

### Grateful? Really?

I know what you're thinking: "File this one under 'You can't be serious.'"

But I am serious.

Nobody likes a tantrum: not your little one, and certainly not you. But even though we don't enjoy our kids' tantrums, there are plenty of reasons to be grateful for the times when they get the most upset.

### It Signals Growth

I know it sounds strange, but we actually want to see our kids having tantrums at this age because it's evidence that they're moving into a new phase of their personhood. This is what they're supposed to be doing: learning to understand their own needs and desires, and then expressing them. It's normal and even healthy.

### It Shows Individuality

A child has tantrums because she wants to do things her own way, so she lets you know. She's exerting her own independent will. And, of course you want this for her. You don't want her just to obey everyone her whole life! Throwing a tantrum means she's exerting a self, a will, and that developmentally, she is in the process of becoming her own little person with preferences and an identity.

### It Shows Where to Focus

Each time your child yells or throws something in anger, he's communicating to you that there are areas he needs help in developing. He's showing that he needs you to work with him on, for

example, sharing, or waiting his turn, or understanding that he can't have everything he wants. It teaches you lessons as well; maybe you need to provide more time for transitions in the future.

## Your Child Feels Safe

Your child knows and believes that she won't lose your love if she falls apart. She won't be holding herself back, trying to keep it together as if she's afraid you won't be there if she's not perfect.

## You Can Show Your Love

When your child loses control and acts his worst, it gives you the opportunity to communicate that you'll always be there for him—that he can fall apart and not lose your love. Your response tells him that you'll still be on his side, ready to comfort and love him, even and especially when he's having a hard time.

## Emotions Get to Be Felt

We want our kids to be emotionally alive and very in touch with their feelings. Ensuring that they can is one of our most important jobs as parents. We just need to help them learn what to do with those big feelings, and a tantrum gives us that opportunity.

## It Calls for Reflection

Kids need to learn how to look back, evaluate and learn from their past actions. After your child has thrown a fit, this can be a great time to model and teach about reflection and making better choices in the future.

## You Grow as Well

Having to deal with a difficult situation concerning our children gives us practice at managing our own emotions during times of stress. It also challenges us to positively model for our kids how best to respond when we're upset. Finally, it inspires us to rise to the

challenge of being more creative, more in-tune and more proactive the next time we see our children getting upset.

## It Helps Form Identity

Again, I'm not saying that you're supposed to enjoy the next time your 2-year-old starts screaming and knocking items off the shelf at Old Navy. I'm also not saying that you allow your child to harm others or destroy property; kids need boundaries. But it really is true that as unpleasant as that moment may be, there are plenty of reasons to appreciate it and use it as an opportunity to help your child continue to grow and develop into exactly who he's supposed to be.