

TEMPER TANTRUMS/ OPPOSITIONAL BEHAVIOR

Definition:

A violent demonstration of rage or frustration that is lengthy and noisy with screaming, kicking and possibly throwing oneself to the ground.

Behavior:

Why could this be happening?

- The rules change or are inconsistent regarding expected behavior.
- Consequences are implemented inconsistently or are not enforced immediately following inappropriate behavior.
- A child may be motivated to continue oppositional behavior to gain one-on-one attention or to avoid or distract the adult from giving a consequence.

Typical Development:

- Temper tantrums are typical for toddlers and should decrease during preschool years.
- Power struggles with preschool children are not unusual.
- Toddler and preschool children need clear rules and predictable consequences to help them feel safe.

When to be Concerned:

- If behaviors become violent and dangerous to a child or to others.
- If the tantrums/oppositional behavior have increased in frequency (number) and length.
- If a child isn't successful in their early childhood settings due to power struggles, tantrums or oppositional behavior.
- If a child is persistent about things being in a particular order or in a particular way.
- If power struggles consistently occur over seemingly "little things" or occur during times of transition (leaving the house, getting dressed, doing activities in a different way).
- If certain sounds, types of touch or texture of clothing "trigger" tantrums on a consistent basis.
- If conflicts or struggles occur because a child gets "stuck" on a certain thought, topic or activity.

Possible Resources:

Help Me Grow, Early Childhood Family Education, pediatrician, mental health professional, occupational therapist