

LIVE

Curb tantrums by getting to the heart of the matter

QUESTION:

My five-year-old gets so angry sometimes that she starts screaming, hitting, stomping, and yelling and I just don't know what to do about it. It seems to happen more after she gets home from school. It actually seems like her mood turns the moment that I pick her up (she goes to after-school care). When I ask her teachers and daycare providers about it, they look at me like I am describing another kid because she is so nice and respectful at school. Am I supposed to let her just have all her feelings no matter what?

Answer:

What you are describing sounds perfectly normal and perfectly frustrating. You didn't say it in your question, but most parents also describe how embarrassed they can get when their perfectly lovely child begins to hit, push and yell in public with witnesses in attendance.

The important thing here is to figure out what your daughter is telling you. Children use behaviours instead of words to let us know what they are feeling and thinking. I often describe these moments that kids go through as "losing their minds," which helps parents realize that when their kids are deep in a raging, hitting tantrum they lose their ability to think about what they are doing and what they



are feeling. The key for parents is to not "lose their minds" too and engage in yelling, hitting or adult tantrums. This can be easier said than done but is very important.

Let's first think about all the possibilities that could be going on inside your five-year-old daughter when you pick her up from school. She is likely very tired physically and mentally, having held in any difficult emotions all day because she doesn't want to stand out, disappoint her teacher, be made fun of by other kids, or simply doesn't feel safe to have any big feelings with people other than her parents. She may be mad at you (likely unconsciously) for leaving her and going to work (or home with another sibling). Sometimes simply negotiating all of the treacherous moments of school can be overwhelming. Remember how stressful

recess can be — not being sure who to play with or who to eat lunch with? There could be many reasons that she has stored up some anger for you, but let me be clear: she is saving it for you because she feels safe with you and needs your help to deal with the feelings.

I hope that this simple re-frame is helpful. What can you do? There are some structural things that can be helpful. Try to pick her up at the same time each day, as early as work or life will let you. Once you establish your normal pick up time, being early or late can throw her off right from the start. Bring a healthy snack for her to receive from you when you arrive. This can reinforce the feeling that you have thought about her during the day and can be an immediate nurturing moment for her from you. I don't expect these things to eliminate the anger, but they might help lessen the intensity. When she gets upset, remain calm and use a gentle but clear voice with her. Tell her that you do not want her to hit you and that it is not okay. When she escalates, try not to escalate

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Capsule Comments



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Norona videos stage race

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course. Then they clean up and repair their bikes, shower and relax. It is such a cool vibe walking through tent city as all the racers chill out and share stories of their day.

In the past, I have run the moto team, a contingent of guys who ride the course on dirt bikes, managing rider and course safety. This year Bruce Spicer took over as I captured the event on video. The Zero Motorcycle I used makes no sound, has zero emissions and allowed me to get up close and personal with the racers. At the end of each day, I would create a video of the day's events, reliving the cool trails and watching these inspiring athletes push their limits.

This year we had a new stage in Powell River and I believe it will become one of the best stage race days in the world. The town of Powell River came out in droves and Russ and Wayne Brewer designed one incredible race course with amazing views. The kicker for Powell River was our beach front camp at Willingdon Beach Park. I will remember it forever!

So cheers to all the towns and directors who created the most killer race courses and to all our amazing volunteers, sponsors and safety personnel who make this race happen. If you are looking for a challenging but fun event check out www.bcbikerace.com and enjoy the 20 videos I have created that will hopefully inspire you to get outside and enjoy our own backyard trails!

Adventurer Dave Norona is still grinning from ear to ear from 450 km of electric moto fun! His escapades are supported by Marin Bikes, Columbia Sportswear and Merrell Footwear.

Let child know you care

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as well.

This might seem tricky, but try to respond to her as if she was actually asking for help. When she yells at you, you can say "I am right here. It's okay. Mom's right here." If she can't hear you, just say it once and let her fizzle out. Waiting a five-year-old out while remaining in a zen state can be one of the most effective tools a parent has in his or her toolbox.

The goal is to soothe her difficult feelings so she doesn't need to express those feelings through anger, yelling and tantrums. If you escalate, then the message you send by yelling back at her is "I am mad at you for being scared today. You are a bad kid because you are sad."

Try to let go of any feelings of embarrassment. I am impressed most by the parent who is able to calmly withstand their child in a tantrum. Of course I am a therapist, but I take that as a parent with solid self-esteem.

Try to make the time when you get home as calm as possible and try to spend some time with her before you move on to making dinner and the other tasks you have ahead of you. Even 15 minutes of focused time when you get home can help settle your daughter.

Then sometime during the evening, at dinner time or before bed, ask her how her day was and if anything happened today. And most importantly, remember that the developmental stage she is going through involves learning how

to deal with her autonomy in the world while still being very dependent on you. This is a big task and she will get through it and on to the next challenging one.

Julia Staub-French, M.A., R.C.C., is the director of clinical programs at Family Services of the North Shore. Questions? Write onthecouch@familyservices.bc.ca or call 604-988-5281.

They're off

PARTICIPANTS set out in the recent Rotary Seawalk 10-kilometre run and five-km walk from the Village at Park Royal. Proceeds support Canuck Place Children's Hospice and Rotary projects.



NEWS photo Cindy Goodman

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People have become concerned about what their skin is absorbing from beauty products. For over 10 years Nature's Creations has been committed to educating consumers on the hazards of toxic synthetic ingredients in skin care products. "It's very serious, and women are starting to take it seriously" says Suzanne Laurin-Seale of Nature's Creations Aromatherapy and Natural Day Spa. **"The average North American woman exposes herself to over 200 synthetic toxic chemicals a day."**

Buyer Beware. Many companies have jumped on the "natural" band wagon promoting purity. However, to call a product natural it only has to legally contain 10% natural ingredients. Read labels and ask questions. Nature's Creations is check-a-block full of 100% natural products. They produce a line appropriately called Natural Beauty Skincare® that is 100% natural and delivers fantastic results.

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