# 5 Strategies to Tame Public Tantrums

The solution for public tantrums has two components – preventing the tantrum in the first place and diffusing the tantrum when it happens.

**Parents can actually enjoy taking children out in public by implementing these 5 strategies…**

1. **Give Positive Power**. Prevent public tantrums in the first place by giving your child plenty of POSITIVE power throughout the day – lots of choices so he can have some control over his world. (blue towel or yellow towel, Spiderman toothbrush or Batman toothbrush) Parents can also give positive power by training their child on “grown up” tasks that make him feel capable and allow him to contribute in meaningful ways. “Grown up” tasks for children include putting spoons and forks away, feeding pets, watering plants (with specific measuring cups) and using a hand-held vacuum to clean up messes. When kids have plenty of positive power, they’re less likely to act out with negative power behaviors – like tantrums.

2. **Give them a Job**. Prevent public tantrums by planning ahead and giving children important jobs at the grocery store. Take a clipboard and a crayon so she can cross off items as you put them in the cart. Children love the power that comes from checking items off a list.

3. **Keep them busy**. Have a back-up plan by bringing other activities if she gets bored – bring a special “outing bag”. This is a tote bag or backpack that has 4-5 interesting activities inside. The items are meant to keep the child entertained while you do your shopping or are waiting for food at a restaurant. The activities should be very interesting and individualized. You know what your child likes…choose based on those interests. But here is the trick…the bag **ONLY** gets used when you are out in public! The bag will lose its’ “magical powers” if the child is allowed to play with it all the time. The best thing to do is keep it in the car. That way you will always have it and you won’t be tempted to give it to her if she asks. Over time, the activities may become “boring”. All you have to do is replenish the bag with new, exciting things. A tablet or phone is also a way to keep a child busy and happy in public. Just remember that total screen time each day should not exceed 2 hours.

4. **Be unimpressed**. When public tantrums or whining happens…remember that your child has a right to have a tantrum, **but you have a right to not participate**. Be totally unimpressed. If you’re in a store, remove yourself to an out of the way corner or go out to the car (you may have to leave your cart) and let her have the tantrum.

5. **Don’t react**! The most important strategy for dealing with public tantrums in the moment **is to NOT REACT**. She’s having the tantrum specifically to GET a reaction from you! Don’t give any verbal feedback. Don’t give eye contact. A public tantrum isn’t nearly as rewarding when we remove the audience. When parents try to “talk the child down from the ledge” or stop the tantrum, it reinforces that tantrums are a great way to get attention, get them upset (big power hit) and prove that “she’s not the boss of me.” When your child is calmed down and ready to go back into the store, you can go.

**Remember, the very best strategy is avoiding the tantrum in the first place by giving lots of positive power and planning ahead with important jobs she can do while you’re there.**