

***I've Got a New Attitude***  
 By John Sommers-Flanagan, Ph.D.

*This tip sheet is for parents who have children or teens who often have tantrums or temper/anger problems.*

Here is some crazy-sounding advice: The best first step for stopping your child's tantrums is for you to *begin looking forward to your child's next tantrum*. This advice is true whether you're the parent of a one-year-old or a 16-year-old.

Children are smart. They can sense your fear and your worries. And if they sense you're worried about their next tantrum the result will be more and bigger tantrums.

Many parents feel like they're *walking on eggshells* . . . fearing their child's next tantrum. If this true in your home, then your child has too much power!

*Looking forward to your child's next tantrum* (or your teen's next angry outburst) is an excellent tool for rebalancing power in your relationship with your child. To deal with your child's tantrums, you must stop feeling afraid of them.

John Gottman, Ph.D., a great parenting and marriage expert, has explained that children's tantrums are an irreplaceable opportunity to:

- Show empathy and compassion for your child
- Make an emotional connection with your child
- Teach your child not to be afraid of her strong emotions
- Help your child solve his emotional problems
- Teach your child emotional self-control

To get over your dread and begin looking forward to your child's next tantrum, you need a clear and positive plan for how you want to deal with the tantrum. Then, you need to practice the plan. And finally, you need to look forward to your chance to implement the plan—because you're confident that it's not only okay to face your child's anger directly—it's healthy and good for you and your child.

Consider the message in this Tip Sheet. Are you willing to try looking forward to your child's next tantrum or your teenager's next angry outburst? Can you really start believing that it's okay for your child to be angry and that it's good to face that anger directly? Can you embrace the positive possibilities linked to your child's anger?

The next time you ask your child to do a chore or to stop playing a computer game, imagine doing it with positive expectations. Imagine facing your child's anger and being strong and showing empathy. And to help with your limit-setting plan, be sure to read the *Limit Setting* tip sheet.



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