

## Language & Learning

### Positive Parenting

#### Dealing with Tantrums

Babies and young children do not have tantrums just because they are deaf or hard of hearing. All children have them when they are hungry, tired, frustrated or upset. When children are deaf or hard of hearing, they may have tantrums when they do not have the words to express what they need, want or feel. As you learn to communicate clearly with your baby, many of these tantrums will disappear. Behavior management becomes easier as communication strengthens.

We need to avoid attributing too many behavior problems to hearing loss. Children with normal hearing have tantrums, too. We can use many of the same techniques to help hearing, deaf and hard of hearing children behave well, including the following:

- Watch for warning signs in your small child, and respond to them. If it has been a long time since a meal, try a snack. If you have been very busy, give your baby some attention before the tantrum can start.
- Ignore the behavior if your baby's tantrum seems to be the result of wanting more attention than you are able to give. If you have made sure that nothing serious is wrong, then ignoring can be a powerful way to help your baby calm down.
- Remove your baby from the situation. If the situation or setting is interesting, then having to leave will be a strong message: "I can't behave this way in here."
- Hold the child gently against your body and breathe slowly and quietly, giving you both a chance to calm down. Small children often cannot calm themselves, but adults can help them.
- Forgive the tantrum as soon as it is over. Catch your baby smiling, or looking at something, or vocalizing and respond quickly.

Your baby will find that positive attention is much more interesting than having a tantrum, unless the tantrum itself is the best way of attracting your attention. Stay calm, ignore as much as you can, and make other times more interesting. Most of all, keep on learning to communicate.