

# 4 Ways to Navigate Toddler Meltdowns While Shopping

What's worse than being stuck in a long line at the supermarket? Being stuck in a long line at the supermarket while your child is having a meltdown. Every parent has been there, and it's every parent's worst nightmare.

My kids are four and two – in other words, prime ages for throwing fits in public places – so I've learned a few coping strategies along the way. Here are some of my favorites:

## 1. Prevention, Prevention, Prevention

I've discovered that one of the best ways to deal with a child's meltdown is to prevent it from happening in the first place. So why not get strategic? Avoid stores when possible by ordering online. And when you do need to enter a brick and mortar store, time your trip to coincide with a moment when your child is rested and happy. If you've been to the store before, pause for a second and mentally map out the fastest route to get what you need.

Additionally, monitoring cupboards to make sure you always have essentials in stock (think diapers, coffee, etc.) can be a great help. The odds of a meltdown are much higher when you're forced to drag your kid on an unscheduled outing.

## 2. Eyes On the Prize

Giving kids a sense of purpose during the shopping trip can also be a great help to navigating stores meltdown free. As babies become toddlers, it's possible to assign them small tasks. I sometimes describe a product to my four-year-old and ask her to help me find it. I might ask my two-year-old to hold something for me. But be careful about what you hand your

kid... because it might get thrown at you later.

I usually promise my kids a treat at the end of the trip. Maybe that's bad parenting. But we don't go into stores that often so, it's not a regular thing. And having something to look forward to goes a long way toward keeping them happy.

### **3. It's All In Your Head**

Think about the last time you witnessed a child (other than your own) screaming in the check-out line. Are you having a hard time remembering? That's probably because it wasn't a big deal. When your kid has a meltdown in a store, your fellow customers may be slightly annoyed, but they'll have forgotten by the time they reach their cars.

In dealing with a toddler meltdown, it's important to keep a cool head. Panicking only makes things worse. So breathe. And remind yourself that the only person who is truly being bothered by this is you.

### **4. Let It Go**

You, the adult, feel miserable when you have to stand for ages in a check-out line, especially if you were already tired going in. Why would you expect your child to feel differently? Crying is a perfectly normal reaction to that situation. I try to soothe my kids and help them feel more comfortable, but I don't feel the need to take extreme measures to get them to be quiet. It's not their fault.

Moreover, an abnormally long check-out line is usually an indicator of sloppy management by the people running the store. Perhaps the sound of a crying kid will serve as some feedback, setting the management on their way to pulling their act together.

So those are 4 things I've learned as I've navigating supermarket aisles with my kids. What tricks do you keep up your sleeve for handling public meltdowns?

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