Today’s piece was prepared by Seja Abudiab, MD, based on a NY Times story [Managing the Storm of a Toddler’s Tantrums](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/30/well/family/managing-the-storm-of-a-toddlers-tantrum.html?rref=collection%2Fsectioncollection%2Fhealth)

In this article, the infamous toddler tantrum is brought to focus. It begins by explaining the pathology of tantrums and how understanding the reason can help with management. The emotional source of a typical tantrum is anger and sadness. When tantrums begin, anger is the predominant emotion and as the tantrum fades, the sadness or distress behavior allows for resolution (crying that leads to hugging parents). The article addresses how to respond to a tantrum. The argument is made that telling a child to verbally express their feelings is not the correct approach. Parents should “contain” the tantrum and provide support during, with discussion left for after. The article delves into the cause of tantrums and what is or is not typical.

It is here that the article is alarmist and potentially misleading. It explains that normal triggers for tantrums are hunger, tiredness and change in routine; children with frequent tantrums, violent tantrums or tantrums with no trigger are “eight times more likely to meet criteria for ‘impairing mental health disorders’”. While it is important to acknowledge pathological tantrums, the absence of clear guidelines can cause undue stress to parents. The interpretation from this article is that a child who has violent outbursts in a tantrum is more likely to have a mental health disorder. While this could be true, up 30% of healthy preschoolers may exhibit violent tendencies during tantrums, based on [findings by Belden et al](http://www.jpeds.com/article/S0022-3476(07)00592-6/pdf), determining that what is seen as atypical tantrum behavior can be seen in typical toddlers; however certain patterns of these behaviors or “tantrum styles” are seen in children with mental health diagnoses. For parents, it is more important to understand their child’s overall temperament when faced with tantrums. Based on the temperament, there can be better understanding of normal versus pathology.  
  
**RESOURCES ON TEMPERAMENT FOR PARENTS:**  
[The Preventive Ounce](http://preventiveoz.org/) *Provides an online questionnaire for parents about their child to learn about their child’s temperamental traits and management.*

And that’s today’s Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics: IN THE NEWS!