

What To Do When A Child is Mistreated in Public

Whether you are at a store, an amusement park or in a shopping mall — anywhere — you may witness parenting behavior that makes you uncomfortable. One of the main reasons for inappropriate parenting is that a parent's expectations for the child are beyond the child's development level. Stress and lack of effective discipline methods are also possible causes.

You can play an active role in preventing the situation from escalating to child abuse. If an adult is losing patience with a child, intervene, but keep it positive. Avoid negative remarks or looks. Intervening will help to calm the situation for the child and the parent may realize that their behavior is not appropriate.

1. Start a conversation with the adult to direct attention away from the child.

She seems to be trying your patience.

My child sometimes gets upset like that, too.

Children can really wear you out sometimes. Is there anything I can do to help?

Kids at that age have so much energy and can really run fast. Sometimes it is hard to keep up with them.

You seem frustrated. Is there anything I can do to help?

Sometimes babies cry and it seems like nothing calms them down. May I try?

It looks like your child is having a bad day.

2. Divert the child's attention (if misbehaving) by talking to the child.

I like your t-shirt. Did you get that on vacation?

That's a great baseball cap. Are you a Phillies fan?

3. Look for an opportunity to praise the parent or child.

She has the most beautiful eyes.

That is a very nice shirt your little boy has on. Where did you get it?

Your child is very cute. How old is she?

4. If the child is in danger, offer assistance.

If the child is left unattended in a grocery cart, stand near the child until the parent returns. If you believe there is a good chance that they child will be injured, contact the store manager for help.



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Protecting children from abuse

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