

ÉCOUTE MOI GRANDIR
Children grow. So do parents.

TEN PERSPECTIVES

*On What Unfolds in the Encounter
Between a Child and Those Who Love Them*



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Introduction

Over the years I have spent alongside children and those who care for them, I have met thoughtful, committed, and sometimes exhausted parents. They were looking less for a perfect method than for a way to understand what they were going through.

Most did not lack love or determination. What they needed most was a place to set down their questions, take a step back, and look differently at what was unfolding in their relationship with their child.

This book grew out of those encounters. I did not want to write a guide with an answer for every difficulty, because children do not all grow in the same way and families do not all face the same realities. An approach that helps in one situation may be inadequate or ill-suited to another. The ten perspectives gathered here are therefore not recipes, but points of reference for thinking about what we observe, what we feel, and how we can remain connected when everyday life becomes more difficult.

A tantrum, a refusal, a fear, a lie, or difficulty separating never tells the whole story of a child. These behaviours can have many meanings and, on their own, cannot tell us exactly what a child is going through. Trying to understand them does not mean accepting everything or abandoning boundaries. It allows us to respond more thoughtfully, taking into account both what the child may be experiencing and what the situation may stir in the adult.

A relationship is not shaped by the child's needs alone. It is also affected by our fatigue, our history, our expectations, and our fear of getting things wrong. Acknowledging this part of ourselves is not about finding someone to blame. It is about accepting that caring for a child involves us fully and sometimes changes us as much as we are trying to guide them.

I have never met a perfect parent, and this book asks no one to become one. I have met adults who doubt themselves, make mistakes, reconsider what they have done, and keep searching for a more thoughtful way to be present. It is within this imperfect but living process that children grow—and that parents grow alongside them.

Children grow. So do parents.

How to Use This Book

You may read this book in order, from the first perspective to the last, but you do not have to. Perhaps you are opening it because a particular difficulty is taking up a great deal of space in your life right now. If so, you can go directly to the perspective that most closely reflects your situation. Each chapter has been designed to stand on its own and to be revisited later whenever you feel the need.

The ten perspectives follow the same movement. They begin with what the parent observes and feels, make room for the thoughts that may arise when a situation keeps repeating itself, and then explore what may be unfolding within the child. They also return to what the situation stirs in the adult, because understanding a relationship requires us to consider what is happening on both sides.

The possibilities offered here are not meant to determine with certainty why a child behaves in a particular way. They open different paths toward understanding. Some may feel close to what you are experiencing, while others may not fit your child or your story. You can keep what helps you reflect and leave aside what does not resonate with you.

Understanding does not mean accepting everything. Throughout this book, the child's needs are considered without erasing the adult's role, the importance of boundaries, or the realities of everyday life. The aim is not to become more patient in every circumstance, but, whenever possible, to choose a response that protects both the structure the child needs and the relationship itself.

You can move slowly, reread a section, or close the book when a reflection needs time to settle. My hope is not that you will finish these pages with a new list of things to get right, but with a little more clarity about what you are experiencing and a little less loneliness when the responsibility of being a parent becomes difficult to carry.

Children grow.

So do parents.

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FIRST PERSPECTIVE

My Child Has Tantrums

When Feelings Overflow Instead of Finding Words

My Child Has Tantrums

A child's tantrums can be exhausting and unsettling, leaving a parent unsure of how to respond. Sometimes they erupt over what seems like a small detail: having to leave, being told no, an uncomfortable item of clothing, or a request that cannot be granted. What seemed simple only minutes earlier suddenly becomes impossible to contain.

In those moments, we may wonder whether our child is trying to provoke us, whether they should already be able to control themselves, or whether we have somehow allowed the situation to get away from us. When tantrums keep happening, they can even change the way we see our child and our own abilities as a parent.

This perspective does not suggest allowing emotional outbursts to unfold without intervening. It invites us to distinguish what we observe from the conclusions we draw. A tantrum may require a clear boundary, firm intervention, or a protective action, while also revealing that, in that moment, the child does not yet have the skills needed to express or contain what they are experiencing.



What I Often Encounter

Parents rarely speak to me about tantrums with detachment. They speak with accumulated fatigue, fear that the situation will get worse, and sometimes a sense of guilt that is difficult to put down. Beneath their words, I often hear several worries becoming intertwined:

"I don't recognize my child anymore."

Often, what this really means is: I no longer understand what is happening to them.

"I feel like I'm doing everything wrong."

After an outburst, guilt can take over very quickly.

"I can't afford to give in."

Often, there is a great deal of fear behind those words.

"I'm afraid they'll be like this forever."

That fear can be terribly heavy to carry alone.

These words do not mean that parents lack patience or love. Above all, they show that parents no longer understand what is happening and fear that each response may have lasting consequences. The harder they search for the right intervention, the more each new tantrum may feel like another failure.

In most of the situations I encounter, the parent has not stopped trying. They have repeated, explained, reassured, sometimes threatened, and later regretted some of their reactions. What they need is not necessarily another technique. Often, they need enough distance to stop seeing every tantrum as proof that they have lost the connection or are not up to the task.

When Our Child's Feelings Overflow into Us

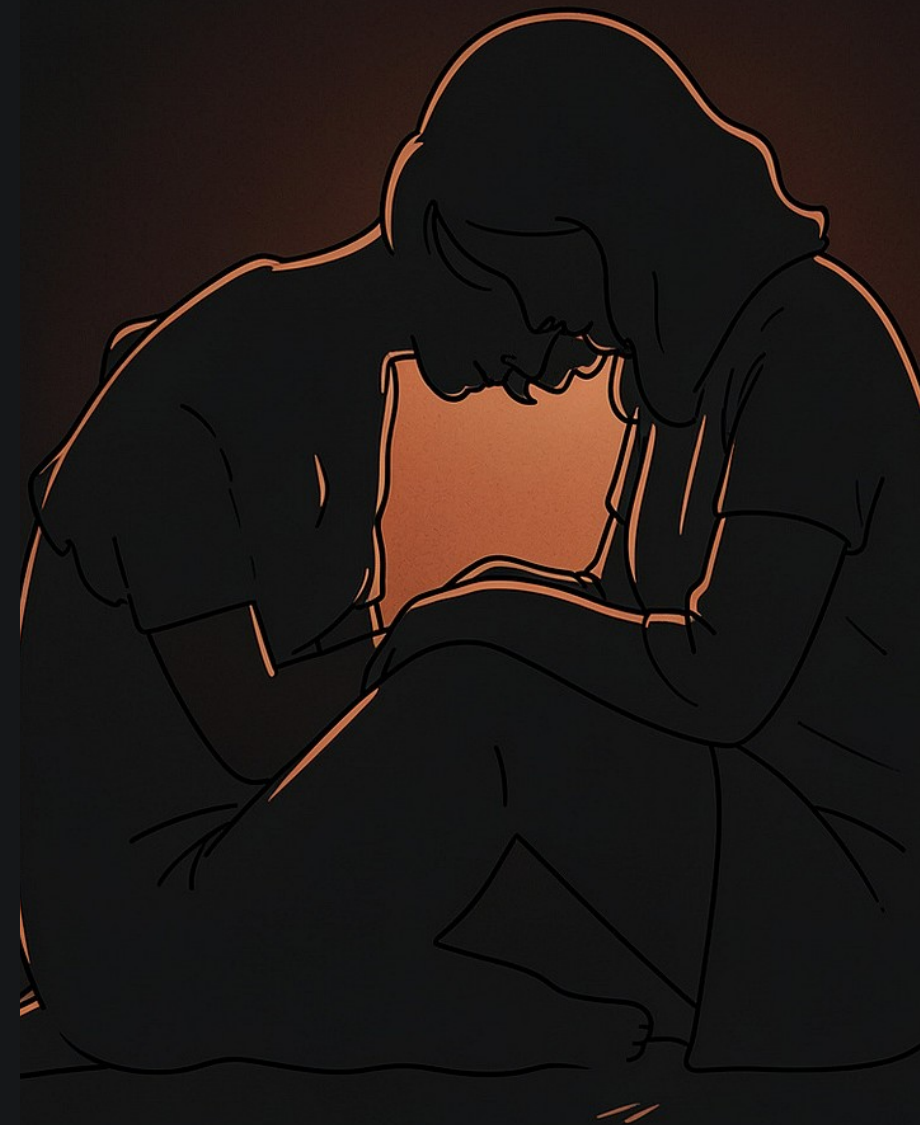
A tantrum does not affect only the child. It also reaches something in the adult who is trying to support them. When voices rise, movements become abrupt, or nothing seems able to calm the situation, our own body reacts. We may feel the tension building, our patience shrinking, and the urgent need to make the scene stop taking over everything else.

There is the fatigue of anticipating situations that may lead to an outburst, watching for the first warning signs, and wondering whether an ordinary request will trigger another explosion. There is also the helplessness we feel when words that worked yesterday no longer work today.

After the tantrum, guilt may replace anger. We replay what we said, the tone we used, or the action we wish we had avoided. We wonder what our child will remember from that moment and why we were unable to remain as calm as we had hoped.

Other people's reactions can make the experience even heavier. A tantrum in public or in front of relatives may leave us feeling that our child and our parenting are being judged at the same time. We may then try to end the scene both to respond to our child's needs and to escape our own discomfort.

Acknowledging these emotions does not mean that we must act from them. It helps us understand why some tantrums are so difficult to move through and why we, too, may sometimes need support before we can become available again.



What We May Think When the Situation Keeps Happening

"He's doing it on purpose."

"Why has he become like this?"

"I'm losing him."

"I don't know what to do anymore."

These thoughts often appear when we have reached our limit. They try to give quick meaning to a situation that feels beyond our grasp. If we believe our child is deliberately acting against us, we may briefly regain an explanation, but that explanation can also turn the tantrum into a confrontation.

These thoughts do not make us bad parents. They speak to our fatigue, our need to understand, and our fear that the situation will last. They do not necessarily tell us what is happening within the child. Between what the child does and the intention we assign to it lies a space in which other possibilities can be considered.

What If We Looked At Things Differently?

During a tantrum, we first see what is happening on the outside: the child refuses, shouts, cries, perhaps hits or throws themselves to the floor. Because this behaviour often follows an instruction or a boundary, it can seem directed at us.

Yet another interpretation is possible. The child may disagree with the boundary while also feeling overwhelmed by what that disagreement stirs within them. They may want to continue an activity, be unable to tolerate waiting, or struggle to leave behind what they were doing. The visible anger is not necessarily the whole story. It may be mixed with fatigue, fear, disappointment, or a feeling of losing control.

Changing our perspective does not mean deciding that the child is never oppositional or only breaks rules unintentionally. They may genuinely refuse what we are asking. The question becomes: in this moment, do they have the skills needed to move through that refusal without becoming overwhelmed?

This distinction changes our role. We are no longer facing only a behaviour that must be stopped, but standing beside a child who is still learning to tolerate frustration, wait, calm themselves, and express disagreement differently. These skills require boundaries, but also time and a presence that does not reduce the child to the moment they are going through.



What May Be Happening Within the Child

A tantrum can have many origins, and the same outward behaviour does not always tell the same story. Fatigue, hunger, too much stimulation, a demanding day, or an unexpected change may temporarily reduce a child's ability to tolerate frustration. Something they could have handled at another time may then become much more difficult.

Transitions are also demanding for some children. Leaving a game, going out, tidying up, or stopping an activity requires them to shift their attention and let go of something that still mattered only seconds earlier. The child may have heard the request without yet being able to adapt to it.

Waiting and managing frustration rely on abilities that develop gradually. Knowing that their turn will come, accepting that an object does not work as expected, or understanding that a wish cannot be satisfied immediately does not come naturally. Some children quickly find words for their disappointment, while others experience it with an intensity that temporarily overwhelms their ability to think or speak.

A tantrum may also follow a buildup. The event that triggers it can seem insignificant because it is only the final piece of a day filled with effort, separations, demands, or feelings that never found words. This does not tell us exactly what the child is experiencing, but it invites us to consider what came before the tantrum as well as what immediately triggered it.

When an emotion becomes too intense, the child may no longer be able to take in lengthy explanations. They are not necessarily refusing to understand; they may simply be unable to listen, think, and change their behaviour all at once. The priority is then to keep everyone safe, reduce whatever is feeding the outburst, and wait until the child is calm enough to revisit the situation.

Understanding Without Accepting Everything

Understanding Does Not Mean Allowing Everything

Trying to understand what contributes to a tantrum does not mean that a child may hit, break things, hurt someone, or have every demand met. An emotion can be acknowledged while certain behaviours remain unacceptable. We can recognize the child's anger while preventing them from causing harm, hear their disappointment while still leaving as planned, or accept their tears without reversing a necessary boundary.

Firmness does not always require more words. When a child is overwhelmed, a short sentence, a steady presence, and a concrete intervention are often easier to take in than a long explanation. The time to understand, repair, or find another way of responding generally comes later, once everyone has regained some capacity to engage.

Understanding also helps us adjust our expectations. A boundary can be appropriate even when the child does not accept it calmly. Our intervention is not a failure simply because it causes frustration. The goal is not to prevent every tantrum, but to gradually help the child develop other ways of moving through what they find difficult.

WHAT THIS AWAKENS IN US

What This Situation Touches Within Us

Tantrums can awaken our fear of losing control, being judged, or failing to pass on what matters to us. If we learned that a good child should quickly regain control or that a capable parent should always know what to do, every outburst may feel like a personal failure.

Some of our child's reactions may also echo our own history. Noise, defiance, and anger do not carry the same meaning for everyone. We may have grown up in an environment where emotions were forbidden, unpredictable, or overwhelming. We may then rush to silence whatever brings us back—sometimes without our realizing it—to an earlier experience.

There is also our legitimate need for calm. We can love our child and still feel unable to bear one more tantrum. We can understand that they are overwhelmed while also feeling angry about what the situation demands of us yet again. These realities can coexist.

It may help to ask what becomes most difficult for us in these moments. Is it the noise, other people's judgment, the feeling of being disrespected, or the fear that the tantrums will never end? Are we protecting an important boundary or trying to make our own discomfort disappear? These questions do not assign blame. They help us distinguish what belongs to the present situation from what it awakens within us.



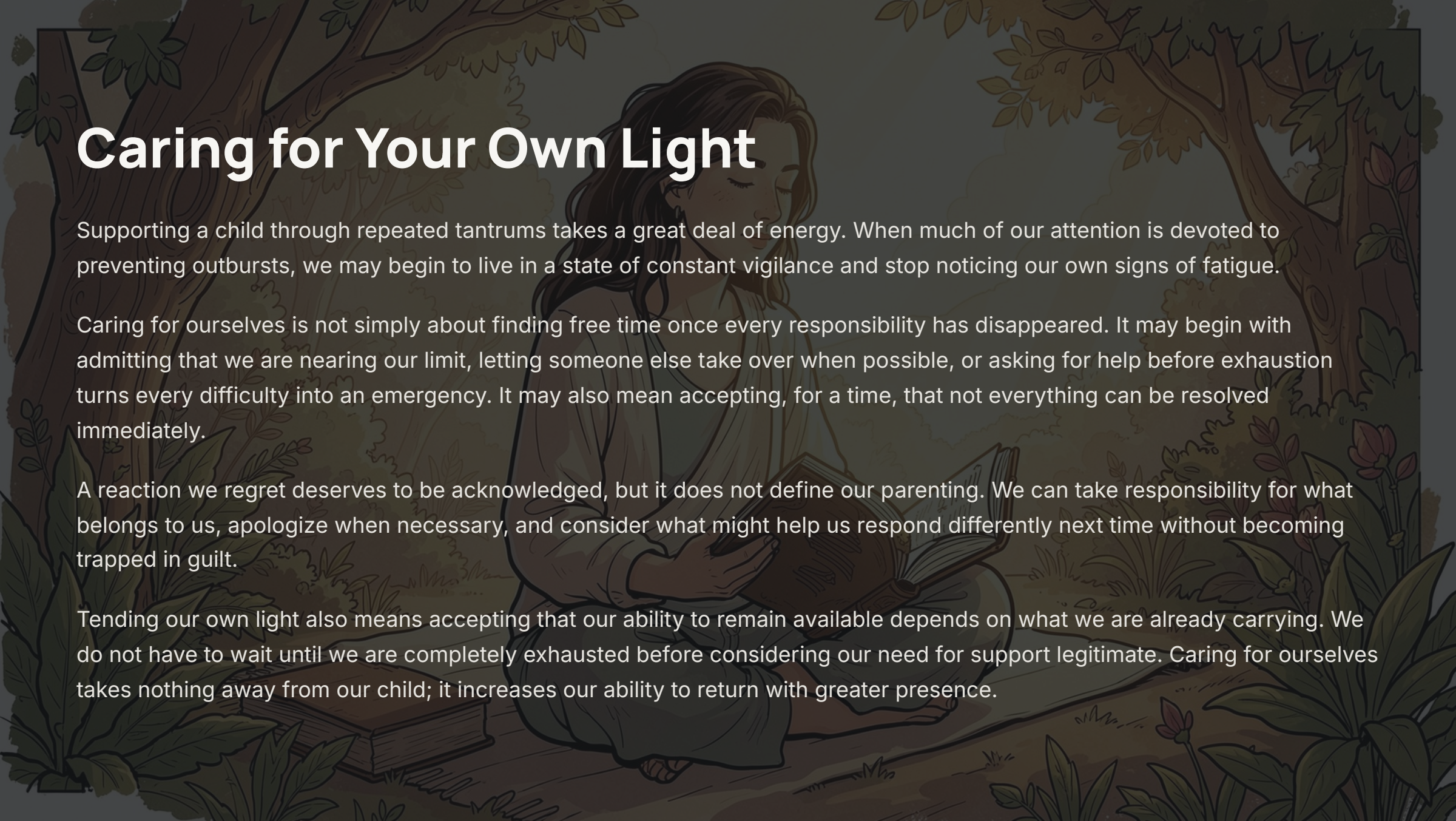
Being the Lighthouse in the Storm

A lighthouse does not end the storm or control the sea. It offers a point of reference when the movement becomes too intense for anyone to know where the shore lies.

Being that lighthouse for our child does not mean remaining perfectly calm or finding the right words during every tantrum. It means holding on to a few simple points of reference: protecting what must be protected, not deliberately adding fear or humiliation, and remaining present enough for the connection to be restored after the outburst.

A lighthouse does not force the sea to become calm immediately. In the same way, our presence will not always end the tantrum when we want it to. It can nevertheless show the child that their emotion erases neither the boundary nor the relationship.

Some days, our light will be steady. On others, fatigue will make it more fragile and we will react in ways we regret. We can then return, acknowledge what happened, and repair what needs to be repaired. Being a point of reference does not mean never wavering; it means finding our way back to the relationship after we have wavered.

A dark, moody illustration of a woman with long brown hair sitting cross-legged on the ground in a forest. She is holding an open book and looking down at it. The background features large trees with dense foliage and some flowers in the foreground. The overall tone is somber and contemplative.

Caring for Your Own Light

Supporting a child through repeated tantrums takes a great deal of energy. When much of our attention is devoted to preventing outbursts, we may begin to live in a state of constant vigilance and stop noticing our own signs of fatigue.

Caring for ourselves is not simply about finding free time once every responsibility has disappeared. It may begin with admitting that we are nearing our limit, letting someone else take over when possible, or asking for help before exhaustion turns every difficulty into an emergency. It may also mean accepting, for a time, that not everything can be resolved immediately.

A reaction we regret deserves to be acknowledged, but it does not define our parenting. We can take responsibility for what belongs to us, apologize when necessary, and consider what might help us respond differently next time without becoming trapped in guilt.

Tending our own light also means accepting that our ability to remain available depends on what we are already carrying. We do not have to wait until we are completely exhausted before considering our need for support legitimate. Caring for ourselves takes nothing away from our child; it increases our ability to return with greater presence.



What Parents Have Taught Me

Parents have taught me that tantrums are almost never difficult for the child alone. They move through the entire relationship and can leave everyone feeling misunderstood, overwhelmed, or hurt.

They have also taught me that the right response is not always the one that brings immediate calm. A parent may hold a necessary boundary while the child remains angry. An adult may also lose patience, later acknowledge their reaction, and turn that return into an experience of repair.

Above all, I have learned that gentleness and firmness are not opposites. Gentleness without boundaries can leave everyone without direction, while firmness without regard for what the child is experiencing may add distress to an already overwhelming moment. Parents often search, with whatever resources they have that day, for a path between the two.

That path is never perfectly stable. It is built through attempts, adjustments, and the possibility of beginning again. Perhaps this, too, is how children grow and how parents grow alongside them.

A Tantrum Does Not Define a Child

A tantrum can take over everything. In the intensity of the moment, it may seem that our child has become unreachable or that we have lost every ability to support them. Yet what we are seeing is a moment of overwhelm, not the whole of who they are.

A child who shouts, refuses, or falls apart is not defined by that behaviour. They are moving through an emotion they cannot yet contain or express differently. This does not mean that everything should be allowed. Boundaries remain necessary, but they can be set without turning the tantrum into a judgment about the child as a person.

Our role is not to make every storm disappear or find the perfect response to every outburst. It is to protect, maintain the essential points of reference, and restore the connection once the emotion settles. Sometimes we will manage this calmly. At other times, our fatigue will take up more space and we will need to return to what happened.

That return teaches the child that a relationship can move through anger, mistakes, and moments of disconnection without disappearing. It shows them that repair is possible, that words can gradually be found for the experience, and that another way forward can be sought.

A tantrum defines neither the child experiencing it nor the parent trying to support them. It tells us that, in that moment, something exceeded the capacities available. Both may then need to regain a sense of safety before returning to the relationship.

ÉCOUTE MOI GRANDIR

Children grow. So do parents.

This chapter is offered free of charge.

If it has kept you company, perhaps you may wish to continue the journey.

The other nine perspectives await you in the book Ten Perspectives.

Because there are sometimes several ways to look at things...

and one is not always enough.

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