

WHAT CAN I DO?

When parents mistreat their children in public...

1. Sympathize with the parent.

Say something like, “She sure is a bundle of energy,” or “My child used to get upset just like that.”

2. Divert the angry attention away from the child.

Open up a conversation with the adult. Ask a question or directions-anything to provide a distraction and some time for the parent’s anger to subside.

3. Compliment or praise the parent or the child.

Say something positive: “What a healthy boy you have! How old is he?” or “It’s hard to shop with a toddler. You have my admiration for handling it!”

4. Offer sympathy and help.

Sometimes a parent’s anger is fueled by embarrassment at the fuss that the child is making. Say, “Children sure can wear you out! Is there anything I can do to help?” “Taking kids out to eat is hard! I’m sure everyone here is remembering that and giving you credit for your patience.”

5. Alert the store manager if you are concerned about the child’s safety.

Ask someone with authority over the parent to communicate that, “This is a safe place for children. You may not spank here.”

6. Quietly stand guard if the child is being neglected or is in jeopardy.

For example, keep an eye on a child left unattended in a grocery cart or a toddler at a street or parking lot curbside.

DO NOT give dirty looks or make snide remarks. Disapproval or anger will only increase the parent’s anger and make matters worse. If someone else in a store or restaurant is clearly disapproving, step in and be an obvious ally to the parent by offering a kind remark or some help.

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