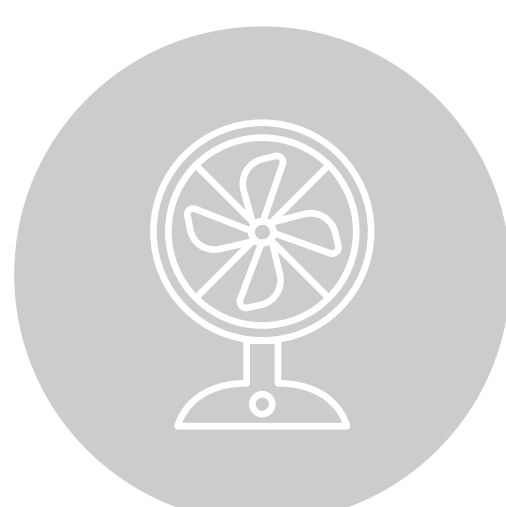


How to positively manage meltdowns and emotions



Recognise a meltdown

Meltdowns are an expression of being overwhelmed or unable to cope, leading to a loss of control. They can be expressed: verbally, physically, or by withdrawal (shutting down and being unable to communicate). You know your child best, so you can probably already think of times when they have experienced a meltdown.



Identify triggers

Analyse the triggers for meltdowns carefully and focus on prevention. Observe and investigate the causes and share what you discover with your child. "I've noticed that when you _____, you _____." This will help build their understanding of what is happening and help them to feel more in control.



Sensory toolkit

Think about the five senses: vision, touch, sound, taste and smell. Then think about what familiar items relating to these senses bring calm, comfort or help reduce stress for your child. This might include things like a weighted pillow or blanket, sand or colour-mixing timers, noise-cancelling headphones, playdough or kinetic sand. Collect these things and have them ready to help calm your child next time they become overwhelmed.



Use the 5-Point Scale

The 5-point scale is a visual system that can help to organise a person's thinking when working through difficult moments. It's a simple but highly effective tool that your child can use to rate feelings, emotions etc from 1 - 5. There are lots of great free downloadable templates you can use. Just google "5 point scale" and choose one that suits your child.



Develop a plan

Once you know which techniques and items calm and comfort your child effectively, build them into a simple step-by-step plan that can be used at any time. Early intervention is key, and your child should practice the plan repeatedly, like a fire drill, so it becomes an automatic go-to routine when they start to feel overwhelmed.



Have a buffer

Don't feel pressured by bystanders. Making sure your child is safe and looked after is your priority. During a meltdown, your child won't be able to listen or follow directions. If possible, try to create a quiet, safe space and calmly ask anyone who might be watching to move along and not to stare. Make sure to turn off any loud music and turn down bright lights. Keep your child safe, with as little input as possible, and wait quietly until it's over.



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