

# Emotional Meltdowns as Learning Opportunities *Children ages 6-10*

Based on resilience, mindfulness and  
National Ctr. for Pyramid Model

By Dr. Diana Bermudez ©2022



(703) 782-8763

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Emotional meltdowns can be...

Moments when children lose control over their emotions and their bodies, visible as crying outbursts, rages of anger, hurting others or self with actions and/or words, lasting from a few minutes to an hour.

## Contributors

The habit of crying/screaming to satisfy needs.  
Parenting that reinforces negative attention.  
Lack of teaching/modeling self-control.  
High stress in the home/school.  
Feisty temperament: intense, sensitive, moody, distractible and active.  
Potential developmental delays.

First, address the origins

## Prevent!

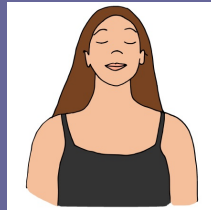
Teach more advanced ways to satisfy needs.  
Empower by giving choices and praising efforts!  
Do not give in to meltdowns, even in public! What is the message?  
Teach/model self-control DAILY  
Consider what sources of stress can be avoided  
Keep rules simple and consistent

# Emotional Meltdowns As Learning Opportunities

## Principles:

1. Behavior is the tip of the iceberg. Low self-control skills are under the surface.
2. Children develop at different paces, and some need more support from caretakers.

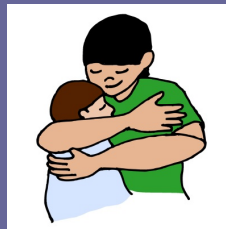
1. Calm yourself down. Breathe in and give yourself a positive message.



2. Help child to calm down, quietly. Breathe in synchrony, together or separately. Do not reason or lecture. Just say you are waiting for helping him/her to calm down.



3. Once child has calmed down, praise him/her for being calm.



4. Now that he/she can hear you, empathize, repeat the rules calmly (not scolding) and show the appropriate way of expressing emotions.



5. Give him/her an opportunity to use the new skill. Reinforce with praise and rewards.



## Following Up

- Repeat the same procedure hundreds of times.
- Children learn by repetition, just as they had learned that crying or screaming were effective.
- Be patient! It can take months/years.
- Self-control is a life-long journey!
- Persistent children might ramp up the intensity of the meltdowns for the first few days, but will slowly learn to calm down.
- Seek professional help if the meltdowns become more frequent; child holds breath and passes out; or there are other behavior concerns.

