

Emotional Meltdowns as Learning Opportunities *Children Ages 5-10*

Recommendations for Parents

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Emotional meltdowns can be...

Moments when children lose control over their emotions and behavior due to stress,

visible as crying spells, anger outbursts, hurting others or self with actions and/or words; which happen occasionally for school-age kids.

Contributors

The habit of crying/screaming to satisfy needs.

Parenting that reinforces negative attention.

Inconsistent teaching/modeling of self-control.

High stress in the home/school.

Difficult temperament: intense, sensitive, moody.

First, observe the triggers and try to prevent!

Teach positive ways to cope with emotional needs (movement, calming).

Empower child by giving choices and praising efforts!

Do not give in to meltdowns, even in public! Giving in reinforces them.

Teach/model self-control DAILY.

Consider what sources of stress can be reduced, if possible.

Keep family rules simple and consistent.

Implement a system of rewards to motivate positive behavior.

Emotional Meltdowns as Learning Opportunities



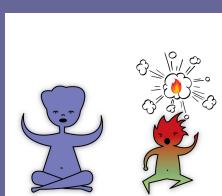
Principles:

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

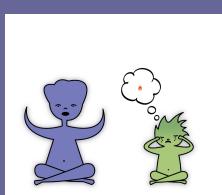
1. Calm yourself down. Breath in and give yourself a positive message.



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



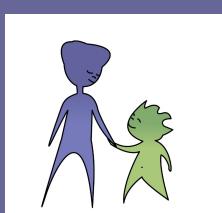
3. Once child has calmed down, praise him/her for being calm.



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 or years for the frequency and duration of meltdowns to decrease.
- Self-regulation is a life-long journey!
- Persistent children might ramp up the intensity of the meltdowns for the first few days, but can slowly learn to calm down.
- Seek help of a therapist or counselor if the meltdowns become more frequent; or there are other behavior concerns.



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