

Understanding and Managing a 'Meltdown'

Workshop



Behaviour
Support Hub



Our work

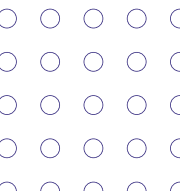
Behaviour Support Hub is a charity led by parents, offering early intervention and ongoing assistance to parent carers. Originally established in 2014 by a group of parents who joined forces after facing challenges in accessing the necessary support for their children diagnosed with Autism and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). We have developed the charity to offer a range of services.

Our Mission

To support and empower parent carers of children with additional needs, inspiring positive change for both parent and child, by developing skills, insight, training, and a peer support network.

Our Vision

For all parent carers of children with additional needs to be empowered, respected, and supported to overcome the challenge they face in helping children to achieve their full potential.



Behaviour Support Hub: The Beginning

Parent support group set up in 2014

Not diagnoses specific

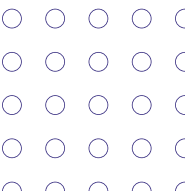
Long term support

Primarily aimed at parents

Registered Charity in 2023



BSH Peer Support Group





What We Offer:

Training programmes

The ADHD Programme

Sessions provide participants with clear information, advice and strategies for parent carers navigating the world of ADHD. For parents with children diagnosed with ADHD aged 6-16.

Well-Being Programme

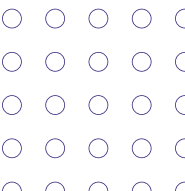
Sessions aim to shine a light on **parental emotional health and alleviate some of the struggles by offering activities and well-being workshops to promote self-care.**

Early Bird Plus

Sessions provide a better understanding of autism, empowering and informing parent carers to support their child with evidence-based strategies. Children aged 4-9 diagnosed with autism diagnosed with autism

Early Bird Teen Life

Sessions provide a better understanding of autism, empowering and informing parent carers to support their child with evidence-based strategies. Children aged 10-16 diagnosed with autism



Workshops

One off sessions, in person or online, with the aim of increasing understanding of the following topics:



Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA)

Develop an understanding of what PDA is and how it presents, as well as develop some strategies to support the child and encourage the adult to adapt their response.

How to manage a meltdown

Develop an understanding of why meltdowns happen, the stages that it follows with the overall aim of developing strategies to manage the meltdown to minimise its effects on the child and those around them

ADHD Overview

Increasing parent carers empathy for living with ADHD, we will explore common themes of ADHD as well explore new areas. Developing strategies to positively support the challenges that ADHD brings.

Supporting Siblings

Exploring the impact of what it is like to have a sibling with neurodiversity in the main focus of this workshop, as well as looking at the support the neurotypical child need to understand their sibling's diagnosis and needs.



Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Overview

Develop an understanding of autism as well as learning strategies based on up-to-date information and a new perspective of autism, to positively support children and young people with autism.

Executive Functioning Difficulties

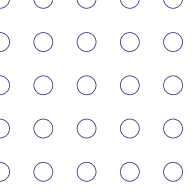
Parents carers will gain a better understanding of executive functioning and its key domains, as well as gain some strategies to positively manage the impact it can have on daily life.

Pathway to diagnosis and preparing for your first ND visit

Develop an understanding of how to navigate the journey of the neurodiversity pathway, for diagnosis, the support that may be available at school as well as exploring getting ready for the first ND appointment

Behaviour which Challenges

Although not specific to a ND condition, we explore the underlying reasons for behaviour and encourage parents' carers to see behaviour as a form of communication and empower them to manage it more positively.



Aims of the workshop:

Recognise the difference
in meltdowns/shutdowns
and tantrums

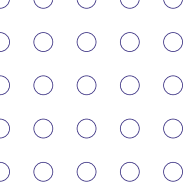
Identify the 3 stages of
a meltdown

Develop an
understanding of why
meltdowns happen

Understand the
importance of
'baselines' our own
and that of our
children

Develop a toolbox of
strategies to manage
the meltdown to
minimise its effects





Tantrums V's Meltdowns

Do you know the
difference between a
tantrum and a meltdown?





Tantrum (Goal Directed behaviour)

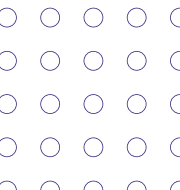


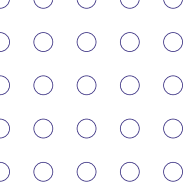
Tantrum

Many people think the words “tantrum” (Goal directed behaviour) and “meltdown” mean the same thing. They can look very similar when you see them happening

What is a Tantrum?

- A tantrum is an outburst from a child when they are trying to get something that they want or need.
- Yelling, crying or lashing out isn't an appropriate way for them to express their feelings, but there is a reason for doing it.
- There is some control over the behaviour.
- Your child may even stop in the middle of a tantrum to make sure you're looking at them.
- When they see that you're watching them, they may pick up where they left off. The tantrum is likely to stop when they get what they want, or they realise they *won't* get what they want by behaving this way.





Tantrums Explored



Tantrums are common in children aged 1-3 years. This is because young children are still at an early stage of social, emotional and language development. They can't always communicate their needs and feelings, including the desire to do things for themselves, so they might get frustrated. They're learning that how they behave influences others. Tantrums are one of the ways that young children express and manage feelings and try to understand or change what's going on around them.

Older children can have tantrums too. This can be because they haven't yet learned safe ways to express or manage feelings

By the age of 4, tantrums should naturally decrease as the child begins to understand emotions more and they're also able to verbalise their wants, needs and desires.

What might tantrums look like: You might see screaming, stiffening limbs, an arched back, kicking, falling, or running away. In some cases, children hold their breath, vomit, break things or hurt themselves or other people as part of a tantrum

Reasons for tantrums: may be a way of getting attention, being unable to communicate their feelings, hunger, thirst, sickness or being tired. It could also be a response to being told no or not having something they wanted or expected to have.



Managing and supporting tantrums



- **Support your child** to understand their own emotions - you can do this from birth by using words to label feelings like 'happy', 'sad', 'tired', 'hungry' and 'comfy'.
- **Identify tantrum triggers** like tiredness, hunger, worries, fears or overstimulation. You might be able to make a plan to manage the triggers – for example, by going shopping after your child has had a nap or something to eat.
- **Say it, mean it, do it** – a difficult one to follow through on but if you have told your child that they cannot have something – mean what you say and don't allow them to have it.
- **Be consistent** and try to manage the behaviours but – don't give in! The minute you do this, the child will learn that if they have a tantrum every time that they are told no, they will eventually get what they want .
- **Remember** that during a tantrum your child feels angry –we all feel angry, but the child hasn't yet developed a way to express their feeling appropriately – acknowledge this feeling for your child.
- **Use distraction** – this needs to happen during the early stage of the tantrum, their favourite food or toy may work.
- **Ignore it** – if you know your child and those around them are safe – ignore the tantrum – giving no response is often the best response!



Meltdown and Shutdown



Understanding Meltdowns/Shutdowns

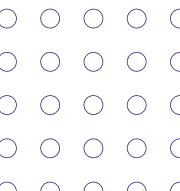
At the most basic level, a meltdown is caused by a feeling of being overwhelmed and a sense of loss of control. The child feels they are no longer able to cope, and the resulting behaviours are an attempt by the child to regain some control over themselves, those around them, their environment or a combination of these.

It is most helpful if meltdowns are understood as a response to their emotions, rather than wilfully defiant tantrums or difficult behaviour.

As mentioned, Meltdowns are best understood as an emotional response. This is not a battle to be lost or won, but more of a 'crisis' to manage. You are the child's emotional brakes. Your response to the 'meltdown' can make a huge difference to the outcome. Try to separate your relationship with the child from the behaviour

Visible signs of meltdown may include withdrawing from communication, hiding, aggressive or self-injurious behaviour, curling up in a ball, rocking intensely and making sounds to drown out the world around them.

It is also worth knowing that some children may respond to being overwhelmed by appearing to completely shut down and becoming non-responsive rather than by having a visual meltdown. This is simply an alternative reaction to being overstimulated, and our children are not able to choose which response they experience in a given situation





The three stages of a 'Meltdown'?

Rumbling

These are early indicators that the child is becoming overwhelmed and can include behaviours such as pacing, fiddling, rocking in a chair, change of facial expression, and withdrawal. The list is different for each child but can often be a feeling that we as adults have.

At this point we could try to alter the environment – provide ear defenders or other sensory items to help regulate them, remove them from the classroom, and most importantly, we should reduce our verbal input to the child so don't try to reason with them and talk to them at length about consequences of their behaviour as this can add to their feeling of being overwhelmed.

Meltdown

When a child has reached the point of 'meltdown' no interventions from you will help them to recover.

They have lost control at this point and the adrenaline in their body as a result of their fight/flight/freeze response has completely taken over.

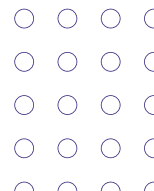
Again, to manage this, we have to ensure they are physically safe, reduce your language and where necessary remove other children from the room.

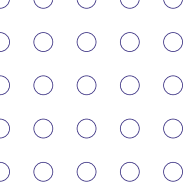
This is far from ideal but when a meltdown is happening time or physical exhaustion are the only way in which it will stop.

Recovery

This will vary for each child. Some children will recover quickly and carry on, seemingly fine, whilst other children will need to sleep.

It is important that we give the child enough time to recover before we wish to discuss the 'meltdown' or behaviour that led to it. Having this discussion too soon can lead to another escalation.





Shutdowns

If meltdowns are equivalent to the fight response, then shutdowns are similar to the freeze response.

As with meltdowns, shutdowns are often the result of situations with high demand in one or more of the following areas:

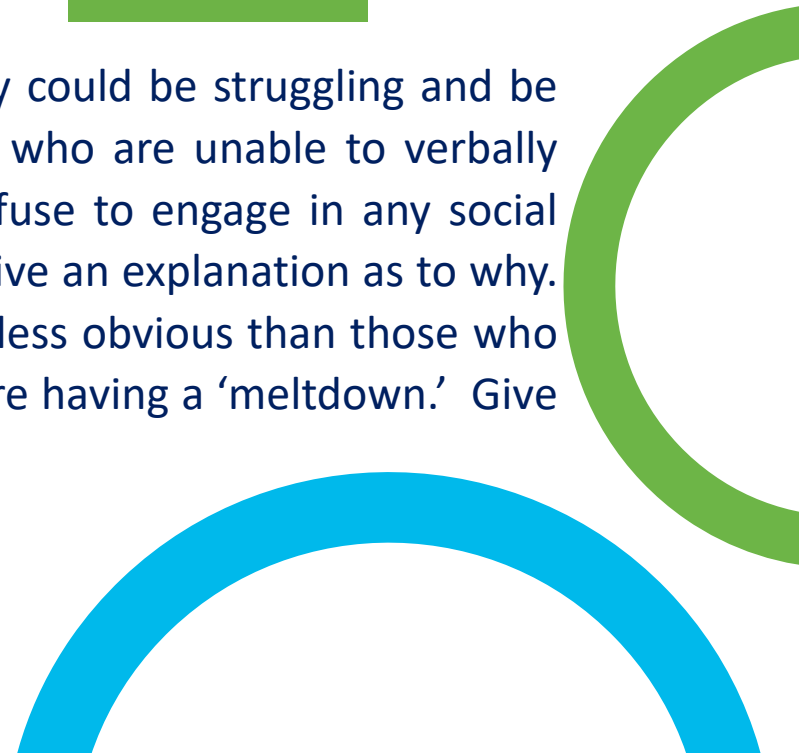
Very emotional situations

Social situations

Situations that require a lot of thinking/ concentration

Situations that are very active or physical

On the surface, the child may appear 'fine' but we should be mindful that they could be struggling and be unable to ask for help or show us that this is the case. We may see children who are unable to verbally communicate during this time, those children may hide under the table or refuse to engage in any social interaction with adults or their peers. Some children may cry and be unable to give an explanation as to why. Please be mindful that these children will also have a rumbling stage, although less obvious than those who have meltdowns. The strategies that we use should be the same as those who are having a 'meltdown.' Give them space, reduce language and allow them time to regulate again.





In Summary.....

Tantrum

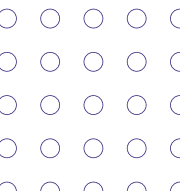
- Driven by a want or a goal
- They repeat the behaviour if they have achieved that goal
- Will check in to see if they still have your attention
- Will have some control over how they behave

Both

- Kicking
- Screaming
- Verbal aggression
 - Hitting out
 - Swearing
 - Crying

Meltdown

- Driven by a reaction to something
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Not aware of the attention they receive from others
- There is no control over this behaviour and it will only stop when they feel safe and a regulated again.



Triggers

What could trigger a meltdown?



The triggers for a meltdown will be different for each child, there are some common factors that will lead to the child feeling overwhelmed and eventually having a meltdown, these can include:

Changes in routines – for lots of our children, they prefer a life that is predictable so that they can make sense of what is happening around them. They have a desire for sameness which provides them with more control. If this routine is changed, this can cause a considerable effect on our children, which will increase the likelihood of a meltdown. A change in a teacher at school is a common difficulty for our children, a new teacher is unpredictable, may have different rules and expectations to what they are used to. Trying to make sense of this, in a high sensory input of a classroom, can be a massive trigger for a meltdown.

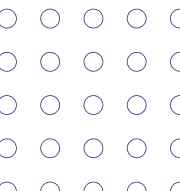
Sensory overload, when there is just too much information for the child's brain to process. For some children, an amusement park can produce more sensory information, including sights, sounds and smells faster than a child can process it. Busy environments can include shops, public transport, concerts and even school. This may explain why the classroom environment can be difficult for some children

Decisions - For other children, the prospect of making a large number of decisions can cause a meltdown or following the demands that certain situations/environments place on them. Something that would appear simple to us such as trying on new clothes for school or being asked to have a shower can cause a meltdown.

Dealing with anger: Since “meltdown triggers” and “angry feelings” are directly related, having discussions about anger (during those times when your child is calm) can help you establish a foundation to build on when trying to identify your child’s triggers. Ask them some important questions about emotions (e.g., what makes you angry, happy, sad, etc.). The purpose of this is to teach your child how to identify various feelings, to learn what it means to feel angry, happy, sad, disappointed, etc., also try linking the feeling with a situation, for example, ‘ you felt angry when you lost the game.’ This also helps your child to communicate their feelings to you clearly so that you are in the best position to help them learn how to cope. It’s a good idea to be a family that talks openly about feelings, including you, as the parent. Label your feelings and be mindful that you are teaching your child the concept of feelings as they are not instinctively learning this.



The Triggers Explored

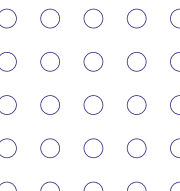


The Triggers Explored...

Delayed Rewards/Incentives: Some children tend to be very rigid in their thinking and when they set their mind to something, they want it now, and if they don't get it, they may have a meltdown. As parents, we understand that “waiting” patiently for a reward or a desired activity is ok for Neurotypical children but not always for Neurodiverse children. Often, they don't have the coping skills to understand this concept of delayed rewards. This may explain why reward charts don't work as well for our children. They live very much in the here and now and can find thinking ahead difficult. Again, it will be your job as a parent to teach your son or daughter to wait for the things that he or she wants. Short board games or create a social story around “waiting for something special.”



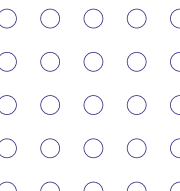
Internal frustration: Some children can tend to be, what appears to us, as perfectionistic and obsessive. The inability to do something right after several attempts, or the lack of language skills to get their point across can get the “meltdown engine” going. Observation is your best tool for identifying “low frustration-tolerance” in your child. Pay attention and be aware of the warning signs. Watch and listen, whether your child is playing a board game with friends, doing homework, after school, the build-up to an event or celebration, family visiting, a trip the dentist or hairdressers may all be situations which your child will become anxious about, but not always know that they are feeling this way so their tolerance levels become lower, and the likelihood of a meltdown will increase



The Triggers Explored...



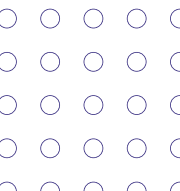
Over-stimulation: Although many children will enjoy going out to eat, going to the shops, attending birthday parties, etc., it can get quite overwhelming for them to the point they start reacting to these unfamiliar surroundings and faces. Many of our children will exhibit frustration simply because the unfamiliar gets to them, especially if there are a lot of new noises and smells. Therefore, if the environment seems too “sensory-unfriendly” or overstimulating for the child, you may simply want to “take time out” for them to regulate or alter the environment around them. Going to a small shop as opposed to the bigger supermarket, going when you know there will be less people around, take a list so you know what you need to get so you don’t spend too much time looking around. Plan and prepare as much as possible with your child and although, we would never suggest that some things are avoided completely, we do suggest that you ‘pick your battles’ so if you know your child is overwhelmed that day, the trip to the park or to a relative's house, may best be saved for another day when they are more tolerant.



The Triggers Explored...



Time constraints: Our children don't always understand the concept of time as adults do (so saying you have five minutes left to finish what you're doing, may mean absolutely nothing to some children). They pick up on your anxiety around time constraints, but they are not always able to work quickly in order to meet your demands. If you're always in a rush and your child is always having meltdowns, try to investigate whether there is a connection between the two. Of course, there are times when you're up against the clock, and your child will need to rush. The key here is to plan and prepare as much as you can so that you have what you need to hand. Mornings can be particularly difficult, when you have to get to school/work on time. Having everything ready before would help massively. Lots of children will have anxiety about going to school so they're tolerance levels are lower in the morning, as are yours due to the time pressure that you are under. Remember, keeping the mornings, in particular, as calm as you possibly can, can help the child to regulate easier and be less anxious about the school day.



Overwhelm bucket



The same activities that can cause a meltdown may not have the same affect the next day.

BUT WHY IS THIS?

Each activity we do or stimulus we come across adds to The Bucket. Stimuli may be something as simple as bright lights or background noise. Things we enjoy can also add to the bucket.

As each individual stimulus adds to the bucket. The water level begins to rise.

Some activities that calm us such as stimming or time alone can help to empty the bucket before it overflows.

If things are being added to the bucket faster than it slowly empties the bucket can overflow, causing a meltdown.

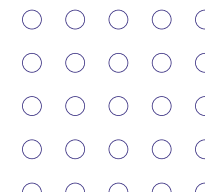
Meltdowns are different for everyone please give them space and time and don't judge. Meltdowns are out of thier control.



The Bucket of Overwhelm



Behaviour
Support Hub





Strategies



Different Strategies for Tantrums & Meltdowns

The causes of tantrums and meltdowns are different, and so are the strategies that can help stop them.

It's important to remember that the key difference between the two types of outbursts is that tantrums usually have a purpose.

Children are looking for a response.

Meltdowns are a reaction to something and are usually beyond a child's control.

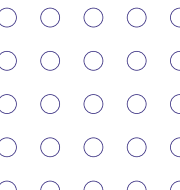
A child can often stop a tantrum if they get what they want.
Or, if they are rewarded for using more appropriate behaviour.
A meltdown isn't likely to stop when a child gets what they want.
In fact, they may not even know what they want.

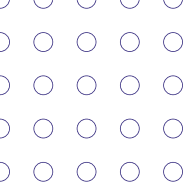
Meltdowns tend to end in one of two ways.

One is fatigue—where children wear themselves out or the other way is to change the amount of sensory input.

This can help the child feel less overwhelmed.

For example, your child may start to feel calmer when you step outside the supermarket.





So how can you handle tantrums and meltdowns differently?

To reduce tantrums, acknowledge what your child needs without giving in.

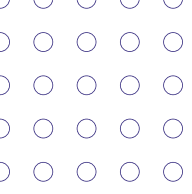
Make it clear that you understand what they want.
“I see that you want my attention, when your sister is done talking, it’ll be your turn.”
Then help them see there’s more appropriate behaviour that will work.
“When you’re done shouting, tell me calmly that you’re ready for my time.”

To manage a meltdown, help your child find a safe, quiet place to regulate

“Let’s leave the shops and sit in the car for a few minutes.”
Then provide a calm, reassuring presence without talking too much to your child.
The goal is to reduce the input for the child.
Regular breaks and using Now and Next can also help to prevent ‘overwhelm.’

Knowing the difference between tantrums and meltdowns is the key to helping your child through them. It may also help to get a better idea of the kinds of situations that can be challenging for your child.

You can also explore tips on how to deal with noise and other sensitivities.

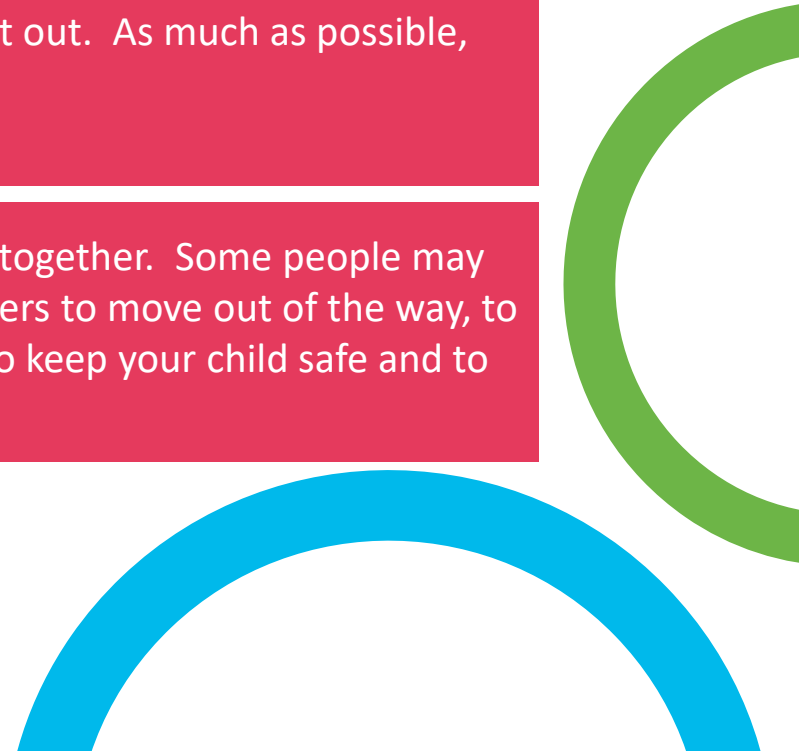


Managing a meltdown in public

Stay calm. Take some deep breaths. Look around and assess the situation. Focus on your child and what he or she needs in the moment. Your goal is to remove any triggers and help your child to feel safe again. It may be difficult but try to stop caring what other people are thinking. Work on ignoring the people who stop and stare. You are doing the best that you can do, and it really doesn't matter whether they understand or not.

Stay strong. If the meltdown is happening, there is nothing you can do to stop it. Just wait it out. As much as possible, try to find a safe space which is quieter or away from the traffic, and stay strong.

Let others know what you need from them. If you have multiple adults in your group, plan together. Some people may want to help once they are able to interpret the situation. Or maybe you need to direct others to move out of the way, to reduce the stimulation, or to prevent someone from getting hurt. Your goal at this point is to keep your child safe and to keep others safe.



Managing a meltdown in public



Practice but pick your battles. The only way your child will get better at successfully being in public is to practice doing it. You can start small and work your way up to busier places or scheduled activities. If you know that your child is triggered by noises, you can practice at quieter places; the mountain for example, and then move towards places with more and more noise over time.

Teach coping strategies. Before going on the outing, work on some methods of calming. Especially in the case of sensory or sensitivity issues, you know what the triggers are for meltdowns with your child, so look for ways to prevent or reduce these triggers. For example, if your child is sensitive to noises, invest in some noise cancelling headphones or headphones with music, and practice wearing them.

Manage your own expectations: So, you've planned an amazing day out, you've covered all avenues and you're feeling positive about the day. After 30 minutes of being there, you can tell your child is becoming unregulated and despite your best effort to support them, you know that leaving is the best option. This can be so disheartening but think of the positives, you got there!

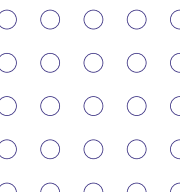
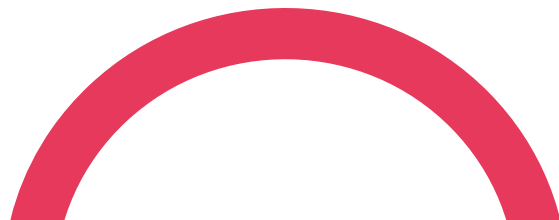


Thinking about School

Reasons for meltdowns at School



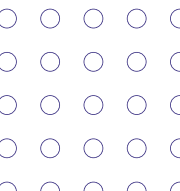
- **Being kept in at break/lunch time** - maybe used as consequence for behaviours that challenge but the bigger impact is that the child, especially those with ADHD, don't have avenues to release their built-up energy meaning behaviours will become even more difficult to manage in the classroom. Regular sensory or movement breaks can help children who struggle to focus/sit at their table manage as well as those who use this time to regulate – it is so important they have this outlet.
- **Anxiety** – School can be overwhelming from a sensory perspective, unexpected change, a whole lot of demands and challenges that the child may struggle with. School may see repeated questions, withdrawal, pacing, complaining of illness, angry outbursts. Recognising the early signs of the behaviours, providing the child with a time out card or regular opportunities to go to their quiet space, along with preparing them for change and in general being mindful of the sensory environment that the child is in.
- **Unstructured times** – children particularly those with an autism diagnosis may struggle with break/lunch times, maybe their hitting out other children and as a result are being taken into the school or head teachers office. This maybe what they want to happen as they struggle to know what to do during these times. Is there an activity we can give them whilst outside, so they have a focus during these times. Chalk, books, blocks – could we introduce a 'buddy'





Reasons for meltdowns at School

- **Assembly** - lots of children who are neurodivergent, will find assembly difficult for a variety of reasons such as sensory differences. We may see difficult behaviours and then they are removed. Is it an option to use 'backward chaining' this means they are taking into the hall for five minutes before the end, this time is gradually and slowly increased as they tolerate it more. The aim is that they finish with everyone else.
- **Start of the day** – lots of children may find it difficult to go in to school. Is it an option for them to arrive through a different entrance, a bit later or earlier than the rest of the class. Is there a familiar person who could support them. Can they go to a quiet space to regulate before they enter the main classroom?
- **Masking/withdrawal** – These children are the ones that won't display difficult behaviours in the classroom but tend to have meltdowns after school. Throughout the day, can school look out for less obvious signs? They may not ask for help when they need it, won't speak to adults, may refuse to engage with peers. School may need to check in with these children more regular and give them regular breaks out of the classroom as we would for a child that is outwardly showing sign that they are struggling.



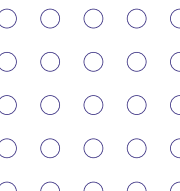
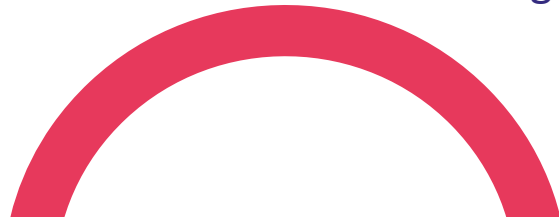


Supporting school to manage meltdowns/shutdowns



What can you do to help support your child at School and also help the school to support your child during meltdowns/shutdowns:

- ✓ Keep open and positive communication with the school. Let them know what 'triggers' the meltdown and what the child needs. Remember, you're the expert in your child!
- ✓ Share the 'Meltdown' plan with the School
- ✓ For children who shutdown – let the teacher know what they may seem to indicate your child is struggling – they may not know unless it's pointed out to them
- ✓ Arrange a meeting with your child's school to see what support they can access during the school day.
- ✓ Talk to your child about their worries/difficulties at school
- ✓ Allow them time to regulate when they arrive home from school – don't engage them in lengthy conversations, reduce your requests and let them have time doing what they need to regulate their emotions.





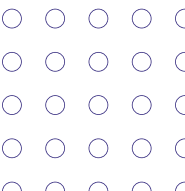
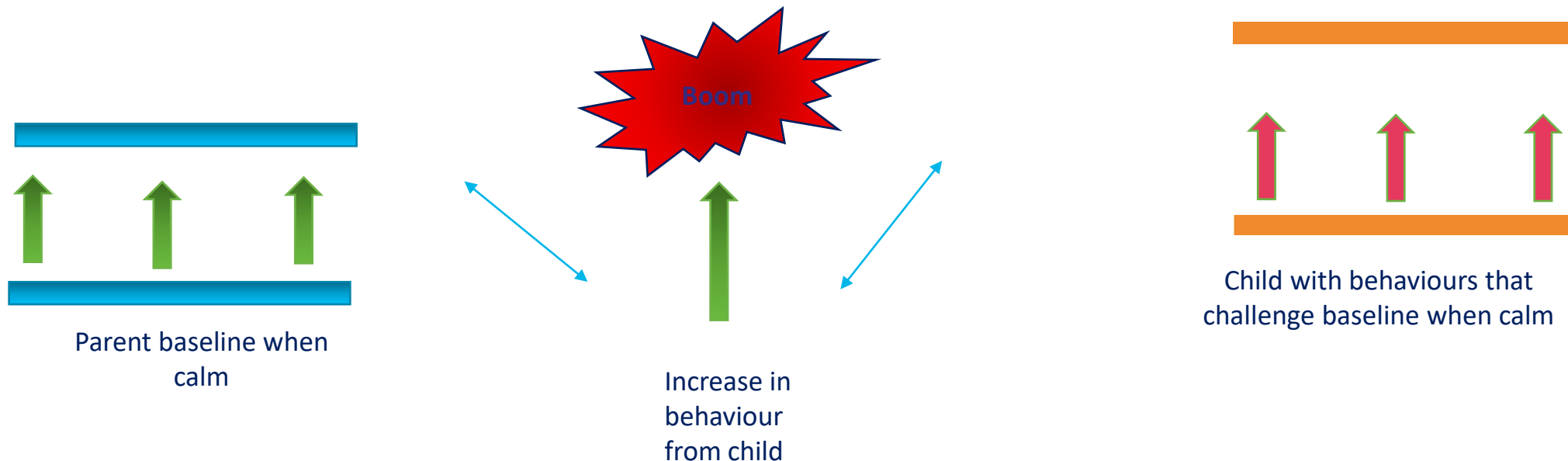
Supporting your child before the 'meltdown'

Baselines – our response



It is always good to be mindful of OUR response to our children when these difficult behaviours arise and to remember that what the child is displaying at that moment is an unmet need.

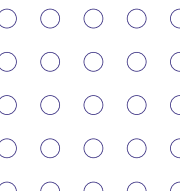
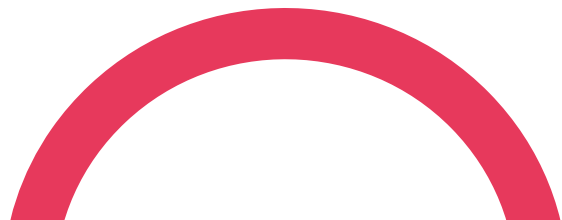
Below is an explanation of how behaviours can escalate, communication becomes difficult, and everyone is angry when we leave our baselines (word used to describe our general calm, relaxed mood, where there is no pressure upon us). It's important to think about ways we can deal with our child's behaviour in a calm and repetitive manner, and practice this when the situation arises rather than waiting until we're in the situation which makes us angry. Waiting until you get angry will leave both parent and child feeling unsettled and agitated.



Recognising, understanding and managing emotions



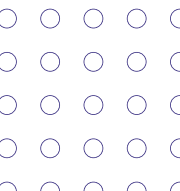
- Some children and teenagers might need support to recognise, understand and manage emotions.
- You can help your children and teenagers understand emotions by explaining how thoughts lead to feelings.
- Some children and teenagers often need help to learn how to manage and regulate from strong emotions
- Some children and teenagers may feel all negative feelings such as sadness or unpleasant feelings as anger and not always know the most appropriate way to express this emotion. This can even be the case with positive emotions – where they don't recognise if they are happy or excited. You may find your child label strong emotions as 'I'm bored,' because they are confused by the emotions that they are feeling.

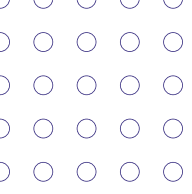




Supporting your child to recognise emotions

- **Label emotions** as you come across them. You can point out emotions when you're reading, watching TV or visiting friends. For example, 'Look – Ben's smiling. He's happy'.
- **Point out your child's emotions.** For example, 'You're smiling. You must be happy'.
- **Emphasise your own emotional responses.** For example, 'I am SO excited! Give me a high five'. Maybe think about relating an event/activity
- **Help your child work out how their body feels when they're feeling an emotion.** For example, 'You look nervous. Do you have a funny feeling in your tummy?'
- **Draw a picture of the body to show where people feel emotion** – for example, sweaty palms or a faster heartbeat.
- **Ask your child to draw how they're feeling.**
- **Encourage your child to explore emotions through play.** Messy play, drawing or painting, puppet play, dancing and music play.
- **Label your own feelings** – let your child know how you feel to, and don't forget to include the not so good feelings. We're asking our children to tell us how they feel so we should be doing it ourselves. Remember to try to place a situation to the emotion where possible.





Behaviour Monitoring Chart

A behaviour monitoring chart is a direct observation tool that can be used to collect information about the events that are occurring within a child's environment, this can help you identify the trigger.

Before

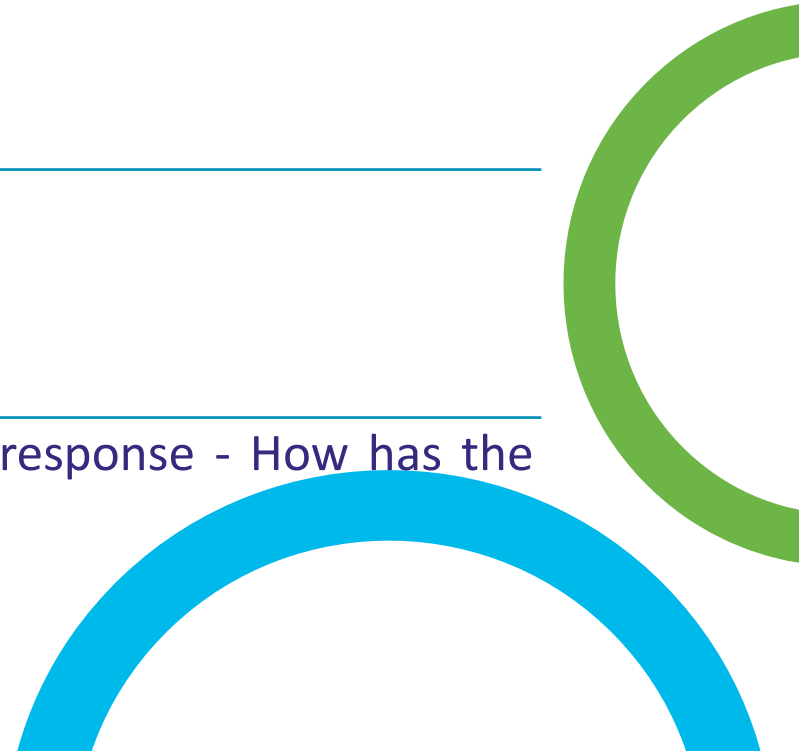
- Refers to the environment, the event or activity that immediately happens before a problem behaviour.

During

- Refers to observed behaviour – what are we seeing?

After

- Refers to the outcome, or the event that immediately follows a response - How has the child reacted? What did they achieve from that behaviour?





I cannot prevent the meltdown,
so how do I manage it?



Some meltdowns are unavoidable...

Provide time and space.

If your attempts to de-escalate have not been successful, you may need to wait and give your child space. Make sure they're in a safe area and they don't have access to items they can use to hurt themselves or others. Get down on their level – literally. If your child is on the floor, sit on the floor near them

Avoid power struggles.

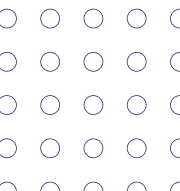
Don't punish or shame your child for what is happening. Instead provide reassurance that you love them and validate their feelings.

- Avoid making threats like, "if you don't stop, there will be no more iPad!", as this typically escalates the situation

Staying safe – you and your family.

If your child is physically lashing out at you, please ensure that there is a safe distance between you and them if you are unable to leave the immediate area. Ensure that there is something between you such as sofa. Ensure siblings are aware of what they need to do if the meltdowns happens. **Don't try to remove the child – remove everyone around them.**

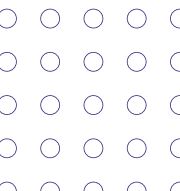
Stay calm. This can be very difficult but try to stay calm and keep a neutral face. Take some deep breaths, use a low voice volume, and talk slowly to model for your child what "calm" looks like, when you need to speak.



Managing Meltdowns from the experts. DO



- Have one person take control of the situation.
- Stay calm, be assertive, and feel confident. Remember to keep the role of the adult, be firm and in control.
- Use a slow, low tone of voice, and clear, simple, minimal words where necessary.
- When speaking to your child, sit to the side and look away from their face (i.e. mid-distance, to side, and down).
- Keep your body language calm, not imposing.
- When giving directions acknowledge the emotions, give the reason for a direction then give a direction (for e.g., “I can see you are feeling really worried. You need a break. Sit on this bean bag.”)
- Keep your child safe by removing anything that your child might hurt herself on and anyone who is not needed.
- Give your child as much solitude as possible by giving her an area to herself that is quiet. If possible, create a permanent, quiet, calm space and call it a name like “Calm Space.” Ensure your child understands this space is not a punishment place like the “Naughty Corner,” or “Time Out.”
- Appeal to your child’s special interest (for e.g. start a discussion or have your child make a list, or sort their collection) when they are calm
- Give your child an emergency/calming-down box (for e.g., a box filled with twiddly toys, puzzles, trucks, catalogues, radio to listen to, stress balls, or spinning things).

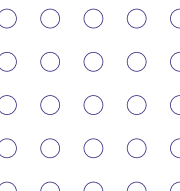
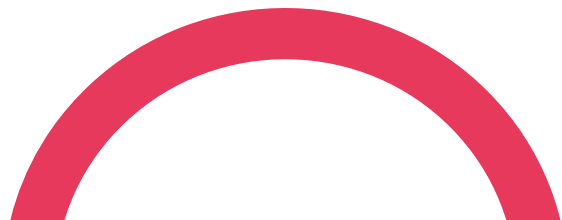




Managing Meltdowns from the experts. DON'T



- Don't touch your child, unless it is a protective action to stop violence, or you know it helps them.
- Don't match your child's mood with your speech, (i.e. stay low and slow.)
- Don't threaten or use punishment.
- Don't try to turn the situation into a lesson, your child's mind is not available for verbal teaching whilst in a meltdown.
- Don't say "No."
- Don't talk about consequences



My 'meltdown' Safety Plan



My triggers

What may happen that would result in the child having a meltdown

Red Flags/warning signs

What physical signs may you see to suggest an imminent meltdown

Coping skills – what helps me

What do I need? Do I understand I need time out

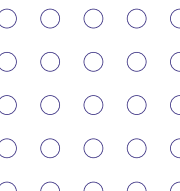
Places that I feel Safe

Where does the child need to be to feel safer



What I need from you in a 'meltdown'

What can the adult do to help the child through the meltdown



Our Family Safety Plan



Our code word

Think of a word that you can use as a family that lets everyone know a meltdown is about to happen.

Possible Triggers

Discuss as a family the potential triggers that may lead to a meltdown for the child. Write them in your plan.

Signs of Overload

Discuss as a family what the signs of the child being overloaded could be. Write them in you plan

Strategies that may work

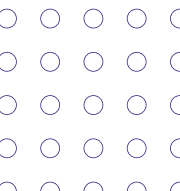
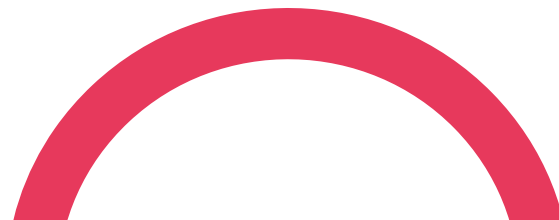
Discuss as a family what helps the child during meltdown – think about what roles people play and what shouldn't be done. Write this into your plan.

Sensory Tools that may work

What would help alter the environment and the sensory input for the child during meltdown

Notes

Is there anything else you should be aware of during meltdowns? Write it into your plan.

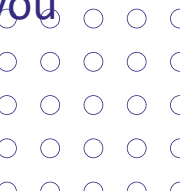


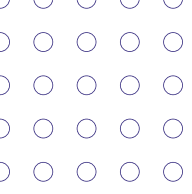


Top tips to remember



- Inform and prepare your child for any changes in routine
- Acknowledge your child's emotions and remain supportive
- Divert the child's attention with objects and toys that they may like such as Lego, engage them in their special interest.
- Teach your child to communicate when he/she is upset
- Offer alternatives to something that is not possible (and the child wants) to make him/her feel like he/she has some control of the situation
- Check and resolve any physical discomfort (hunger, illness, being cold)
- Observe your child closely to identify a meltdown "rumble" so you have time to try and prevent the meltdown
- Learn from previous meltdowns and modify your strategy as needed – keep a diary to identify triggers
- During a meltdown, reduce, reduce, reduce – your verbal and physical input wherever possible, remember the child's processing of information, logical thinking and reasoning is not working due to them being so unregulated – in fact if you are talking to them, you may very well be escalating the meltdown!





Workshops



Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA)

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Overview

How to manage a meltdown

Executive Functioning Difficulties

ADHD Overview

Pathway to diagnosis and preparing for your first ND visit

ALN Overview

Behaviours which Challenges



Thank you

How to Contact Us



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Support Hub**

