

Enfys Howells, Behaviour Support Hub - Managing Meltdowns (Parents & Carers Virtual Advice Sessions)

I'm Enfys. I'm the service delivery manager here at the Behaviour Support Hub. And we have my colleague Claire, who is the Co-founder of the charity. I'm going to be with you, talking to you for the first hour of the session. And as the previous slide suggested, we'll have a little break and then me and Claire will be going through some of the questions and hopefully giving you the answers that you're looking for. Hopefully we know the answers. If we don't know the answers - we'll find out. Yes. So, understanding and managing a meltdown is why we're here.

If we can go on to the next slide then. So just before we get into the reason why we're all here, just to give you a bit of a background, the Behaviour Support Hub - we are a charity, and where we're a little bit unique, I think we are all parents of children who are neurodivergent. We're a very small team of seven and all our children are neurodivergent, whether they be diagnosed or on the pathway. So yes, along with our professional training, personal experience as well, so the aim is for us to offer early intervention and support for parents/carers. We've been going since 2014, when a group of parents joined forces to try to get support, because there was very little support back in 2014, not very much different now, but even less back then. So we work with families who have children who are neurodivergent, so that could be diagnosed with autism, ADHD or on the pathway. Our mission as a charity is to support and empower parent carers of children with additional needs inspiring positive change for both parent and child. We don't work directly with the child. Our hope is, the fact that we're working with the parents to empower the parents, so then that would be support for the child as well. So, developing skills, insight, training, a peer support network. Our vision is for all parent carers and children with additional needs to be

empowered, respected and supported to overcome the challenge they face in helping children to achieve their full potential. I think you'd all agree that it's not an easy ride. It's a difficult journey and having people in your corner who know and understand your journey can really help. So, like I said, we started as a parent support back in 2014. We're not diagnosis specific - you haven't got to have a diagnosis to access any of our support. But we do ask that there is kind of underlying concerns for a neurodiverse need. So, it's long-term support. We're not short-term support like other services out there, we are primarily aimed at parents and we became a charity just last year. We were given the interest company before that. These slides will be available afterwards on the website as Ben said, so I'm not going to go through them in depth, but this is our peer support and kind of why peer support is so important to us as a charity and will always continue to be kind of the most important thing we offer and that is for you to know as parents that, you know, on your own, you have a network and we are your people. So that's a little bit about our peer support sessions. And hopefully it opened the door for other support as well. So, we offer structured programmes as well, such as early bird, plus teen life, well-being for us parents. So yeah, like I said, look back on these slides, they will be beneficial. There's lots of different workshops that we're offering in addition to this one today covering lots of different things such as Autism Overview, PDA, Behaviours that Challenge, ADHD. The pathway - sort of exploring the journey and your first appointment with neurodevelopment if that's where you're at.

OK, so let's get down to it then. Let's do what we are here to do. So, the aim of today's workshop is for you to recognise the difference in meltdowns, shutdowns and tantrums. I use the word tantrums and I'll explain why, but primarily because it's an easily identifiable term. So, we do use the word tantrums and I'll explain a little bit about that as we go. Hopefully we'll be able to identify the three stages of a meltdown by the end and develop an understanding of why meltdowns happen. We can't try to support the actual meltdown unless we explore the triggers underneath, so hopefully

you have a better understanding of what a meltdown is, what triggers meltdowns will help us handle it more positively, I suppose. Understanding the importance of baselines, and that is our own baseline and our own reaction to the situation as well as the baseline of our children and why you've all come here, is hopefully to develop a toolbox of strategies to manage the meltdown, to minimise the effects it has on the child and you as a family. By doing this workshop, it's not going to be a magic wand. You're not never going to experience another meltdown, but taking into consideration what I said, our hope and vision was, as a charity, we are hopefully going to empower you to have a bank of strategies, because you can understand the meltdown better and have some strategies to manage them more effectively.

So, OK, moving on to the next slide. We're going to look at Tantrums versus meltdowns and the question we ask is, do you know the difference between a tantrum and a meltdown? And it is really, really important to know the difference. But let's look first at tantrums. So, tantrums are for want of a better word, goal directed behaviour. So, there is a means to an end. I'd like to say tantrums are what we'd expect in younger children, and they usually kind of stop by the age of four for neurotypical children. But that's not to say that our children won't continue to have tantrums past that age, so I will refer to them as tantrums throughout. But the correct terminology would be goal directed behaviour.

OK, so moving on. So tantrum. So many people think that the words tantrum, goal directed behaviour and meltdown mean the same thing. They can look very similar when you see them happening. I don't know about you, but I hear the word meltdown used quite a lot, which for me sometimes underestimates the severity of what's going on for the child. They are different too. People unfortunately, do use the word meltdown to describe goal directed tantrum like behaviour. So hopefully by looking at what a tantrum is, you can then start to differentiate between a tantrum and a meltdown. So, what is a tantrum? Tantrum is an outburst from a child when they are

trying to get something they want or need. So, I'll give you an example of that. Mum, can I have some chocolate? And you said no, then you'd see an escalation and what that looks like is yelling, crying, lashing out and that's the behaviour they're displaying as a result of you saying no to something that they want. So, this type of behaviour is not an appropriate way for them to express their feelings, but there is a reason for them doing it. They want something. They behave in that way and hope that they get what they want. So, during a tantrum, there is control. There is control over that type of behaviour and some children might even stop to ensure that you're still looking at them whilst their behaviour is happening. So, when they see that you're watching them, they may pick up where they've left off. The tantrum is likely to stop when they get what they want. So, for example, you have said OK, have the chocolate. The behaviour would stop quite instantly. Or. You have said no and you've stuck to your guns and you've been consistent in that approach. Don't give them the chocolate and they will realise no, I'm not having that chocolate I desperately want then that behaviour should stop

OK. So, moving on to the next slide. Tantrums are common in children aged one to three years. And obviously, social and emotional language development is still taking place. They can't always communicate their needs and feelings. Maybe that speech hasn't come to them yet. They might be seeking independence, and they need something for themselves, so they might get frustrated. They're learning that age between 1 and three, they are learning how their behaviour influences other people. Tantrums are one of the ways in which young people express and manage their feelings to understand or change what's going on around them. Children are very, very clever that and we're talking about, you know, that neurotypical normal age and stage tantrums at this point they are very clever. And if they learn by behaving in such a way that they get what they want, that behaviour will continue because they know they have all they want by doing that. Older children can have tantrums too. This can be because they haven't yet learned safe ways to express or manage their feelings. What

we tend to see is quite often as they hit puberty, we see an increase in their tantrum type behaviours coming back. So just to prepare you, if you're at that stage. By the age of four, tantrums should naturally decrease as the child begins to understand emotions more and they're also able to verbalise their wants, needs and desires. So, tantrums might look like screaming, stiffening of limbs, arched back, kicking, falling, running away. In some cases, children will hold their breath and vomit, break things or hurt themselves as part of the tantrum. The reasons, as I said earlier, may be a way of getting attention or being able to communicate feelings, hunger, thirst, sickness, or being tired. I can remember that when my children were young, definitely as they were tired, there would be an escalation in the tantrums. So tiredness is a massive factor. It could also be a response to being told no or not having something they want or expected to have.

So, managing and supporting tantrums: support your child to understand their own emotions. You can do this from birth by using words and label feelings like Happy, Sad, tired, hungry, comfortable. Identify tantrum triggers because they are very different for each child. So, like I said earlier, tiredness, hunger, worries, fears, over stimulation - that is a real thing. You might be able to make a plan to manage - to guess, for example, by going out shopping after your child has had a nap or something to eat. If you say it, you mean it, you do it. It's little bit of a mantra that we say. It's a difficult one to follow through on: mean what you say and don't allow them to have it all. So, as you know, we're all guilty as parents. We've given in to our children. Sometimes we could be busy if they're asking for something. So we say yes. Have it. Because you know we need to do what we're doing. But like I said earlier that child becomes familiar then with, if they behave that way, they get what they want. So when we use the say, it mean it, do it if you are saying no. No chocolate. We stick to that and as we continue, use a consistent approach, hopefully the child will learn OK by kicking, screaming, having that tantrum is not necessarily going to get me what I want. Remember that during a tantrum, your child feels angry and we can all feel angry.

Anger is an OK feeling to have, but the child hasn't yet developed a way to express their feeling appropriately, so it's important that we acknowledge that feeling for the child from a young age. And let them know how they are feeling. Distraction. This needs to happen during the early stages of a tantrum, so their favourite food or a toy or TV programme, colouring, drawing activities whatever it may be - use that as a distraction. Ignore it: if you know your child and those around them are safe, ignore the tantrum. Giving no response is often the best response, just something for you to think about. If you know that they are safe, OK. So let's look at meltdowns and shutdowns then.

So we've got to understand what a meltdown and what a shutdown is. So at the most basic level, a meltdown is caused by a feeling of being overwhelmed and a sense of loss of control. So if you remember from tantrum, I said that tantrum is goal directed behaviour – it is very much where the child is in control. Now I'm introducing to you that the meltdown is something that's beyond the child's control. So what they're experiencing is absolute, internal overwhelm, and then loss of control of all of that emotion. So very, very different control from a tantrum, lack of control for a meltdown. The child feels that they're no longer able to cope and the resultant behaviours are an attempt by the child to regain some control over themselves, those around them, their environment, or a combination of all what is going on for them. It's most helpful if meltdowns are understood as a response to their emotions rather than wilfully defiant tantrums or difficult behaviour and we are going to explore about a little bit later on how it can look like the child is in control and that the child is being difficult. When the meltdowns are happening, we often react to the behaviours and the behaviours for a meltdown might be perceived as being challenging and difficult. So a consequence is then put in. So we have as we've already mentioned, meltdowns are best understood as an emotional response. This is not a battle to be lost or won, so you know, we're not going to kind of give the child what they want as we would in a tantrum like situation because they might not know what they want when they're having a

meltdown. So we know it's not a battle between you and the child, it's more of a crisis to manage and looking at it from a point of view where this is beyond the child's control, you are the child's emotional breaks as the main person and your response to the meltdown can make a huge difference to the outcome. Try to separate your relationship with the child from the behaviour, so that's really, really important in remembering that you know your child has no choice in the meltdown and making that kind of division in your mind can really help. Visible signs of a meltdown may include withdrawing from communication, hiding, aggressive or self-injurious behaviour, curling up in a ball, rocking intensely, making sounds to drown out the world around them. They will all be different for each child, so we need to be mindful of what a meltdown looks like for our child. So, it is also worth knowing that some children may respond to being overwhelmed by appearing to completely shut down and becoming nonresponsive rather than by having visual meltdowns. This is simply an alternative reaction to being over stimulated or overwhelmed, and children are able to choose which way they respond in. In any particular situation I always kind of worry a little bit more, I think about the children who shut down because that emotion is internalised. So that is a worry that I have because on the ground on the surface they appear fine, but that's obviously not what's happening for them.

So let's move on to the next slide. So, we're going to look at the three stages of a meltdown now. This is something that our professional training has kind of taught us and when we can kind of understand the stages of meltdowns, it can really, really help to manage them more appropriately. So the rumbling stage: some of you may have used this, it might be new to some others. It is what we think a meltdown path pattern follows - so rumbling: These are early indicators that the child is becoming overwhelmed and can include behaviours such as pacing, fiddling, rocking in a chair, a change of facial expression and withdrawal. The list is different for each child but can often be a feeling that starts with adults, with us as parents, and it's definitely something that I experience. You know, sometimes it's just a gut feeling and you think,

oh, OK, things are not as they should be here. We might kind of get that from a change of facial expression from our child. You know, their eyes might look a little bit different. They might start pacing and you get that, Oh, OK, things are not as they should be. So listen to that feeling is the message at this point the child is not yet in full blown meltdown. But you know, that's something I always liken it to a pan of water, I suppose that's sitting on the cooker and it's just starting to simmer, you know, so you know that it's going to boil soon. It's just starting to simmer. What can we do to prevent getting to that boiling point if that's where we don't want it? Rumbling on the surface there at this point we could try to alter the environment. So do we need to provide ear defenders or other sensory items to help regulate them? Do they need to be removed from the environment they're in, such as the classroom? And most importantly, what we'd encourage you as parents and parent carers to do is to reduce verbal input for the child. So we'd encourage you not to try to reason with the child or talk to them at length during this rumbling stage - about anything about what's going wrong in that situation, or if you're trying to divert them to something else, you know, for some children it can work if use their special interest. But reducing our language during the rumbling stage is really, really important, because if they are trying to listen to us process what we say in and formulate a response that can add to that feeling of being overwhelmed when they're already climbing that ladder to feeling completely overwhelmed. So reassuring - you know, I'm here. You know can be enough or shall we put ear defenders on? Shall we go upstairs? Into your quiet space. Like that's what we're doing at the rumbling stage. Despite our best efforts of rumbling stages, not always going to be possible when to identify or to catch it before it gets to meltdown point or catch that water before it boils. So when it has reached the meltdown situation - no interventions from you, and I just want to reassure you that will help them to recover. So when they're in the full blown meltdown the child has lost control and there is very little you can do to help them during that point apart from having a presence, so during the point of meltdown, the child they've lost control and the adrenaline in their body as a result of the fight flight freeze response has now

completely taken over. To manage this we have to ensure that they're physically safe. So you know we need to ensure that there's no objects around them that they could harm themselves with or that they're on the side of the road. You know, that type of thing we have to show physical safety is always paramount during that actual full blown meltdown their safety is of utmost importance.

Again, reduce your language as much as you possibly can, reassuring mums here, dad's here and that should be really it. You know, some children who will need space. Some children will need you to sit close by with them. Again, it is knowing what your child needs in that meltdown, and we are going to give you a few tools later on to help you start identifying that, what another really important point is, is if you're at home and the meltdown is happening, there's other siblings, other children in the vicinity, our advice is always to remove the children, not the child who is having the meltdown. Because again, you know, any kind of physical touch kind of guide him out of the room that can add to the meltdown, and that feeling of overwhelm. So removing the siblings is what we would suggest. It's far from ideal. It's almost firefighting during this point. But when a meltdown is happening is physical exhaustion of the child, and time is the only way that the meltdown will stop. So we got 2 stages there of rumbling and meltdown. So rumbling is early intervention. What can we do to stop the progression and despite your best efforts, it has escalated into a meltdown and that is the advice for a meltdown. The last stage is a recovery stage, you know, as important as any stage. And I've worked with lots of children who will need to sleep after a meltdown because their bodies are physically exhausted. So it's important to again identify what your child needs during that recovery process, some children will recover quite quickly and seemingly fine. Well, like I said, other children will go to sleep. It is important, though, that we give them enough time to recover before we wish to discuss the meltdown or anything that led up to the meltdown, because having that discussion too soon when we know that they're not completely regulated, can escalate that situation again. So it's almost like you're letting them have the lead and letting them come to you, which

would suggest that they're more open to communication after that meltdown. Some children will apologise because, like I said earlier it's not something they're choosing to do. So they will apologise and they can become quite upset and you know afterwards, because they know that situation is not what you'd want to see. But yeah, like I said, each child is different. Right. OK, let's move on to the next slide. Shutdowns. So if a meltdown is equivalent to the fight response, then shutdowns are similar to the freeze response. I hope you're all familiar with the fight flight freeze response when our bodies identify shock, danger. If not, please go onto YouTube. There's lots of good videos that will explain the fight flight freeze response. So we would say that the meltdown is a fight response if outwardly showing, a shutdown is more of a freeze response. So, as with meltdowns, shutdowns are often the result of situations with high demand in one or more of the following areas. So very emotional situations, social situations and situations that require a lot of thinking and concentration and situations that are very active or physical. So. Lots of reasons why shutdowns happen, but in particular in those areas. Like I said at the start or on the surface, the child may appear fine, but we should be mindful that they are struggling and being able to ask for help or show us that this is the case. In my mind when I envisage, I like to use analogies about a duck on water. You know, you look at a duck on water and they look like they're having a great time. They look like they're absolutely fine - underneath the surface of the water they're paddling, really, going for it to stay afloat. And I think to myself, a shutdown is quite similar to that - on the surface, a child can appear like they're OK, but underneath they are paddling. They're struggling.

So we may see children who are unable to verbally communicate during this time, even children who are usually able to verbally communicate. During a shutdown, they may lose that ability to verbally communicate. We have children who will hide under tables. They'll refuse to engage in any social interaction with adults or peers. Some children may cry and be unable to give an explanation as to why. Please be mindful that these children also have a rumbling stage. It might be less obvious than those who have

meltdowns, but the strategies are exactly the same when we are managing a shutdown, as we are managing a meltdown. Give space, reduce your language and allow them time to regulate again.

So in summary, then, a tantrum - driven by a want or a goal. They repeat the behaviour if they have achieved that goal, they will check in to see if they still have your attention and they will have some control over how they behave. A meltdown - driven by a reaction to something, feeling overwhelmed, not aware of the attention they receive from others. Like I said earlier, you know, even if the child knows what they want, even if they had what they want, it's not going to stop the meltdown because the response to their body is having to those overwhelmed feelings. There is no control over this behaviour, and it will only stop when they feel safe and are regulated again. So very different reasons, as you can see there. But what they both have in common is what we actually see. The list is endless. But to pick out a few - kicking, screaming, verbal aggression, hitting out, swearing, crying, we got the withdrawal as well. The hiding, the shutting down. They're refusing to communicate. Now one of the questions that we always get asked by parents is, I think it starts off as a tantrum and it ends up in a meltdown. What do I do? And I think you've got to know your child in terms of what they're experiencing at that time because regardless of any autism, ADHD or neurodivergence, they are children and they are going to experience, you know, tantrum type or, you know, demonstrate tantrum type behaviour because they are children and that's the way children initially communicate. So there are going to be times where they will have tantrums and we would encourage you to manage that as a tantrum. But there are also going to be times when that turns into a meltdown because a tantrum will be overwhelming for them anyway. So, we always say you are being detectives. It is so important taking that step back and sometimes things have to go wrong for us to know how to manage them better the next time. So, if you know you're quite confident your child is having a tantrum, you manage that as a tantrum: you say it, you mean it, you do it. If then that flips over it into a meltdown, we

encourage you to manage that as a meltdown - to step back. Protect the child's physical safety. Reduce your language. All of that stuff to manage the meltdown.

OK. Moving on for the next slide. Like I said at the beginning, it's also important we spoke about the difference in tantrums, goal directed behaviour and meltdowns. Now we can explore a little bit about the triggers, because this is the part for us that we need to concentrate on to prevent as many meltdowns as we can. If we can manage the triggers a little bit better and support the child around the difficulties, hopefully we would see a reduction. Now 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. This list is not just these things, it's an endless list. But we've picked out a few to cover with you today. Changes in the teens, lots of our children prefer a life that is predictable so that they can make sense of what is happening around them. Lots of children, particularly with autism, need to know what is happening, when it's happening, and in what environment. They have a desire for sameness, which provides them with more control. If there is a change in routine, it can cause a considerable effect on our children, which will result in the likelihood of meltdowns. So, we're talking about changes such as a change of teacher at school, very common for our children, because a new teacher is unpredictable: different rules, different expectations of what they are used to. And trying to make sense of this, with our children in a high sensory input of a classroom can be a massive trigger for meltdowns. So, it is about bearing in mind, if that change of routine is an issue for your child, what can we do to prepare them for that change where possible. I mean life is unpredictable, but if we know of a change then you know we need to support the child and let them know what is happening and when is happening so that they can prepare for that change. Sensory overload - this is where there's just too much information for the child's brain to process. For some children, an amusement park provides more sensory information, including sights, sounds and smells faster than the brain can process it or the child can process it. Other busy environments can include shops,

public transport concerts, even school. And I think this is why we see a lot of escalation in school with, you know, with meltdowns and shutdowns. Decisions - for other children the prospect of making a large number of decisions can cause a meltdown or following the demands certain situations and environments place on them, something that would appear to be as simple as trying on new clothes for school or being asked to have a shower can cause a meltdown. There's a different workshop based on helping children to make the right decisions. When we're understanding autism and ADHD, offering choices, but limited choices is what we suggest. So would you like a bath or a shower? Would you like Weetabix or toast? So offering choice but limited choices?

Moving on to the next slide. Dealing with anger - since meltdown triggers and angry feelings are directly related. Having discussions about anger during the times when your child is calm. So, when you know they're open and responsive to a discussion. It can help you to establish a foundation to build upon when trying to identify your child's triggers, ask them some important questions. If they're able to answer you about emotions or things like what makes you happy, what makes you sad, what makes you angry, the purpose of this is to teach your child how to identify various feelings. To learn what it is to feel angry, happy, sad, disappointed etc. Also try linking the feeling with the situation. So, I'll give you an example of that. You felt angry when you lost the game. This also helps your child to communicate their feelings to you clearly so that they 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 a parent. Label your feelings and be mindful that you were teaching your child the concept of feelings and they are not instinctively learning this. That is so, so, so important when we're talking about children who are neurodivergent. That understanding, internally of their own emotions is an area that we need to support them with. It's something that's come instinctively for neurotypical people. They pick that up from the people in the environments in which they're in. But for our neurodivergent people, that is not the case. So we do really need to support them. They need strategies like this to help them

understand their emotions. I always feel like this part is as important as giving them food and water to try to help them understand themselves. Yeah, just to bear that in mind, OK, so we got delayed rewards and incentives - some children tend to be very rigid in their thinking and when they see or set their mind to something they want it now. And if they don't get it, they may have a meltdown. Now, you'd think to yourself, is that a tantrum because they, you know, they're getting something, they want something, so they're going to behave that way to get it. This is amplified. This is more than, because their fixed mindset thinks that if something is happening and because we know that they like the predictability of, you know, routine. And if that is taken away, then you know that can be a trigger for meltdowns. As a parent, we understand that waiting patiently for a reward or desired activity is OK for neurotypical children, but not always OK for neurodiverse children. Often, they don't have the coping skills to understand the concept of delayed rewards. So for those of you who have tried things like reward charts, you know the shells in the jar, that type of thing, they're not going to work as well for neurodivergent children because they very much live in the here and now and not projecting ahead to Friday. So, if I'd be good all week, on Friday I can have something that I really want - that is really difficult for neurodivergent children. So, it's better to give an instant reward, because they are living very much in the here and now. So again, it will be your job as a parent to teach your child, your son or your daughter to wait for things that he or she wants. So it is about supporting that development of waiting and we suggest things like social stories, games - board games are really good for things like that in terms of waiting for something special. So rather than saying you know if they're good Monday to Friday, on Friday they can have something. Do we kind of find this special interest? Give them a small reward when that desirable thing has happened and then they can build up to get that bigger reward. So, to put that into context, if they're motivated by money (and that's another point, we need to find something that motivates them), if they're motivated by money, we could be giving them 20p. If they managed to get out of bed in the morning, we could give them 20p every morning. And then on Friday, they can go to the shop to

spend that £1. So, the instant reward is the 20p, but the longer-term goal is that pound to go to the shop. I hope that makes sense. Internal frustration - so some children can tend to be what appears to us as perfectionist 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. This is happening to me and my house just to share that a little bit of personal experience here: My son, he has ADHD although not diagnosed, he very much meets the criteria at home anyway for ADHD and he needs to know that we are listening to him before we formulate a response. So, what is really, really important, if we don't allow him to get his point across and if he doesn't know he's being heard, we see that meltdown engine definitely triggering. So, 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 to the dentist or hairdressers may all be situations where your child will become anxious, but not always know that they're feeling this way. So, their tolerance level becomes lower and then likelihood of a meltdown will increase. It's always the same as I know this particular time with you now as we're coming towards the end of the school year, around Christmas time we see an escalation in behaviours, because the routines are not as predictable. So, lots of different things happening in school, you know, at home things might be a little bit different, so their tolerance levels naturally become lower because they become uncertain and that lack of control increases. So, if you always feel at this time, you're teetering on that edge of meltdown because they are feeling that uncertain feeling internally and not necessarily understanding it. OK, overstimulation - going to the shops, attending birthday parties, etcetera, it can get quite overwhelming for them to the point they start to react to the unfamiliar surroundings and faces. Many of our children will exhibit frustration simply because the unfamiliar gets to them, especially as if there's a lot of new noises and smells. Therefore, if the environment seems too sensory unfriendly, or over stimulating for the child, you may simply want to take time

out for them to regulate or alter the environment around them. Go into a small shop as opposed to a bigger supermarket, going when you know there will be less people around, take a list so that you know what you need to get, so you don't spend too much time looking around. This is really important: plan and prepare as much as possible with your child. Although we would never suggest there's some things that can be 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 the relative's house might be best saved for another day when they are more tolerant. So, I know sometimes it is about us managing our own expectations. I think we think in our minds that you know we can do this, our child can do this, for example going to the shop as they've come home from school. We sometimes don't even think about it. We just naturally do it. But if we're taking our child who is already overwhelmed coming out of school straight into a busy shop, that is going to trigger meltdown behaviours because they're already overwhelmed and we're just adding to that. So sometimes it is about planning and preparing and thinking, OK, after school is not the best time to go to the shop because they are going to need time to regulate. Pick your battles and lower your expectations is kind of the message for that point.

OK, moving on to the next slide. So, keep carrying on with the triggers, time constraints. Sorry, our children don't always understand the concept of time as adults do. Well, saying you have 5 minutes left to finish what you're doing may mean absolutely nothing to some children. On the flip side of that, some children might have a real good concept of time and expect you to leave dead on the time you said you were going to, but we just want you to be mindful that not all children have a concept of what 5 minutes is what 10 minutes is. Children are really clever, as I said earlier, and pick up on your anxieties around time constraints, but they're not always able to work quickly in order to meet your demands. If you are 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. Naturally, we're all up

against the clock, particularly in the morning. Sorry, I've lost there, lost my train of thought. In the morning, we're all going to be rushing and like the key here is to plan and prepare as much as you can so that you have what you need to hand - might be a simple little strategy. But if we are running around every morning looking for different things, that is increasing our anxiety and in turn increasing the child's anxiety, and you know that lack, sorry, loss of control for them. Mornings can be particularly difficult when you have to get school or work on time. Having everything ready would help massively. Lots of children will have anxiety about going to school, so their tolerance levels are lower in the morning, as are yours to do to the time pressures. Remember, keep the mornings in particular, as calm as you possibly can. This can help the child regulate easier and be less anxious about the school day. If your child is particularly anxious in the morning and then they have to transition into school and that is an issue, I would be looking or asking the school if they can have some time before they go into the main classroom to help them regulate in a quiet space.

OK. So, we're going to look at the overwhelm bucket. Some of you may have heard of this. We've kind of adapted it a little bit for our purposes. So, the same activities that can cause a meltdown may not have the same effect the next day. And I often hear you say why, why could they do it yesterday, but they can't do it today. So, each activity we do or stimulus we come across adds to the bucket. Similarly, maybe something as simple as bright light or background noise. Things we enjoy can also add to the bucket, so it's not just about the demands or sensory overload. Even the happy stuff that the child enjoys adds to the bucket. As each individual stimulus adds to the bucket, the water levels begin to rise. Some activities are calmer, such as stimming or time alone, can help empty the bucket before it overflows. So, if you can see at the bottom there, we've got time alone, special interests, stimming, which allows the water to kind of, you know, drip back out so that the water at the top is more manageable, so more stimulus can go in. If things are being added to the bucket faster than it empties, then the bucket will overflow, which will be result in the bucket overflowing – and a

meltdown. Oh, I can see this. I'm not picking up all of the questions - the comments in the chat, I can see stimming. So stimming is a behaviour that children and all neurodivergent people really can use to help regulate emotions. So, what we may see is high pitched, screaming, humming, rocking, hand flapping, moving from foot to foot. It's different for each child, but we described the stimming as a way to regulate their internal emotions. It's almost like they're using something to block out everything else around them that's going on. Meltdowns are different for everyone, so as I said earlier, give space and time and try to kind of divide the child from the meltdown is what we would encourage you to do. Because like I said earlier and I've said quite a few times, a meltdown is a lack of control. OK, strategies.

So different strategies for tantrums and meltdowns. They are different. I hope we've kind of got a little bit of an understanding of that now. So for the strategies that can help stop or manage them, it's important to remember that the key difference between the two types of outbursts is that tantrums usually have a purpose. The child is looking for a response. Meltdowns are a reaction to something and are usually beyond the 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 might not even know what they want. A meltdown ends in one of two ways, which is fatigue, where they become so tired that they have to stop. Or maybe you know, we've reduced the sensory input around them. This can help the child to feel less overwhelmed. For example, if you were in a supermarket and you can see that the rumbling stage is kicking in and the child is becoming unregulated, if you alter that environment and step outside the supermarket, you might see that meltdown diffuse. So, it is about being mindful of the area or the environment you're in. OK, so how can we handle tantrums and meltdowns differently? So, to reduce tantrums acknowledge what your child needs without giving in. Make it clear that you understand what they want. So, a phrase such as, I see that you want my attention, when your sister is done talking it will be your turn. Then help

them see that is a more appropriate way that the behaviour will work. I'm still using a phrase such as when you're done shouting, tell me clearly that you're ready for my time. So, in a nutshell, to manage a meltdown, help your child find a safe, quiet place to regulate. Let's leave the shop and sit in the car for a few minutes. Then provide a calm reassuring presence without talking too much to your child. Your goal is to reduce the input for your child. Regular breaks and using now and next can also help to prevent overwhelm. So, what's now/next: now we're having tea, next we'll have a story. So, you tell them what's happening now when you're preparing them for what's going to happen immediately afterwards. So, knowing the difference between the tantrums and meltdowns is the key to helping your child through them. It may also help you get a better idea of the kinds of situations that are challenging for your child. You can also explore tips and how to deal with noise and other sensitivities. Sensory input is really important to be mindful of for neurodivergent children as it plays a large part in us seeing, I suppose some of the behaviours. Lots of people will say out and about is the most difficult time to manage a meltdown and I'd absolutely agree with that. And you know, regardless of what information we'll give you here, sometimes our own fight flight freeze response takes over, and we might not always be able to put this in practice. So, I think it is about not beating yourself up about that, but being mindful of what we should be doing can help. If it doesn't happen the first time or the second time, or if you manage to do one thing out of a list of things, you should be doing, then that's OK. But being kind of thinking to yourself, what do I need to do can really really help.

So, I'm reading the managing a meltdown in public slide now. So, our advice would be to stay calm wherever possible. Take some deep breaths, look around and assess the situation. Focus on your child and what he or she needs in that 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 think. That's one of the main things we hear from families who we support. They had a meltdown in a supermarket or on the street.

Everyone was looking at me and yeah, I get it. I've been there. I know it's really, really difficult. But part of managing a meltdown in public is completely blocking out all of that that's going on around you and focusing on your child in that moment, practise that will take because you're always going to have an element of everyone is watching, but they really don't matter in that moment. So, work on ignoring the people who stop and stare. You were doing your best and that's all you can do it. And it doesn't matter whether they understand or not. It would be good if they did, but we know we can't control other people. So, managing that situation is about ignoring others. Stay strong. If the meltdown is happening, it is nothing we can do to stop it from as we know from our previous slides, you have to wait it out. And as much as possible, if you can try to find a safe space which is quieter or away from the traffic. And be as strong as you possibly can. Sometimes, and I certainly have had to paint on that picture that you were in control, you know, so on your face, you look like you're managing the situation. I mean, inside I have been in absolute bits thinking how am I going to manage this? But you have to try to because as we said earlier, we are our children's emotional brakes and if we're kind of showing them that we are struggling in that situation that might not help them regulate as quickly then so let others know what you need from them. So, if you are with other people, other adults in the group, or even, you know, siblings who you think are able to help you in that situation, come up with a plan together beforehand. Say some people may want help once they interpret the situation. So, if you've had that discussion and other people can think, oh, this is a meltdown, I can do this to help they may want to help. So don't be afraid to have a plan if there's other people around you. You may 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 meltdowns in public is really, really difficult. There's no getting away from it. And like I said at the start, it is going to be a time where you feel really anxious about doing so and then happening. But like I said earlier, if you've identified the triggers you've done your best to support the triggers and the meltdown is going to happen. You're in that situation

anyway, so if we can do it a little bit better this time and then a little bit better the next time, you know, hopefully it will, it will help you and the child moving forward.

OK. On to the next slide. So continuing with the meltdowns in public - Practice, but pick your battles. The only way your child will get better at successively being in public is to practice doing it. We always say small steps, so start small and work your way up to busier places or scheduled activities. If you know your child is triggered by noises you can practice in quieter places. I think, for example and then move towards places with more and more noise over time. For example, if you know the supermarket is a trigger for your child, can we take them to the corner shop where we're going in to get one item and come out? Hopefully you know we've exposed them then to that social situation, but not in such a large scale. So, I think small steps and build on that planning and preparing them wherever possible for what that activity is going to look like. Teach coping strategies. Before going on the outing work on some methods of calming, especially in the case of sensory overload. Look at ways to prevent this, or reduce the triggers. So, for example if you know they're sensitive to noises, invest in some noise cancelling headphones or headphones with music and practice wearing them so you know, encourage them to wear them at home before they go out in public so that they are, you know, they know the benefit of them before they are in that situation where they are experiencing a little bit of anxiety. Manage your own expectations. I touched on this earlier, but it's really, really important, I think, for us as parents carers for us not to kind of beat ourselves up when things do go the wrong way. So, you've planned an amazing day out. You've covered all avenues and you're feeling positive about the day. So, you've planned and prepared the child. You've packed a bag full of distractions, you've got the ear defenders. But for example, after 30 minutes of being there, you can tell your child is becoming unregulated and despite your best efforts to support them, you know the best option is that you have to leave. It's so disheartening for us as parents because we want our children to have nice things, do nice things, but sometimes we've got to quit while we're ahead and we think of the

part positives -you've got there. You've got to be out, and you've got to the activity, you've been in 30 minutes. All right, it's not the three hours we planned, but celebrate the achievements. What am I trying to say there is regardless of how much you plan and prepare, sometimes things are unavoidable. It is, and again picking up one thing there, it is difficult for other siblings. I totally get that there's been lots of times where I've had to leave activities and my other children are absolutely, you know, really devastated that they have to leave. But then you've got to kind of weigh that up with is it beneficial for them to be there when your child is so unregulated anyway? OK, let's have a little think about school.

And moving on to the next slide. Reasons for meltdowns at school. So, these are things we hear from parents all the time, and it's kind of quite often the default for school managing some difficult behaviours there - being kept in at break or lunchtime, so it's used as a consequence for behaviours that challenge, but the bigger impact is that the child, especially those with ADHD, don't have the avenue to release their built up energy or having a break from the sensory environment of a classroom, and the behaviours will become even more difficult to manage in the classroom. Teachers really do shoot themselves in the foot by keeping them in at break time, because that overwhelming feeling continues, and they do experience that more difficult behaviour afterwards. Regular sensory or movement breaks can help children who struggle to focus sit at the table. They can help them to manage as well as those who use this time to regulate. It is so important that they have this outlet. We always try to advise parents to ask schools not to keep their children in during break time, because that is such a vital regulation time for them. In fact, they should be having more regulation times and like that suggests in terms of regular sensory breaks. Anxiety - school can be overwhelming for lots of children from a sensory perspective, as well as unexpected change. A whole lot of demand and challenges that the child may struggle with. School may see repeated questions, withdrawal, pacing, complaining of illness, or angry outbursts. So again, recognising the early signs of these behaviours, providing the child

with a time out card or regular opportunity to go to a quiet space. Along with preparing them for change and in general being mindful of the sensory environment that the child is in, what we want to encourage teachers, school staff to be aware of is what a meltdown looks like for your child. And again, we're going to give you some tools later on to help that happen. But open communication with the school is absolutely vital in terms of if you know what your child's triggers are to letting them know that and how you feel like they're best supported. Again, it's so, so important. I said earlier on keeping them in at break times and lunch times is not what we want. But on the flip side of that, unstructured times can be really difficult as well. Children, particularly those with autism or with an autism diagnosis may struggle with break and lunchtime. Maybe they're hitting out at other children and as a result have been taken into the school or the head teachers office. This may be what they want to happen as they struggle to know what to do during the unstructured time. So, what we look at is it an activity we can give them whilst outside or whilst you know whilst they're in their quiet space. So that they have some sort of focus during the unstructured times. It could be chalk so they can chalk the yard, books. It could be to introduce a buddy so that they have some way of interacting with another child.

OK. On to the next slide. OK, Assembly again can be a massive trigger. Lots of children who are neurodivergent will find assembly difficult for a variety of different reasons. Mainly I would say for sensory differences we may see difficult behaviours and they may be removed. Again, that might be what the child is seeking. It is removal from that situation. So, we use the word backward chaining. It's a National Autistic Society term that we kind of incorporated. So, what that means in this assembly context way is taking the child into the hall 5 minutes before the end. This time is gradually and slowly increased as they tolerate it more. The aim is that they finish with everybody else, so rather than them going in at the start and then have to be removed, if they come in towards the end, they finish with everyone else – that is backward chaining. If that is something that you'd interested in finding out about, the National Autistic Society,

give a better understanding of that. Start of the day – lots of children may find it difficult to go into school, so is it an option for them to arrive through a different entrance a bit later or a bit earlier than the rest of the class? Is there a familiar person who could support them? Can they go into a quiet space to regulate before they enter the main classroom? I mentioned that earlier and I mentioned it again because it's so, so important. If they're anxious about school and that anxiety has started as soon as they've opened their eyes in the morning, their anxiety is already up there before even going into a classroom. So to manage some of our anxiety by regulation time in a quiet space can really, really help thinking about the overwhelm bucket that can help reduce the water level a little bit before they go into our main classroom. Masking or withdrawal - so these are the children who won't display difficult behaviours in the classroom, but tend to have meltdowns after school. Throughout the day, what we want to encourage the school to look at is if there's any less obvious signs, like for example, asking the teacher to check in with those children who won't ask for help or won't let anyone know that they're struggling. They may feel even refuse to engage with their peers. School will need to check in on these children and to ensure that they are OK and provide regular breaks from the classroom whilst being mindful that the child might not know that they need that regular break. They're not outwardly showing signs that they're struggling, so it is a bit of a worry, but having a strategy in place to help support those children would hopefully help reduce their meltdowns then after school. OK. So, we wanted to kind of put that into a bit of a summary, I suppose Supporting schools to manage meltdowns. What can you do to help support your child at school and also help the school to support your child? Because we've all got the same aim, which is to support your child. So, 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, and if you don't take anything away from today, you're the expert in your child, you mostly know what the triggers are and how best to support that trigger. So let the school know. Share the meltdown plan with school, and we're going to look at Meltdown plans later on for children who shut down.

Let the teacher know what they may seem to indicate. The shutdown may seem to indicate that your child is struggling. They may not know this unless pointed out to them. Arrange a meeting with your child's school to see what support that they can access during the school day. Don't wait for things to go wrong and they're phoning you, have a meeting in place as soon as you are concerned about anything. Talk to your child about their worries or difficulties at school. If they're able to communicate that with you, this one again is so, so important. Allow them time to regulate when they arrive home from school. Don't engage in them in lengthy conversations. Reduce your requests and let them have time doing what they need to do to help regulate their emotions. So very little conversation. Don't ask them to empty the bags. What they want for food. Empty a pack lunch literally as they come in, they come in home from school we're taking their lead on how much they want to communicate with us. Trying to keep our communication with them to a minimum where possible. OK, supporting your child before the meltdown: I mentioned at the beginning there about baselines. So, it's always good to be mindful of our response to our children when the difficult behaviour starts to arise and to remember that the behaviour the child is displaying at that moment is an unmet need. So, we use this diagram here as an explanation really for what's going on for your child. So, your child there, there's an orange line at the bottom of the screen which indicates that your child is struggling with it with their emotions and are displaying some behaviour is when they are calm, their baseline. So, the bottom line indicates their baseline and the blue line indicates our baseline. When we are calm, and while you can evidently see that is, they are always above us when they appear calm, and that is because they are never completely calm because they've taken in all the sensory stimuli or the requests. They are anxious about what's happening next, so they're always above us. What happens if they escalate? So, if the behaviour starts to escalate, the rumbling stage starts to engage and our response is to maybe try to reason with them, then we kind of become a little bit frustrated and maybe we start kind of being strict. As we come up off our base and we become frustrated and angry, the child would always go above us until we go up again,

they go up again until everybody is having a meltdown at the top. Or for us, we're having a bit of a situation that we feel we're not in control of, so the advice is wherever possible, and we know you're human, it's not always going to be possible, remaining as calm as you possibly can is always our advice. If you know your child is safe, taking time out of that situation. You know, compose yourself if you've got to walk out of the room to count to 10 or 1000, you know, keeping as calm as you possibly can is going to have a better outcome for that child. If there's another adult around, feel free to say, you know, don't think bad if you have to say - over to you. I can't deal with this right now. You're human and there will be situations where you have to say over to you to if there's an adult present. So as I said right at the beginning, recognising understanding and managing emotions is really, really, really important. And we can assume our children are going to need to have support to do this. And this includes teenagers as well. You can help each other understand emotions by explaining how thoughts lead to feelings. Some children, children and teenagers often need help to learn how to manage and regulate from strong emotions. Like I said earlier, they don't always necessarily know what they want or what they need. Some children and teenagers may feel all negative feelings, such as sadness or unpleasant feelings, as anger, and not always have the most appropriate way of expressing their emotions. This can even be with the case with positive emotions, where they don't recognise if they're happy or excited. I work with lots of children who, even when they're excited, they display that meltdown type behaviour because they are still overwhelmed by that emotion and they know to release it. Having that meltdown will help them to regulate, come back down. You may find you're trying to label your child's strong emotions or sorry, let me start again. You may find your child labels strong emotions, such as I'm bored, but they often can say - lots of emotions when I'm trying to say are labelled as things like I'm bored. As we say I'm bored, but that is because they don't always understand. There are other feelings in that equation.

OK, moving on to the next slide. So label emotions as much as you possibly can when you're reading, watching TV, visiting friends. Look, Ben is smiling- he's happy. Really, really important from as young an age as possible. Point out emotions such as, Yossi's smiling, he must be happy. Be mindful, not all children who need the diversion to recognise facial expressions, so having that pointed out to them may help emphasise your own emotional responses. For example, I'm so excited give me a high five. Maybe think about relating to that one activity, you know, give me a high five it's Friday. That type of situation and emotion attached there. I've done this with lots of children. Draw a picture of the body and go through with the child where people feel a strong emotion, such as sweaty palms, or a faster heartbeat, ask your child to draw how they're feeling. Encourage your child to explore emotions through play, so we talk on things like messy play, drawing or painting, puppet play, dancing, and music. Label your own feelings. Like I said earlier, be the family that speaks openly about feelings, the good and the bad, because we've got to role model feelings for our children. What I've got here is a tool. I'll introduce it as a tool. You may come across it before, but again it's really invaluable to help as a reflective tool to look back on. OK, what happened there. So we call it the behaviour monitoring chart might be known as an ABC as well, but what we want to use this for is as a direct observation tool that can be used to collect information about the events that are occurring within the child's environment, that can help identify any triggers. So, before - this relates to the environment they were in, any activity or event that happened immediately before the behaviour that's causing the difficulty or the meltdown. So, were they in school? Were they in the shop? What was the environment? What was the situation. During - what behaviours we observed? Is it withdrawal? Are they hitting out? Are they screaming? Are they swearing? And then afterwards - this refers to the outcome or the event that immediately follows a response How the child reacted? What did they achieve from this behaviour? What did it look like afterwards for the child, as they were coming down, you know from that meltdown behaviour, did they move on? Did they kind of, were they taken from that environment and that's what they wanted. So, there was a,

you know, they were able to regulate. That's what we mean when we look at after the meltdown, that will be available on the website. So, you can like kind of use your own format. Now I bet most of you are thinking what have we gone through all that? I still don't know how to manage a meltdown. The reason why we put so much emphasis on understanding meltdowns is because that's what we need to do. We need to understand it to support it better. But there are going to be situations where we cannot prevent the meltdown. So how do we manage it? OK, some meltdowns are unavoidable - provide time and space. If attempts to deescalate have not been successful. You may need to wait and give your child space. Make sure whether in a safe area and they don't have access to items that 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 and there is exceptions that which we're going to go on to now. But again, this may be different for you for each child. Some children might need you quite a distance away from them. Some children might need you next to them, but using your observation and knowing your child is going to give you a clearer picture of what you need to do. Avoid power struggles, don't punish or shame your child for what is happening. Instead, provide reassurance that you are there, love them and validate their feelings. Avoid making threats like, if you don't stop, there will be no more iPad, as typically this will escalate the situation. We come from a point of view of why are punishing something that the child is experiencing beyond their control, so we don't talk about any consequences of anything at all, really during this time staying safe for you and your family. If your child is physically lashing out at you, please, and I say a second time, ensure that there is a safe distance between you and them if you were unable to leave the immediate area. Ensure that there is something between you, such as a sofa, ensuring siblings are aware of what they need to do when the meltdown happens. Don't try to remove your child, remove everyone and everything from 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 volume voice and talk slowly to model for your child what calm looks like when you need to speak. I just want to go back to the way

if your child is lashing out physically, again, we may work with lots of parents who will allow the child to lash out at them as a way of getting all that pent up emotion out. But what we want to say to you is please don't stand there and allow the child to hit you physically or anyone around them because we are giving them a message it is OK to hit and even if we're talking about a child aged 1,2,3, or 4, they're going to get bigger and then hit harder. So, we need to model from quite a young age that it is not OK to hit and lash out, and by keeping that safe distance, that will help - not in all cases, but hopefully it will help. You might need to kind of step back, physically step back from the situation and do a firm hand – no, stop. If no is a trigger, stop, or you know, saying their name, but please the message is don't stand there and allow them to hit you as a way of regulating their own emotions.

Moving on to the next slide. This comes from our friend Tony Atwood, and I know lots would be familiar with him and it is advertised as, *Managing Meltdowns by the Experts* and this is what we'd encourage you to do. Have one person take control of the situation. Stay calm, be assertive and feel confident. Remember to keep the role of an adult, be firm and in control where possible. We're human, so again we know that. Use a low, slow tone of voice with clear but minimal words. I can see you're angry and that's it. Or mum is here. Dad is here. When speaking to your child sit to the side and look away from their face. Contact can be a trigger or it can be a sensory discomfort for our children. So again, eye contact. If you sit to the side of them, that should help with that. Keep your body language calm and not imposing so that's when we're towering over them. We sit down at their level. When giving directions acknowledge the emotion. Give the reason for a direction and then give a direction. So, for example I can see you were feeling worried. You need a break. Sit on the bean bag. This may be before the meltdown is happening. Keep your child safe by removing anything they might hurt themselves on. Give your child as much solitude as possible by giving them an area that is quiet. If, possible, create a permanent quiet calm space and call it something like calm space. Ensure your child understands this space and it's not a

punishment. This is not a naughty corner. It's not time out, it's a place that's quiet for them to regulate and calm. Appeal to your child's special interest again during the rumbling stage, you might have a conversation about their special interest or you know, have them make a list of the type of things that they enjoy. Obviously, when they're calm and regulated. Give your child an emergency calming down box for example. It could be filled with wiggly toys, puzzles, catalogues, stress balls, spinning things, things that you know that your child would like. They might not engage with it, but if it is there, they might reach for it. Don't touch your child unless it is in a protective action to stop violence or, you know, it helps them. Don't match your child's mood with your speech. Again, staying low and slow because your child could be shouting, screaming, swearing, but low and slow is what we suggest. 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. Try to avoid NO where possible and don't talk about the consequences. So, I mentioned earlier about a meltdown plan. And this is something I think is a tool that we don't use enough of, and this is something that I personally and professionally feel like we need to put more emphasis on and we are certainly going to be doing it as a service and a safety plan for a meltdown. It should be used continuously and consistently in all environments with other family members and school. So, because it is unique to your child, what we're looking at is things like triggers. We've spoken at length about what triggers are. So, they are what may happen that would result in your child having a meltdown. So, we are talking about overload, we're talking about sensory, all the things you know triggers your child - red flags or warnings. So earlier on I spoke a little bit about the rumbling stage and what physical things that can look like pacing, changing colour of face repeated questions - these are warning signs. So then that the next stage: coping skills - what helps me. So, what does the child need? Do I need time out? Do I need to take time out of the classroom? Do I need to go to my bedroom for time out? You know, quiet time. Places that they feel safe. So where does your child need to be to feel safe? And it might be in an area in the school where they feel more safe than

anywhere else in our house. It hasn't always got to be their bedroom. It could even be your bedroom. It could be the garden. So yeah, communicating with our safe place is what you need and what the child needs from them, the adult in the meltdown situation. So, it could be to reduce your language. It could be not to ask me questions. It could be, don't tell me I'm naughty. And remember, this isn't for you, solely you, this is going to be something that is the same in school as well, so schools will quite often, you know, go into kind of 'as a consequence of this, this will happen', but your child doesn't need to hear that during the meltdown. So that would go on to that section. So Meltdown Plan, have a think. Like I said, this will be available on the website. You can use the headings. Think about creating your own meltdown plan. And in addition to that, we've got a safety plan. So, safety plan, we thought we'd put in place for the children who are experiencing that, you know, quite extreme outcome as a feeling overwhelmed. So, the meltdowns may be physical towards you as parents, towards other siblings, there could be damage of property happening. So, when we devise a family safety plan, we look at maybe looking at a code word, so think of a word that you can use as a family that lets everyone know a meltdown is about to happen. That works really well in my house. Having a code word - discuss as a family, the potential triggers that may lead to a meltdown for the child and write them in your plan. In here as well, we could talk about outings because you know we're having a discussion with siblings at this point and, if we know that going out is quite often a trigger, we can reassure the child that we're not going to stop going out, we're going to try. But if this happens, we have to put our safety plan in in action and leave that situation. So having them involved in this type of thing may help the siblings. Signs of overload - discuss as a family what the signs of the child being overloaded could be and write them in your plan. So again, what those early, rumbling stages look like. Strategies that may work, discuss as a family what helps the child during a meltdown. Think about what roles the people play and what should and shouldn't be done. So, for example, I've worked with families and my colleagues have experienced this where, for example, if the child having the meltdown is lashing out at the parent, the sibling will get in

between. So, they're having the hits as opposed to the parents. Obviously, we don't want that to happen, so having a clear role for people within this safety plan can alleviate things like that and stop that happening. Sensory tools that may work. What would help? Alter the environment, and it could be something like somebody turns the TV off, turns the radio down during their meltdown. But again, knowing what those sensory issues are and how it can affect your child in meltdown and communicating that as a family. Notes, is there anything else you should be aware of during meltdowns and write that in your plan? So, for example, does your child scream? Will they be asking for help during that time - these type of things would go into the note section. OK so to summarise. What we spoke about, I know we've run over time and I do apologise for, that. Top tips to remember: inform and prepare your child for any changes in routine; acknowledge your child's emotions and remain supportive; divert your child's attention with objects, toys, food that they may like such as Lego or engage them in their special interest. Teach your child to communicate when he or she is upset. And that is done by working on and understanding their emotions. Offer an alternative to something that is not possible and the child wants to make him or her feel like they have some control of the situation. Check and resolve any physical discomfort, because, again, quite often neurodivergent children have things like a very high pain threshold and they might not recognise that they're in pain or you know they're tired, they might feel angry. Sensory input can affect messages getting to the brain. So, it almost is like elimination from our point of view and ensuring those things are not the reason for them being unregulated. Observe your child closely to identify a meltdown rumble so you may have time to try to prevent the meltdown. Learn from previous meltdowns. I know it's bad, but sometimes things have to go wrong for us to know how to do it better the next time and then we can modify strategies as needed. Use the ABC, the behaviour monitoring charts, use a diary to help you identify triggers and share them within your family and with school during the meltdown. Our message is - reduce, reduce, reduce, reduce your verbal and physical input wherever possible. Remember your child's processing of information, logical thinking and reasoning is

not working during the times of them being so unregulated, in fact you talking to them may very well be escalating the meltdown. And I think that is it. That is just a very brief slide of what we offer workshop wise and our contact details can be found on the next slide. This is going to be put on to the website so you know if you want to contact us, that's absolutely fine. Our details are there as well.