

How to Handle Your Child's Meltdown

By Michelle DellAquila M.A.

Parentingcoachonline.com



Tantrums and meltdowns can test the very last nerve of every parent. Children who experience meltdowns are reacting to their environment in a negative manner. Meltdowns can raise blood pressure, cause headaches and stomach aches and upset everyone involved.

There are a few things you can do to handle tantrums effectively. First, it is important to understand that tantrums are learned behaviors, which means you can help your child unlearn this type of behavior by teaching them the proper tools they need in order to communicate better.

Don't Let YOUR Emotions Heighten the Situation

It is important to stay calm and rational during a meltdown. Your calm behavior and demeanor can be felt and seen by the upset child which can assist them in returning to a calmer manner and quicker. It can be difficult to remain calm, especially if a tantrum occurs in public. By remaining calm, you show your child by example how to handle this type of stressful situation with poise and adult-like behavior.

Address the Level of Anxiety

Your role during a tantrum is to listen. Take a deep breath and quiet yourself and repeat slowly what your child says so that they know you are listening and engaging. A calm manner can reduce the flood of anxiety and emotion your child is currently feeling which can help them rationalize and calm down.

Leave Reasoning for Another Time

Your child is not present at this moment. They are anxious, their senses heightened, they feel frustrated and angry. Don't try to reason with your child if they are not actually able to at this moment. Teach your child to speak their frustration or to use their words instead. Use caution when trying to "make" them come to their senses. They are only reacting in a child-like way to things they can't express through speech or an understanding to others.

Reinforce Positive Attitudes and Behavior

Acknowledgment of positive behavior is key to helping curb tantrums and meltdowns. This sheds a desired light on being good and receiving praise or a tangible item of sorts for their positive behavior. Acknowledging the good can help your child understand that getting upset and throwing a tantrum will not get them the desired reaction they might want.

Give Your Child Some Space

Trying to talk to, correct, or further interfere while your child is very upset can only make things worse. Try giving your child some space and do not acknowledge the bad behavior. Reacting to their emotional overload will have no effect. It is best to wait until they can be calm and understanding once more. Forcing a child to sit or listen during a meltdown can stress out both the child and parent more.

Meltdowns do occur, and most children experience them at least once. It is a learned behavior and can strike when the child cannot relay what he or she wants, reacts to a situation poorly, or is confused or hurt. Remaining calm is the number one thing for a parent to do. Don't try to force your child to behave or stop. This can make things much worse. Encourage positive behavior and make sure they are acknowledged for it as you guide them in understanding how to express themselves and cope in a healthy manner.



Michelle DellAquila M.A.

Michelle is a New York State licensed early childhood specialist who is certified to work with children 0 to 12 years old. She has 20 years experience utilizing a multidisciplinary approach. Her work has been both independently and for Agencies that offer early intervention services . Michelle is specialized in

parent coaching for families, offering advice and proven strategies for all parenting goals. Michelle fosters the healthy development of children, creating customized plans to support their physical, mental and emotional well being. Michelle is passionate about her work and her greatest joy is helping families.