

When Your Child Melts Down

Remember: a meltdown is a nervous system in overload, not a child trying to give you a hard time. In that moment, your calm is something they can borrow.

What to do

- 1 **Steady yourself first.** Exhale longer than you inhale. Drop your shoulders. Lower your voice. You can't calm a storm while you're in one.
- 2 **Keep everyone safe.** Move breakable things or siblings away. Use fewer words, not more.
- 3 **Connect before you correct.** Get down to their eye level and name the feeling: "You're so frustrated."
- 4 **Wait out the wave.** Skip the lecture. Their thinking brain is offline until their body settles.
- 5 **Teach later, when calm.** Talk about what happened and practice what to try next time.

Try saying

- "I'm right here. You're safe."
- "It's okay to be mad. It's not okay to hit. I'll help you stop."
- "We'll figure it out when your body is calm."

Instead of

- "Calm down right now!"
- Threats or bargaining mid-meltdown
- Long explanations while they're upset

For me to notice

What usually sets my child off? (hungry, tired, transitions, screens ending...)

What helps *me* stay steady in the moment?

When to reach out: if meltdowns are frequent, very intense, unsafe, or seem out of step with your child's age, talk with your pediatrician or a counselor.

"Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath."

JAMES 1:19