

Tears, Tantrums & Temperament

Dealing with *troublesome* children

Tantrums



- ▶ Tantrum
 - ▶ an outburst that happens when a child is trying to get something he wants or needs.
- ▶ Childs nature
 - ▶ Tears may flow more freely in children who are sensitive by nature.
 - ▶ Kids have trouble keeping their emotions in check if they are Impulsive by nature.
- ▶ Environment / Situations
 - ▶ Most children at some stage will struggle to manage their feelings and behaviours, particularly when they are tired, hungry or facing new experiences.
- ▶ Learning and attention deficits are more prone to tantrums.
- ▶ Developmental disorder
 - ▶ Some may get angry or frustrated quickly due to their nature or a developmental disorder.

Meltdown

- ▶ A meltdown
 - ▶ is a reaction to feeling overwhelmed often resulting in tears and or a tantrum.
- ▶ Too much sensory input
 - ▶ For some kids, this happens when there is too much sensory information to process. The noise and activity of an indoor play centre or pool or going to the home of someone unfamiliar might create a feeling of being overwhelmed.
- ▶ Too much to think about
 - ▶ For other kids, it can be a reaction to having too many things to think about. Shopping can cause a tantrum that triggers a meltdown.
- ▶ Sensory Input
 - ▶ It is sensory input that floods a child's brain that results in being overwhelmed.



How does it end?

- ▶ Once a Meltdown happens, some experts believe a child's "fight or flight" response kicks in. That excess input overflows in the form of yelling, crying, lashing out or running away.
- ▶ Collapse / calm reassurance
 - ▶ Meltdowns tend to end in one of two ways. Fatigue—young kids wear themselves out. The other way is to change the amount of sensory input. Calm, verbal reassurance is required.
- ▶ Source: Amanda Morin *The Everything Parent's Guide to Special Education*.
<https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/child-learning-disabilities/sensory-processing-issues/the-difference-between-tantrums-and-sensory-meltdowns>

Pre-school to school to adulthood

- ▶ In the preschool years, children's self-regulation skills are still developing and can often go up and down. Being able to consistently regulate their own feelings and behaviour is a major task for a young child.
- ▶ By school age, children become more flexible and are better at regulating their own emotions and actions. Choosing schools and friends should be a careful and researched choice parents make.
- ▶ When children learn to self-regulate they have stronger friendships and relationships with others, are more able to pay attention and learn well and deal better with the normal stresses and disappointments of daily life.

How do they learn self control?

- ▶ Models
 - ▶ Parents and carers are important models for their children in their day to day life.
- ▶ Watching
 - ▶ All children learn to regulate their emotions through watching the adults in their life (i.e. parents and carers) manage their own feelings and behaviour and by the way they assist the child to de-escalate.
- ▶ When children see parents and carers effectively regulate their own emotions and actions, it helps them to learn how to manage their own feelings and behaviours.
- ▶ "Children learn to regulate thoughts, feelings, behaviours and emotion by watching and responding to adults' self-regulation."
- ▶ Source: Florez, I. R. (2011) Developing Young Children's Self-Regulation through Everyday Experiences. Young Children, p.51.

Building skill leads to Independence



- ▶ It is this growing ability to control their own feelings and behaviour that allows a child to become more skilled in their relationships and interactions with adults and other children.
- ▶ Emotional and behavioural self-regulation contributes to young children's growing independence.
- ▶ What can happen when a child is not in control of their own feelings?

Success and Happiness



- ▶ Teaching self-control
 - ▶ is one of the most important things that parents can do for their kids;
- ▶ leads to success and happiness in life.
- ▶ Self-regulation skills
 - ▶ linked to how well young children manage many other tasks such as concentrating, sharing and taking turns.

Practising?

- ▶ Playgroups for toddlers
 - ▶ can be a useful place for interactions with others to practice these skills, under close parental supervision.
- ▶ Reading picture books about emotions
 - ▶ With your children can also can help in their self-development.
- ▶ Team sports
 - ▶ allow children to regulate their emotions in a group situation, learn patience and self-control.



Playing Games

- ▶ Play games that help kids practice self-control -
- ▶ “Red light, Green light.”
 - ▶ When a child hears the words “Green light!” he is to move forward. When he hears “Red light!” he must stop.
- ▶ Dance tempo
 - ▶ Kids dance when the music plays and freeze when it stops. Dance quickly for fast-tempo songs, slowly for slow-tempo songs.
- ▶ Jenga. Twister. Card games. Any game that has rules and involves taking turns.
- ▶ Source: <http://www.parentingscience.com/teaching-self-control.html>

Managing stress

- ▶ Developing self-regulation
 - ▶ By developing self-regulation, children will be able to manage difficult and stressful times that occur as part of life, such as loss of a pet, death of a family member, older siblings leaving home, family relocation, moving schools.
- ▶ Talking through life events
 - ▶ ‘Being there’ and talking through these major life events with children is imperative regardless of their age to help them understand and reduce the sense of helplessness and frustration.



Trauma

- ▶ Trauma at any stage of development can have a negative impact on the physical and mental health of the child. Researchers are now learning that impacts may present years after the trauma.

Source: Australian Child & Adolescent Trauma, Loss & Grief Network
www.earlytraumagrief.anu.edu.au

Where are they in the self-regulation scale

- ▶ One way of understanding self-regulation difficulties in babies, toddlers and preschool children is to look at their behaviour.
- ▶ Behaviours can be broken down into two broad types:

Externalising behaviours

- ▶ For example: tantrums, fighting with peers, not following an adult's directions, hitting, spitting, and throwing self on the ground.
- ▶ Easy to spot
 - ▶ These behaviours are often relatively easy to recognise and are quickly noticed.
- ▶ But disruptive
 - ▶ These behaviours can be quite disruptive and are likely to demand attention from parents, carers and teachers.

Internalising behaviours

- ▶ For example: worry, anxiety, sadness, becoming easily upset, withdrawing from social situations, turning away from parents, carers or teachers.
- ▶ Difficult to spot
 - ▶ Internalising behaviours tend to be more difficult to notice because feelings are directed inwardly by the child and do not necessarily draw attention from others.
- ▶ Need help to express
 - ▶ A child who internalises their emotions still experiences strong feelings and needs help from others to express such feelings and emotions.



On or Off & self-regulating for stress

- ▶ Stuck On or stuck off
 - ▶ In general, children who struggle with self-regulation find it hard to maintain a balance and their stress levels can get stuck in the 'on' or 'off' position. When this happens children find it hard to move back 'into balance' by themselves.
- ▶ Source: Gonzalez-Mena, J., Widmeyer Eyer, D. (2009) Infants, Toddlers, and Caregivers: A Curriculum of Respectful, Responsive Care and Education (5th ed), p.226. McGraw-Hill
- ▶ Feeling stress
 - ▶ To self-regulate feelings and behaviours is linked to regulating stress levels.

Responding to stress

- ▶ Responding to stress is an essential part of the body's response to life experiences.
- ▶ Distress
 - ▶ Difficulty regulating stress is related to a large range of mental and physical health concerns.
- ▶ Eustress
 - ▶ A positive response to stress is one of the key indicators a child has learnt to regulate their emotions and behaviours. This regulation should be able to be maintained throughout teenage years ... and into adulthood.



Temperament

- ▶ Temperament is a set of in-born traits that organise the child's approach to the world.
- ▶ https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/child-development/temperament_and_your_child/
- ▶ The development of the child's personality is intertwined with these traits - for example:
- ▶ Introverted, extroverted, sanguine/talker, melancholy/thinker, choleric/doer, phlegmatic/watcher.

Plastic and Elastic

- ▶ Temperaments and personalities are not static; they can be altered through life experiences.
- ▶ Recent Neuroscience studies have conclusively proved that the brain can “re-grow” as it has plasticity.

<http://www.learningrx.com/ankeney/2016/12/29/neuroplasticity-what-is-it-can-we-build-a-better-brain-2/>

