

Behaviour Workshop

How to help at home

- We want our children to behave well, and to:
- have respect for themselves and others; n be polite to others;
- know how to behave in different situations;
- be able to concentrate and pay attention;
- share and to take turns;
- know how to win and how to lose.
- But children often behave quite differently, and we may feel annoyed, frustrated and embarrassed.

Meltdowns or Tantrums?

Meltdowns are different from tantrums. Tantrums are about your child feeling frustrated and wanting more control over a situation. Meltdowns are about your child experiencing an emotional overload and not thinking straight. They will need your help to calm down. It's normal for children to get upset - and important that they can tell you when they are.

1. Show your child you understand what they're feeling

My daughter used to have meltdowns when I picked her up from After School Club. I used to get so upset that she didn't seem happy to see me! Then I realised that it's only once she's with me that she feels safe enough to release all the emotions from her day. Now I just hold her and tell her I understand how much she misses me during the day. She hardly ever has meltdowns after school anymore.



2. Let your child know that they are safe

- Staying close to your child while they are experiencing a meltdown lets them know they are safe.
- Take them somewhere quiet if possible. If they allow you to, try holding them or rocking them. Allow them to cry.
- If they are lashing out, stay close and reassure them. Try saying, “I am right here”, “You are safe” and, “This will pass”.
- Acknowledge they're upset, “You wish you could play with your cousins all day” or “You wish we could stay at the park longer”.
- Your child may try to hit you and damage things around them. Remove anything that can cause injury to them. You could say, “I know you are upset but I love you and won't allow you to hurt yourself”.

3. Be patient

- It can feel really horrible in the moment, but your feelings will pass - along with the meltdown. Here are some ways to stay calm and think mid-meltdown:
- Get yourself steady before you try to help your child.
- Pause and take some deep breaths.
- Think about any triggers that might have caused the meltdown. Can you remove or reduce them?

4. Help your child to understand what has happened

- Make sure both you and your child are calm. Then you can try to help them understand what has happened. Here's are some things to try:
- Go down to your child's level and engage in eye contact. If your child struggles with eye contact, sit alongside them
- Describe what happened: "You were having a great time with your friend and then I said it was time to tidy up the toys and say goodbye. You got really angry and started throwing toys."
- Show some empathy: "I know it's hard to stop playing and say goodbye to friends after a playdate. Maybe you felt angry with me when I said it was tidy up time?"
- Try some emotional coaching: "Toys are not for throwing. Next time, can find a way to you tell me with words that you are angry?"
- Start to repair things: "I think we are both feeling a bit tired. How about we snuggle up and watch a film/read a book/have a drink and a biscuit?"

Why is my child behaving like this?

- What makes children behave in challenging ways? Children do not usually misbehave just to upset or annoy their parents. There is often a reason behind a child's behaviour.
- It may be:
 - they are upset or anxious about school;
 - they feel jealous of their brother or sister ;
 - they want their parent to listen to them;
 - they want their parent to spend time with them.
- Behaviour patterns can get stuck. At some point most children will misbehave to get attention.
- If a parent doesn't pay much attention when children are behaving well, some children will try 'acting up' to get attention, even if it results in a telling off.

Positive Parenting

Top tip 1

Talk and Listen

As we know, all children are unique. Getting to know your own child, and knowing what makes them angry or agitated can help you prevent angry or upsetting situations before they happen. Talking and listening to your child helps them to understand what's going on:

Language

Try to use positive words. Tell your child what you want them to do, not what you don't want them to do. Instead of "don't make such a mess" try "tidy up your toys please".

Change your tone

Your voice is a powerful tool. Sometimes changing your tone or volume can be enough to stop a fraught situation or get your child to do what you want. This can work equally well with older children. If you react or speak in a completely different manner to which they expected they might be surprised.

Listening

Your child is trying out his/her new language and needs to be heard. Encourage your child to talk to you – sit beside him/her – they'll find it easier to talk and listen to you if you're not standing over them.

Feelings

Help them find the words to tell you how they are feeling, even if it takes time. Remember the Zones of regulation language.

Explaining

If you have to say 'no', give your child a good reason and offer an alternative – "Rosie is playing with the doll now, let's find you another toy".

Involve your child

Where possible talk with them about the rules and what you expect from them. Be clear.

Top tip 2 :Play

A few ideas for play might be:

- Painting, drawing and colouring: Children enjoy creating works of art and the messier the better!
- Water: A washing up bowl of water and a couple of cups or a plastic jug can keep a toddler busy for ages.
- Imagination: Get out some teddies and dolls and create a tea party, a zoo made up of all sizes and shapes of toys or arrange a 'shop', with some of the (unbreakable) contents of your kitchen cupboards – let their imagination run wild.
- Keep it simple: Try to keep a box of toys, crayons and play dough handy and make the most of bath time for playing with a couple of cups and a sponge.
- Join in: Before you start your 'job' or after, or both! Show them that what they're doing is important.

Top tip 3:

Understand changes as they grow

Exploring

Young children find out about their world by touching, shaking, tasting, pouring, squeezing...the list is endless! This isn't naughtiness, but a way of learning about their world. Make your home 'toddler proof' by storing valuables and breakables away from your child so they can explore safely. The mess of life with a toddler can be exhausting but think of all the learning they're doing!

Independence

Part of growing up for your child will be pushing against the boundaries and becoming an individual. You can help them by letting them do as much for themselves as possible – for young children, keep toys at a child's height, let them dress and feed themselves.

Encouragement

Your child will learn what's ok to do from you, so give lots of praise and attention to good behaviour. If you only pay attention to your child when they misbehave, they'll learn to misbehave to get your attention.

Top tip 4: Set boundaries

Children need clear rules, boundaries and routine.

- Be consistent.
- Parents need to agree the rules. It will help the child if both parents take the same approach.
- When you say no, mean no. Keeping to this can be hard work, but if you have a few clear rules, it helps you and your children.
- If you make promises keep them.
- Rules should be simple and clear.
- Keep to as few rules as possible.
- Try one new routine at a time and get it working before moving on to the next.

Tip 5: Reward and Notice Good Behaviour

- Sometimes it is easy to ignore your child when they are behaving well, and only notice them when they are misbehaving. Children love their parents' attention, and if they have to behave badly to get it, they will. Give them lots of praise when they are behaving well, rather than focussing on misbehaviour.
- Rewards do not have to be material things.
- Real praise and encouragement is the best reward as it can boost a child and build self-esteem and confidence.
- Try not to stress over the little things. If you are praising things they are doing well, and ignoring the small niggles, your child will learn that unacceptable behaviour no longer gets them the attention.

Tip 8: Deal with Meltdown Moments Positively

- There will be difficult times for every family – usually when there's too much to do in a short space of time, or when what you need to do, clashes with what your child wants to do.

Recognise Triggers

There might be some specific triggers or times when your child misbehaves. Be aware of these and try different approaches.

e.g. The morning rush

- "I try to get clothes out and make up their packed lunches the night before – it gives me a bit of extra time in the morning."
- "Getting them to do a bit for themselves always helps, even if it's just getting a bowl and a spoon. They feel like they're helping and it's one less thing for me to do."
- "I get up before everyone and have five minutes on my own for a quick coffee each morning. If you feel rushed you will be stressed and this feeds into your child's behaviour."

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At the supermarket checkout

- “I try and find something else to interest her before we get to the checkout – sometimes I get him to draw when he’s sitting in the trolley, or make a ‘shopping list’, or to look out for the next thing on my list.
- “When he’s sitting in the trolley I pass him things to put on the counter and he really likes that.”
- “We plan something ‘nice’ to do together after the shopping, as we shop, like watching a favourite DVD or going to the park.”

Bed time

- “When I get in from work, I try and have five minutes just for them – once I’ve heard about their day, it’s easier for them to let me get on and cook tea.”
- “We’ve just started giving him a five minute warning so he knows that he’s got a bit more time to play then it’s bedtime.”
- “We have a ‘bedtime routine’ of a bath, book and then bed.”

Top tip for you...Look After Yourself

If you make sure you get a break to relax, this may help you cope better.

Try to:

- take time for yourself;
- keep interests outside the home;
- take up the offer of help from family and friends;
- get rest when you can; ■ look after your health;
- know your limits;
- get together with other parents and their children – children also need company

Unique

- Your child is unique and we hope there are some takeaways here that work for you. If you're looking for help parenting children with additional needs, you can get specific advice from specialist organisations.