

## Is it a Tantrum or a Meltdown?

### **Tantrum**

An outburst that happens when a child is trying to get his wants or needs met

Tantrums stop when children learn to express what they want through language.

Sometimes children are impulsive and struggle with difficult emotions such as anger or frustration.

### **Meltdown**

A reaction to feeling overwhelmed, a sensory overload or having too much to think about and too much to process at once.

Meltdowns are usually beyond the child's control. Reducing the sensory overload can help de-escalate or they might get exhausted and stop.

Some experts believe it is a fight or flight or freeze response that triggers - finding a quiet place to calm should help.

Tantrums have a purpose

1. To get what they want or need

2. To get rewarded for using more appropriate behaviour

### **A child's behaviour is a response to how people around them react:**

If the adults give in – the tantrum works = 'I'll do it again, to get what I need' – the child learns that tantrums are a good way to get their needs met.

Or, the adults listen and help find a solution that pleases everyone and the child is praised for listening and following instructions. The tantrums should reduce and they learn other ways of getting their needs met.

## Strategies for Dealing with Tantrums

Acknowledge  
what he  
wants  
without  
giving in

Talk about his  
frustrations:  
How do we know when  
you are getting  
frustrated?  
How can we help?

Try to  
understand  
the trigger  
for the  
tantrum

Praise what you  
want to see:

“You got frustrated but  
I am so pleased with  
how you calmed and  
spoke calmly to me”

Use ‘when-then’  
language

“When you speak to  
me in a calm voice,  
then we can talk this  
through”

Acknowledge  
his Feelings.

“I can see you are...”  
or “I can understand  
that you are...”

Ignore it  
If attention makes  
it worse:  
“I’m going to give  
you some time to  
calm down”

Use the  
Calm Down  
Spot