



## Stress and Meltdowns

Children need to learn how to bounce back from big feelings that may overwhelm them (meltdowns). But meltdowns often make parents feel stressed. Even when you feel very stressed, you need to stay calm so that your child can stay or become calm.

### Managing your own stress

You can reduce your stress by connecting with others and by practicing *mindfulness*. Mindfulness means paying attention to your own thoughts, emotions, and body.

Aim to practice mindfulness for 5 to 10 minutes each day. You can find directions for brief mindfulness exercises on many websites, such as

- <https://www.mindful.org/take-a-mindful-moment-5-simple-practices-for-daily-life/>
- <https://psychcentral.com/blog/1-minute-mindfulness-exercises/>

### Preventing a child's meltdown

- Build playful routines at the beginning and the end of activities to gain cooperation.
- Act silly. Example: If your child refuses to put on socks, pretend that you forgot how to do so. Say something like "I guess I'll have to help you put your sock on!" Then put the sock on the child's head.
- When you ask your child to do something, pretend to be the voice of a stuffed animal, doll, or other toy.
- Use puppets to talk with your child about a situation.
- Read books about feelings with your child.

### Managing a meltdown

- Respond to a meltdown with calm. Stop your child from hitting or throwing things, and then hug and reassure.
- Avoid an angry face or voice, which will frighten your child and prevent him or her from listening.
- Smile and show interest as your child starts to calm down.

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- [Info@peaceathomeparenting.com](mailto:Info@peaceathomeparenting.com) • 1-661-PARENT-6
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