



MINDFUL
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MELTDOWN CHEAT SHEET

TIPS FOR TODDLERS TO TEENS

When your child—toddler, adolescent or teen—is melting down, your maternal/paternal response is to fix the problem. But you'll be more successful if you first take a moment to help your child feel validated.

1. PAUSE AND BREATHE.

Before you even begin to address the meltdown, **stop yourself and take a deep breath (or two, or three)**. In a heated moment, you are more likely to respond to your child's anger with your own anger, which only fuels a treacherous fire. When you pause and breathe, you tell your brain that everything is okay. If you have already introduced these breaths to your child, you can invite your child to take a breath too.

2. VALIDATE YOUR CHILD'S EMOTIONS.

Example – young child

“You’re feeling angry right now. You don’t like that I won’t give you a cookie before dinner. I know you really like cookies.”

“I see that you’re feeling sad. You don’t want to go to bed because you’re having fun. I know you love to play with your Legos.

“You look frustrated. You’re having trouble riding your new bike. It’s not easy is it?”



Example– tweens and teens

“That sounds really
disappointing...”

“That must be incredibly
frustrating...”

“I bet that was upsetting...”

3. START YOUR SOLUTION WITH “AND” NOT “BUT.”

When you follow your validation with “But...” your child will go right back to feeling invalidated. There is something about the word “but” that negates any good intentions of the preceding words. By substituting the word “and” (or simply eliminating the word “but”), you will change the way your solution is received.

Check out these before and afters:

Example – young child

BEFORE: You’re feeling angry right now.
You don’t like that I won’t give you a cookie
before dinner. I know you really like cookies.
But you can’t have dessert before you eat
your dinner.

AFTER: “You’re feeling angry right now.
You don’t like that I won’t give you a cookie
before dinner. I know you really like cookies.
And you can have that cookie as soon as you
finish your dinner, okay?”

You might still get a tantrum after all this, but the more you approach your child’s meltdowns in this way, the less likely your child will be to spiral out of control.



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Example – tween or teen

BEFORE: “You’re mad that I took your game privilege away. I know how much you enjoy playing games with your friends. It’s not easy when you know they’re all playing and you can’t, right? But you didn’t follow the rule I set about game time limits.”

AFTER: “You’re mad that I took your game privilege away. I know how much you enjoy playing games with your friends. It’s not easy when you know they’re all playing and you can’t, right? And do you remember that we agreed on a time limit for games? And that if you go over, you lose your privilege? I have to keep my end of the deal on that. Thanks for understanding.”

Again, your child may not walk away from this interaction in a wonderful mood, but you are establishing a strong foundation of connection that will only grow from here.