

Meltdown Management

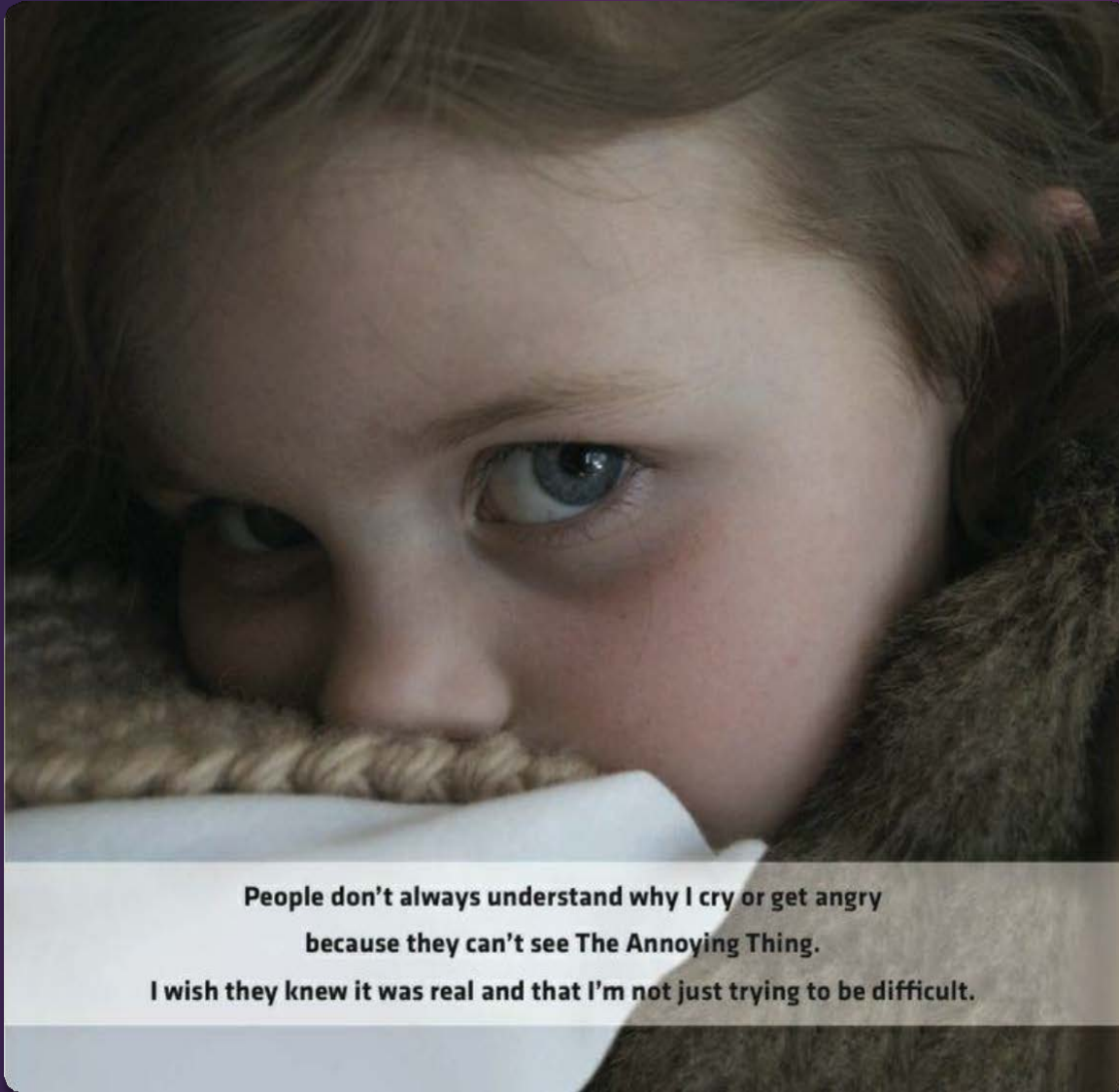
Emily Coler Hanson M.S.,
LMFT, CGP



Anne Carlsson

Nurturing abilities. Changing lives.

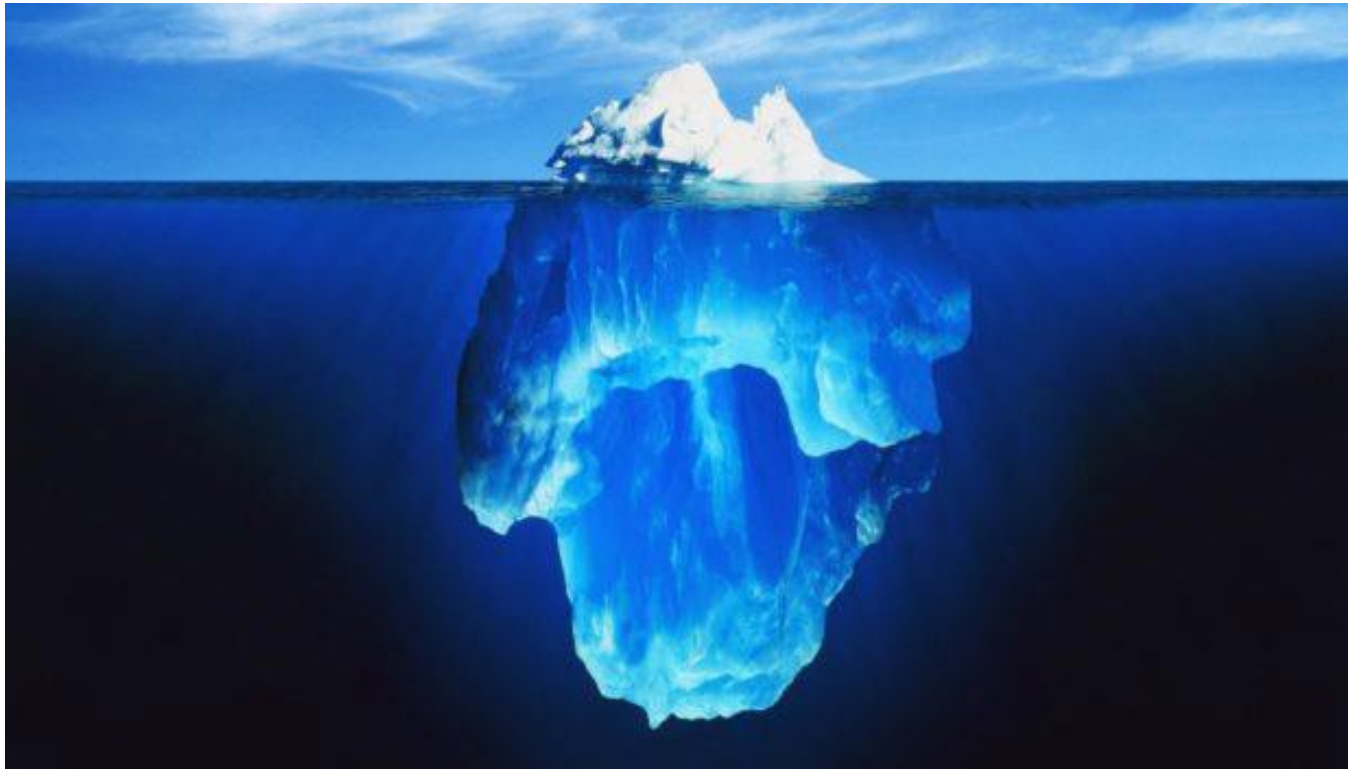




**People don't always understand why I cry or get angry
because they can't see The Annoying Thing.
I wish they knew it was real and that I'm not just trying to be difficult.**

WHO HAS MELTDOWNS?

TBI
ASD
ANXIETY
ODD/DMDD
TRAUMA
ANYONE



It's all
about
the
brain....

Neural responses regarding eye gaze are different in people with autism (2011 Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders)

Overconnectivity and underconnectivity means that the brain can't coordinate the messages (2012 University of Amsterdam)

Research is also looking at:

- brain structure
- the topology of the grey matter
- white matter tracts

Every autistic brain is different "Same Behavior, Different Brains" (2009 Journal of Neurodevelopmental Disorders)

Genetic research

Research:

Frontal lobes

- Personality
- Social skills
- Judgement
- Emotion regulation
- Movement
- Speech
- Reasoning
- Executive function

Temporal lobes:

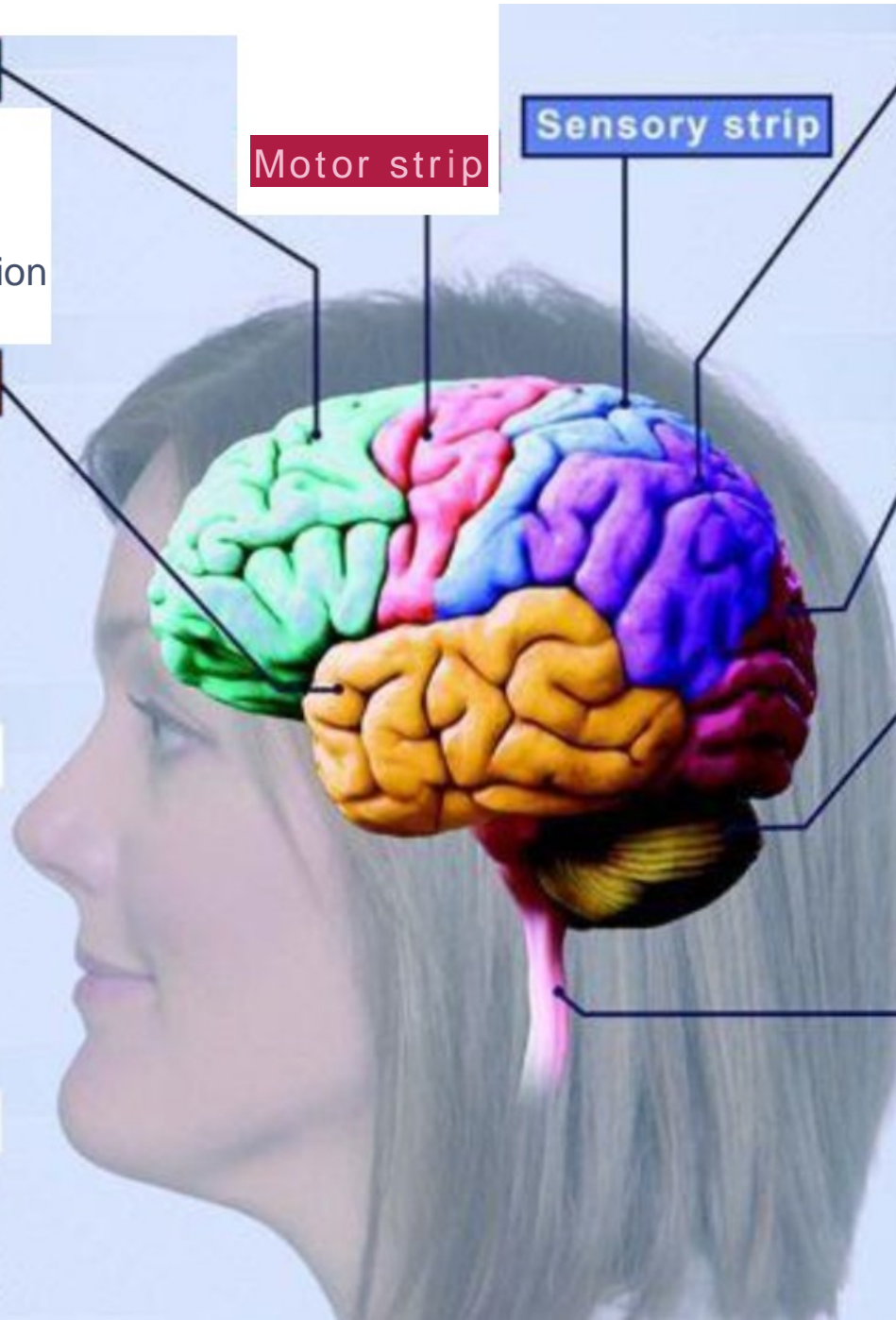
- Memory
- Combine senses with memory
- Object recognition
- Understanding language
- Art/Music
- Speech
- Hearing

Thalamus:

- Spatial attention
- Depth perception
- Relay center for information from the body to brain.
- Consciousness
- Alertness
- Sleep

Basal Ganglia:

- Memory
- Emotion
- Coordination of muscle movement



Motor strip

Sensory strip

Parietal lobes:

- Depth perception
- Spatial orientation
- Receives sensory input
- Language processing
- Spatial attention
- Writing/Reading
- Calculation

Occipital lobes:

- Sight
- Processing visual information

Cerebellum:

- Balance
- Learning
- Emotion regulation
- Coordinate movement
- Attention

Brainstem

- Breathing
- Heart rate
- Blood flow throughout the body
- Motor and sensory pathways cross sides of the body from
- Alertness and sleep patterns



FOR ALL CHILDREN; WHEN
DOES MISCOMMUNICATION,
INDIVIDUALITY OR A STRONG
SENSE OF SELF BECOME
PATHOLOGY?



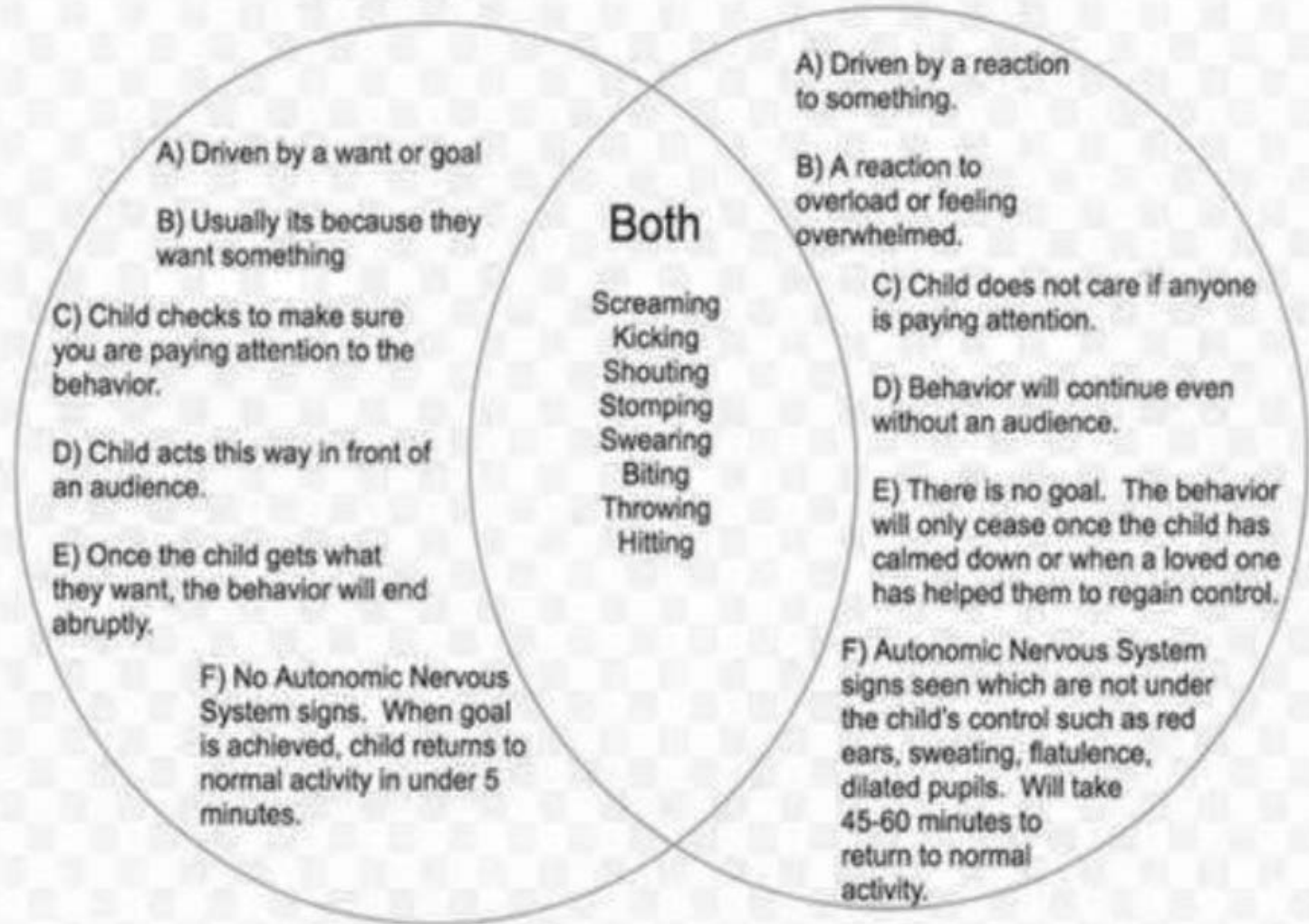
Making the diagnosis:

Differentiate by whether or not the child is behaving in a deliberate or spiteful manner. Is the behavior vindictive or retaliation? Look at their face...do they look angry or confused? Is there a logic to the behavior? Is there a pattern?

Children who have meltdowns or behave "disrespectfully" do so because of frustration, sensory overload, misinterpretation of communication, inability to be flexible, difficulties transitioning from one activity to another, etc. They often see themselves on an intellectual level with adults so will have no problem challenging someone in authority. Accuracy of facts is critical. Understand the developmental level of the child.

Tantrum

Meltdown





**KEEP
CALM**

Its an Autistic Meltdown

**NOT Bad
Behavior**

- ▶ Many issues are neurologically based differences that we identify through behavior.
- ▶ Interventions must be about the brain.





TRAUMA



- ▶ Stress and trauma limit a child's ability to learn.
- ▶ Chronic stress and trauma will alter brain development and subsequent emotional/behavioral development.
- ▶ Children who have experienced trauma live in a constant state of alarm. Therefore, they attend more to non-verbal cues such as tone of voice, facial expressions and body posture.
- ▶ Neuroplasticity is critical to understand so that we teach to the brain.
- ▶ Trauma informed care will support all children.

HOW THE BRAIN RESPONDS TO STRESS

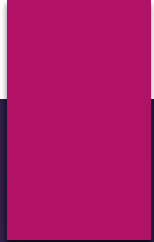
When individuals experience stress, their minds and bodies react in adaptive ways, altering their states of arousal and styles of thinking. The greater the stressor or threat, the more regressed the thinking and behavior; other physiological responses increase heart and respiration rates, as well as the body's muscle tone. Because children with a history of trauma can be in a persistent state of alarm, they are less capable of concentrating in the classroom.

Arousal Continuum	Calm	Alert	Alarm	Fear	Terror
Regulating Brain Regions*	Neocortex Cortex	Cortex Limbic	Limbic Midbrain	Midbrain Brainstem	Brainstem Autonomic
Cognition	Abstract	Concrete	Emotional	Reactive	Reflexive
Adaptive Response	Rest	Flock**	Freeze	Flight	Fight

* **Primary brain region; secondary brain region**

** **Reading social cues to interpret the perceived threat**

SOURCE: Bruce D. Perry, The ChildTrauma Academy



Define Problem/ Assess Need	Self-Motivate/ Self-Direct	Monitor Progress	Regulate Emotions and Behavior
Apply Prior Knowledge	Initiate Action/ Implement Plan	Exhibit Flexibility	Sustain Effort
Set Goals	Concentrate/ Stay Focused	Make Decisions/ Solve Problems	Complete Tasks/ Achieve Goals
Organize/ Prioritize	Manage Time	Make Adjustments/ Corrective Actions	Evaluate Results
Develop Plan	Manage Resources	Ask for Help	Plan to Improve

Executive Functioning Skills

Self Regulation Skills

- ▶ Perceive
- ▶ Initiate
- ▶ Inhibit
- ▶ Modulate Adjust
- ▶ Gauge
- ▶ Focus Attention
- ▶ Problem solving
- ▶ Focus Effort
- ▶ Shift
- ▶ Hold
- ▶ Manipulate
- ▶ Organize
- ▶ Anticipate
- ▶ Wait



It can be
confusing. If in
doubt...treat it
as a meltdown.

Nurture and Thrive

“

NEXT TIME YOUR CHILD HAS A
MELTDOWN, SEE THEIR
SMALLNESS. OBSERVE HOW
THEIR EMOTIONS ARE LARGER
THAN THEY ARE. IN THAT
MOMENT, YOU WILL FEEL
EMPATHY INSTEAD OF
EXASPERATION.

”

Ashley Soderlund Ph.D.



Meltdowns
happen and
you need to
watch them....

Types of Meltdowns

▶ Fight

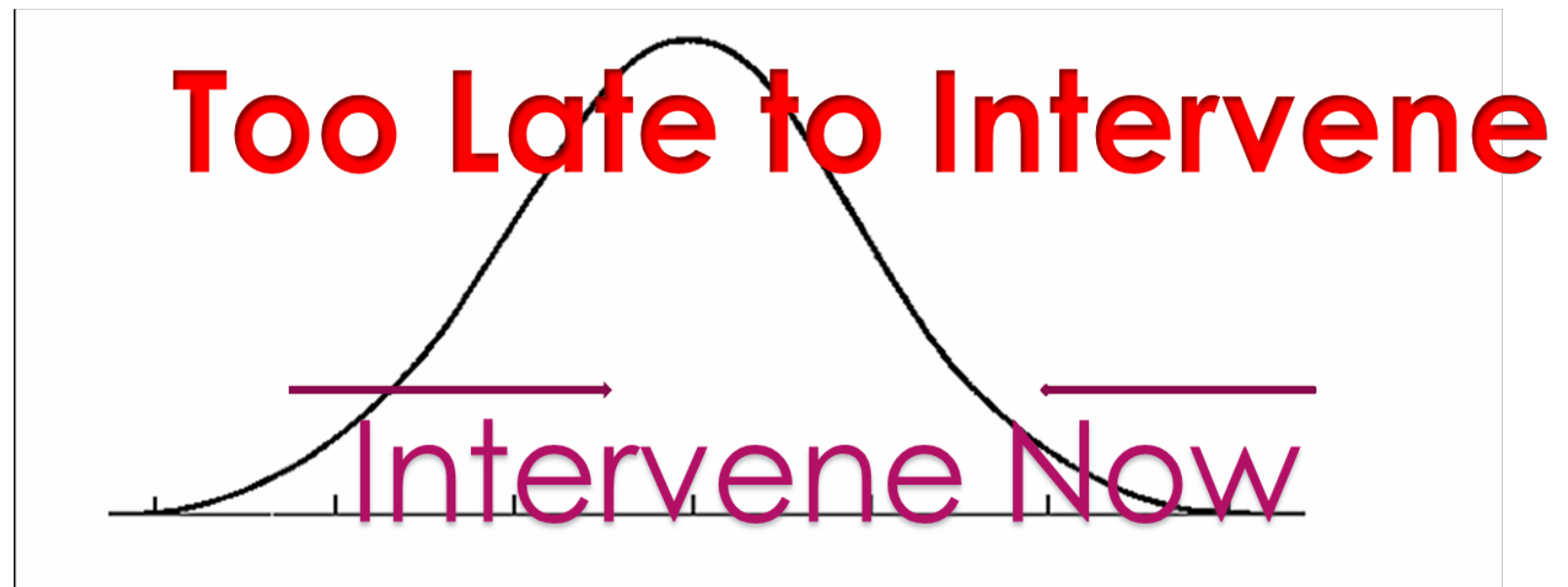
▶ Flight

▶ Freeze



Three Stages of a Meltdown

- ▶ Rumbling
- ▶ Rage
- ▶ Recovery



Recognize the cues

- ▶ Growling
- ▶ Tense
- ▶ Red face
- ▶ Pacing
- ▶ Swearing
- ▶ Clenched fists, kicking
- ▶ Running
- ▶ Hiding or going to quiet place
- ▶ Refusal, being stuck



It looks like
chaos during
meltdowns...



- ▶ If we don't see meltdowns
 - We can't determine triggers
 - We can't try new interventions
 - We won't know what works and what doesn't work

- ▶ If it was about behavior then rewards/consequences would work consistently for the child and they wouldn't continue to have issues

- ▶ We can't help if we demand compliance and don't allow the child to behave as they usually would and understand it.

Meltdown Protocol

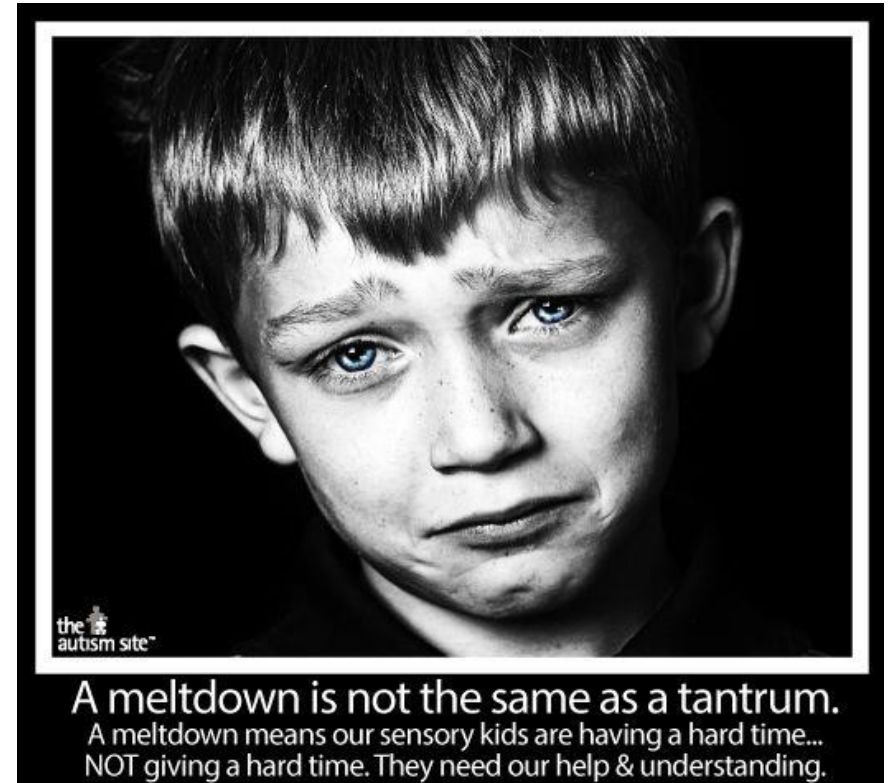
Meltdowns are common for children for children with developmental or emotional issues and they are dreaded. They are often the reason caregivers don't take their children out in public and why they avoid family gatherings. Caregivers feel shame, guilt and a loss of control. They often speak of unbearable exhaustion.

Features of a Meltdown:

- ▶ During a meltdown, a child does not look or care if those around him are reacting to his behavior. But those around the child can provide additional triggers and escalate the meltdown.
- ▶ A child in the middle of a meltdown often does not consider their own or others safety.



- ▶ They don't always give obvious clues about why they are melting down.
- ▶ A child in the meltdown mode has no interest or involvement in the social situation.
- ▶ Meltdowns seem to move along under their own power and may end suddenly or wind down slowly.
- ▶ The meltdown usually begins with a specific trigger and, after a point, nothing can satisfy the child until the meltdown has run its course.
- ▶ A meltdown often gives the feeling that no one is in control.



- ▶ While it is preferable to prevent meltdowns, it is also important to see how the child reacts to triggers and responds to calming strategies.
- ▶ Meltdowns are brain related. Executive functioning skills are at a minimum.
- ▶ Do not discipline for the meltdown. You have missed your teachable moment for the child. It can be a learning moment for everyone else.



Meeting a child's aggression with adult aggression only adds fuel to the fire.

To extinguish aggressive behaviour meet it with calmness and compassion.

Being calm isn't passive - it's mature. Be it to teach it.

Rebecca Eanes
Artist: Yuta Onoda





- ▶ Determine the **function of the behavior** or what caused the meltdown (most important). Meltdowns may happen because of
 - ▶ Lagging skills
 - ▶ Communication
 - ▶ Social interactions
 - ▶ Sensory issues
 - ▶ Overwhelmed
 - ▶ Executive skills
 - ▶ Anxious, depressed or hyperactive
 - ▶ Tired
 - ▶ In pain, not feeling well
 - ▶ Interventions... i.e. child is task based not time based

Sensory Issues:

- ▶ Sound
- ▶ Taste
- ▶ Smell
- ▶ Touch
- ▶ Texture
- ▶ Visual
- ▶ Sensory seeking



Ross Greene: Lost at School

Behind every challenging behavior is an unsolved problem or lagging skill.

Challenging behavior often occurs when the demand being placed on the child exceeds his capacity to respond adaptively.

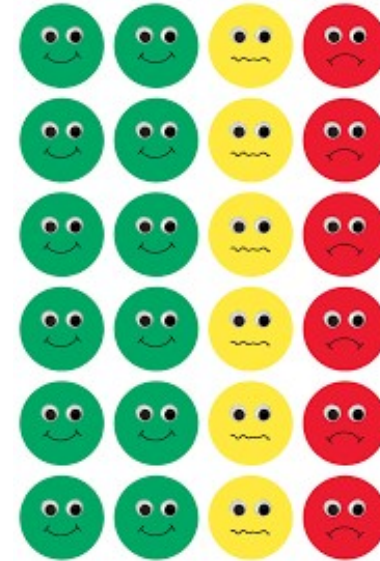
One needs to determine what thinking skill the child is lacking so that thinking skill can be taught.

One needs to determine the triggers/antecedents: the what, who, when and where

The goal is to develop a plan with the child that resolves the problem in a realistic and mutually satisfactory manner.

- ▶ Stickers, earning privileges, time outs, grounding etc.... are “unnatural or artificial consequences”.
- ▶ These can actually interfere with gathering the information needed about what skills the child needs to learn.
- ▶ Children learn to lie to in order to avoid consequences.
- ▶ Look for consequences other than the adult imposed variety
- ▶ Use the least toxic response.
- ▶ Identify the unsolved problem and resolve it.
- ▶ Always start with empathy.

Ross Greene “Raising Humans”




STORE	# TICKETS	ACTIVITIES	# TICKETS
Treat at Store	40	PICK DINNER	20
Ice Cream out	60	LIBRARY	30
OUT TO LUNCH	60	BIKE RIDE	30
Buy a BOOK	100	GAME NIGHT	30
DATE with MOM	150	Picnic lunch	40
DATE with DAD	150	Go to the PARK	40
NEW TOY	500	PICK MOVIE	40
Hit or 3DS game	550	Baking	60





TWITTER @BENJAMINMOSEF



If a child can't read, we teach
If a child can't tie their shoes, we teach
If a child can't ride a bike, we teach
If a child can't behave appropriately, we punish...

Watch for "false attributions".

Interventions: Teaching the new skills



- ▶ Determine what skills the child is lacking
- ▶ Teach the skill and practice in real life over and over and over and over
- ▶ To generalize, change the setting/situation for the skill to be practiced in
- ▶ Change: the physical or social setting, nature of the task, the cues
- ▶ Teach through positive coaching, may need to increase support in times of change or stress
- ▶ Problem solve when something doesn't work- change your hypothesis and your approach
- ▶ Find compensatory strategies: assistive technology
- ▶ Use the interventions with everyone in the class or at home

Interventions

- ▶ Change how people interact with the child
- ▶ Work on recognition of difficulties.
- ▶ Work on problem solving (Ross Greene)
- ▶ Use common interventions and language (“5 minutes to shift”)
- ▶ Learning is a process
- ▶ Don’t give up too soon
- ▶ Don’t make too many changes at one time
- ▶ Audio or video tape cues: especially for decision making, self regulation, calming activities
- ▶ Distract... You are NOT rewarding bad behavior





- ▶ Use cues to fit the needs
- ▶ Remember about time based vs activity based transitions. Be task based whenever possible.
- ▶ Use the special interests
- ▶ Incorporate the 5 senses in calming
- ▶ Relationships are more important than stuff
- ▶ Share knowledge with team members and learn from each other.
- ▶ If something works, do more of it
- ▶ Be more flexible when others cannot.
- ▶ Use non verbal communication during shut down melt downs.



Officer gets on floor to comfort a child who was having a "bad day".



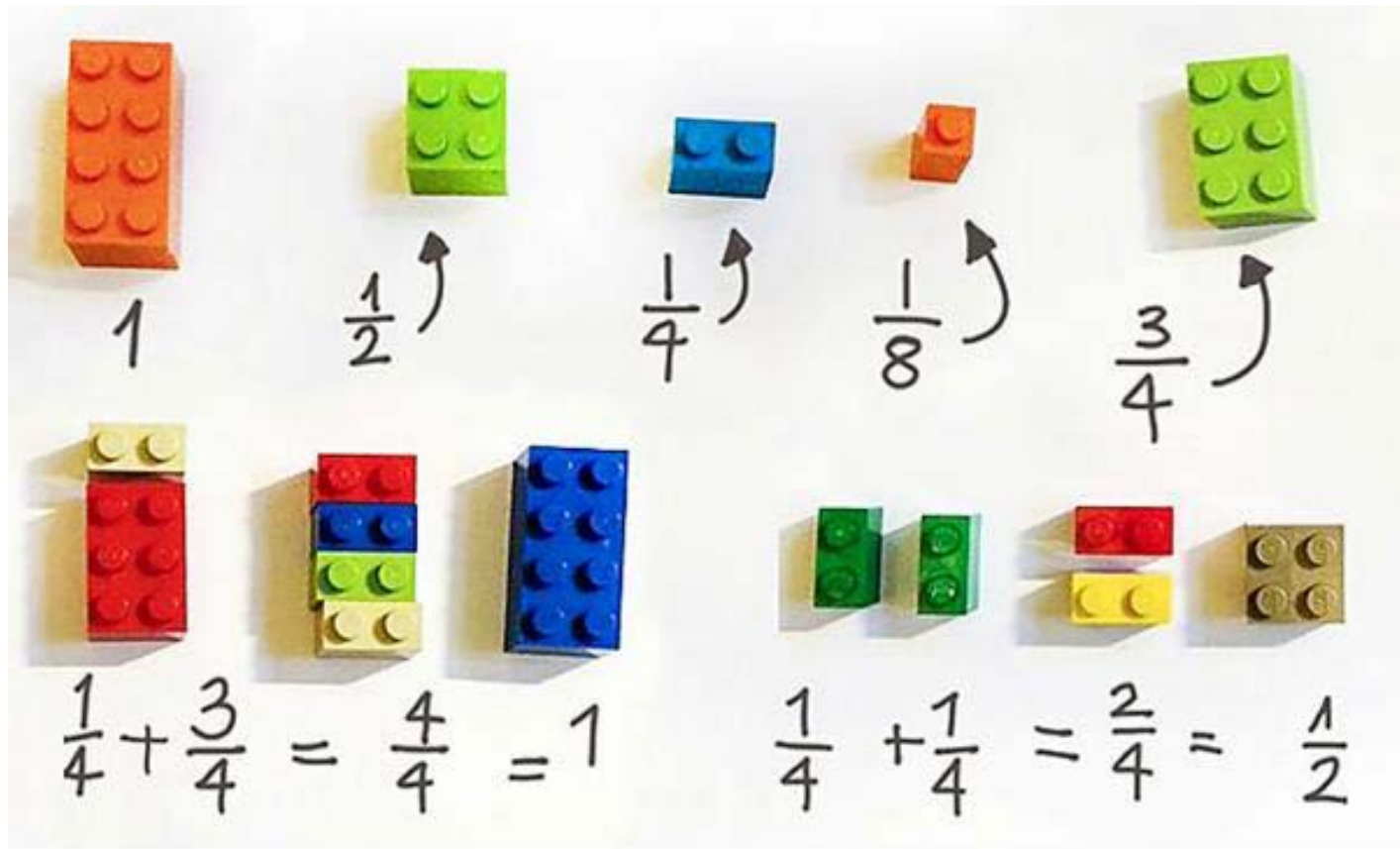
- ▶ Offer feedback and guidance rather than correction or discipline (“instead of X, what do you think about Y”)
- ▶ Support all efforts to correct the error
- ▶ Build in variety and choice
- ▶ Interact with child positively
- ▶ Change your lens
- ▶ Talk out loud
- ▶ Neither the child nor you fail...the strategy does
- ▶ Be willing to throw out your plans when necessary.





- ▶ Give opportunity to redo mistakes; everyone makes mistakes, one mistake doesn't have to ruin your day, you can always start over
- ▶ Offer feedback rather than correction or discipline; Nurtured Heart approach
- ▶ Build a multifaceted tool box with the child. This toolbox should be easily accessible.
- ▶ Don't make the child earn calming strategies.
- ▶ Be strength based and look for successes.
- ▶ If you document negative behaviors, be sure to document positive ones too with as much detail. And start with those.

Using a special interest....





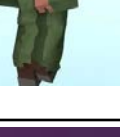


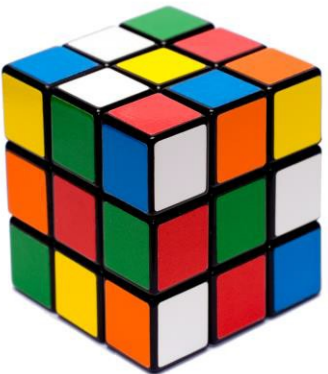
Brushing My Teeth



ncial Story

► 5 Point Scale

What it looks like		What it feels like...	
5	 <p>Feels like you're a creeper and are about to EXPLODE</p>	<p>Out of control</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Screaming Yelling Crying Swearing Throw or kick things Feel like I want to die <p>I can: Tell mom and dad Leave me ALONE, no talking</p>
4	 <p>Getting angry like a Zombie</p>	<p>Starting to lose it</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head feels hot Start to say mean things Stomach is upset <p>I can: Call mom and dad Go somewhere calm Use visual cues</p>
3	 <p>Feels like an Enderman and you want to get away or jump out of your skin</p>	<p><i>ANXIOUS WORRIED EXCITED</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Don't want to talk about it Upset Talk loud and a lot Can't sit still Thoughts get stuck <p>I can: Talk about a special interest, go to safe space</p>
2	 <p>Feels like Steve who has to work hard and stay focused</p>	<p>I THINK I CAN HANDLE THIS</p>	<p>Things might be getting hard but I can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stay in class Listen to suggestions Ask for help <p>I can: use my tools like drawing or talking, remember I have Steve in my pocket</p>
1	 <p>Feels like a villager who is just going about his day feeling good about himself</p>	<p>JUST RIGHT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Happy Calm Peaceful Nothing bothers me Interested in what others are doing <p>I can: keep doing what I am doing</p>





Quick Tips....

Children do
well if they

CAN

- Ross W. Greene

Stay calm
Empathize

Talk less, don't
lecture or threaten

Constructive
destruction

Stay back

Don't touch or
hold

Move throwable
objects out of the
way

Let the meltdown
run it's course

As soon as you are
able, distract (you
are not rewarding
bad behavior)

Let it go

**When adults
rethink
challenging kids,
amazing things
can happen.**



Any questions:

- ▶ Call:

- ▶ 218-443-2837

- ▶ Email:

- ▶ emily.colerhanson@annecenter.org

Resources

- ▶ Temple Grandin, PhD
www.templegrandin.com
- ▶ Michelle Garcia Winner: Social Thinking
www.socialthinking.com
- ▶ Howard Glasser
www.difficultchild.com
- ▶ Child Trauma Academy
www.childtrauma.org
- ▶ Wright's Law
www.wrightslaw.com