

Meltdowns How to Help

A meltdown is the result of being overstimulated, leading to the person reacting in an instinctive way to their surroundings as they temporarily lose behavioural control. This can be expressed verbally (e.g. screaming, shouting, swearing) and/or physically (kicking, hitting, biting). Meltdowns are slow to end and will slow as the individual becomes accustomed to their surroundings. Meltdowns can occur across the lifespan.

During a meltdown, the individual:

- has no interest in how others react to their behaviour;
- may be injured;
- is not in control of their actions - their actions are instinctive;
- will not make demands.

What can you do to help?

- Make sure the person is safe. Have a strategy in place to ensure the safety of the person and anyone around them.
- Give them time. It can take time to recover from overload.
- Reduce sensory or information overload, e.g. turn down lights, turn off music. Give the person a quiet, safe space.
- Develop a calming routine.
- Track the meltdowns. This can be useful in trying to predict when a meltdown might happen. Tracking how the escalation occurs can be useful in identifying triggers. You may be able to begin the calming routine once you see signs of escalation and avoid meltdown.
- Stay calm.