



What is an autistic meltdown?

When someone is anxious or flooded with sensory input, the brain can become overwhelmed. This is more common for autistic people and can result in a meltdown.

It's not deliberate!

An autistic person has a meltdown when they lose control of their behaviour due to becoming overwhelmed - and in this moment, cannot process how they feel another way. A person having a meltdown may change their behaviour verbally or physically – or a mixture of both ways.



Triggers

Meltdowns are often the result of situations in one or a few of the following areas:

- Social situations
- Sensory overload
- Experiencing changes
- Basic needs unmet
- Very emotional situations

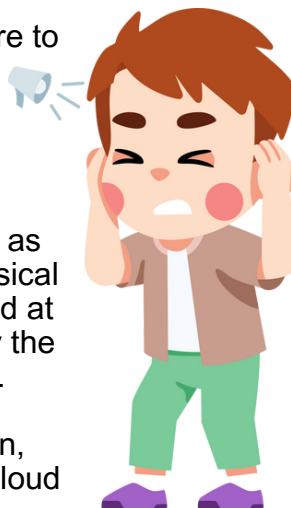
Warning Signs

Before experiencing a meltdown, many people will show signs of distress such as pacing, repetitive questioning, shaking or sweating. They also might lose the ability to mask.

What can you do to help?

Firstly try not to judge! Meltdowns cannot be controlled and getting upset or angry will only add to their stress.

- Let them know that you are there to support them
- Avoid asking questions, giving information or instructions.
- Avoid restrictive methods, such as removing comfort items, or physical restraint. This should be avoided at all costs - unless it is absolutely the only way to keep a person safe.
- Match your energy to the person, e.g. use a firm voice if they are loud and a quiet voice if they are still.



- Give them time. It can take a while to recover from a meltdown.
- Create a calm, safe environment. Remove any objects/people/sounds that are causing sensory overload.
- Give them a sensory object to vent energy or to help them feel calm.
- Different people will have different triggers, responses and needs. Discuss this with the person when they are calm. You can agree a plan to support them during a meltdown.
- Practice strategies when the person is calm which will help them remember what to do during a meltdown.