

HOW TO KEEP COOL, CALM AND CONNECTED

during your child's emotional storm



Welcome

Let's first start by understanding our why and what, before we look at how?

1. Why do my kids have meltdowns?

Children experience big feelings and they do not have the capacity or skills yet to cope with these.

Their brains are still growing, and the emotional part of their brains is more advanced than their logical and reasoning parts, which are not fully developed until well into their adult lives.

Adults (and parents!) also have meltdowns – so this is a lifelong skill for us all to work on.

2. What is my role and how can I help them?

Your child's emotional outbursts are not your fault, nor are they a reflection on your parenting. Your job is not to fix them or make it right, but instead to try to remain calm yourself in the face of their emotional storm.

This will enable your child to experience a sense of safety through you, despite their bodies feeling out of control and unsafe. It is through your calm presence and connection, that they will in time take this comfort inside and learn to soothe themselves.

3. This process is simple, yet why is it so hard to do?

When children are emotionally dysregulated, causing them to act out and communicate their feelings and needs in the only way they know how, this is very triggering to us as parents.

Often, we re-experience how we felt as a child at that age, that sense of overwhelm, lack of safety in the throes of our emotions. It will be even more triggering for you and require more work, practice and self-compassion, if you yourself did not experience a calm presence from your own parents.

Children learn to calm themselves by experiencing a calm adult, in the presence of their distress. However, it is not possible to be calm all the time and there really is no quick fix here! This guide requires work, lots of practice and bags of self-compassion along the way, so let's dig in.

Top #10 Tips for Keeping Your Cool:

#1

PAUSE, TAKE A BREATH & DROP YOUR ANCHOR

Every time you notice your stress levels rising, or perhaps the urge to yell – stop, pause, take a deep breath and try planting your feet firmly into the ground.

Even if you have started to yell, you can stop, close your mouth (hum if you need to), pause and take a breath. If you need to step away for a moment then do, and really focus on slowing down the rhythm of your breathing.



#2

ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR OWN FEELINGS



Our parental triggers, such as a feeling of sudden panic or rage in the face of our child's emotional outburst are common and are often rooted in our own childhoods.

As you notice your rising panic, take a breath and let your inner child know that you are safe, nothing bad is going to happen, and that you are an adult now and you've got this.

#3

REMIND YOURSELF YOU ARE SAFE

Let yourself know that you are safe, that nothing bad is happening – your body is responding to what it thinks is a threat. It needs the steady soothing rhythm of your breath and your reassurance that you are safe, and you can handle your emotions right now – nothing bad is going to happen, your child is having big feelings and all they need right now is your love and calm presence.



#4

EXPRESSING FEELINGS IS A GOOD THING



You and your child will experience feelings no matter what, it is a fundamental part of being human. It is your reaction to their expression of feelings that will teach your child whether or not it is safe to express their feelings.

If we do not feel safe to express our feelings, we learn to suppress them, and it is these suppressed feelings that pop out uninvited and cause us to act out.

Try saying something like ‘it is okay to feel sad,’ when your child starts to cry; instead of the most likely response we were given as children of ‘stop that whining’ or ‘please don’t cry.’

#5

BEHIND EVERY BEHAVIOUR ARE FEELINGS & NEEDS



Start to try to see your child's behaviour as a form of communication of their feelings and needs.

It is okay not to always know what they are feeling or needing. However, your calm presence and desire to understand them, even in the face of their behaviours that challenge you, will instil in your children a sense of unconditional love and self-worth.

The more a child (and adults for that matter) feel heard, loved and respected, in time the behaviours that challenge us will become less and your child will naturally learn new ways of communicating their feelings and needs.

#6

TAKE THE PRESSURE OFF

As parents we feel so much pressure to be teaching our kids right from wrong, so they will grow up to be kind, respectful, well-behaved humans, right?!

However, the most important lesson here for you today is to take this enormous pressure off yourself, and what your child really needs right now, is your love and unconditional acceptance of them, exactly as they are – with all their tangled-up thoughts and emotions, they are enough. And so are you!



#7

TOLERATE NOT FIX

This will take practice, but you can learn to tolerate emotions, without the need to act or to fix them. During the emotional storm, your role is to be there together, whilst you are the anchor. Name the feeling if you can, or in some situations you may need to remain silent.



Or perhaps try saying 'I'm here for you, you're safe, it's okay, we've got this...' Notice how it feels in your body and know that you can sit with this, you can breathe and be in the storm together, until it passes – and it will pass.



Even if your child is saying 'I hate you,' take a breath and know in your heart, what they mean is 'I need you,' so try to respond with something like 'I love you, I can see you are struggling, I am here for you.'

#8

CHOOSE CONNECTION & LOVE



Despite old school beliefs, you cannot 'spoil' your children with love and affection.

If we choose to connect with our children, especially during times when they are struggling, this is the greatest gift we can give our kids and it will help them become happier, more confident human beings.

Take a breath and lean into the discomfort you feel when your child is struggling and see if you can develop a mantra that works for you. I often use: 'This too shall pass, I can be calm, I can handle this, we are learning to calm ourselves together.'

#9

KEEP IT SIMPLE



You want to “teach” your child to learn a ‘better’ way of behaving or feeling right now? But your child can’t learn until she is calm – her emotional brain has hijacked her learning brain.

Your child needs you to calmly and compassionately witness their outpouring of big, yucky feelings and to experience your calm presence and unconditional love.

They need to know they can feel, and express their feelings and not be judged, criticised, or shamed or that you yourself won’t become overwhelmed by their feelings... or else this natural emotional process will be shut down and repressed.



Keep it simple, don’t try to fix, just be with the emotion and work on your calm – your kids will get there, through the work you do on yourself.

#10

PROCESS YOUR OWN FEELINGS

Nothing is more triggering than the work of a parent. Kids have sticky fingers, and they expose feelings and past experiences we thought we had dealt with, and the coping mechanisms that once worked, are no longer serving you (or your kids).

This is not your fault, but you can do something about it. There are many ways of processing your own emotions – you can do this through journaling, talking it through with a friend (watch out for the ones who want to fix you!), having a good cry, or more active based approaches such as walking, running, cycling or yoga.



Whatever approach works for you, try them all, give them a go but your goal is not to avoid or suppress your feelings. Allow your feelings up and to be there, validate them, which will in time allow them to become digested and less likely to be passed onto your kids.

Dr Jade Redfern



As a Clinical Psychologist, trauma-informed therapist, parent coach and mum of two, Jade throws herself into life and work with ambition, heart, and soul. For over ten years, her specialism is in child development and the parent-child relationship.

Jade believes that the greatest gift a parent can give their child, is his/her own peace and happiness. So, by helping parents develop a greater self-awareness and understanding of how our own childhood shapes our parenting, together we can raise compassionate, confident children who thrive.

Jade's career highlights so far have been working at Great Ormond Street Hospital and The Grenfell Trauma Service, helping parents and children from all walks of life heal their invisible wounds. Her mission has always been to help clients bring about more calm, confidence, and joy into their lives.

Jade loves being outdoors, ideally with the sun shining, spending time with family and friends. Her favourite tippie is a gin and tonic and she would always choose a starter over a pudding (but secretly wants both).

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