

# ADDITUDE

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## MELTDOWNS & ANGER

### Meltdowns Happen: 7 Healthy Ways to Respond

When your child dissolves into tears or an angry fit, employ these strategies to stop the ADHD tantrum in its tracks and remind your child that he can find control again.

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Nothing can make a parent feel more powerless than a child with ADHD in [meltdown mode](#). The tears, the irrationality, the flailing limbs? No, I'm not talking about the parent, but the child.

When a child breaks down in public, parents feel like failures — we should be able to control our child, right? We see the judgment in other parents' eyes, and we resent the “helpful” suggestions from the passerby who means well but who doesn't know a whit about ADHD.

Keep your head and your perspective. Often kids with ADHD are impulsive and can't regulate their behavior. Meltdowns say nothing about your parenting ability, but they do reflect the nature of ADHD. So what to do when your child has an [ADHD tantrum](#) in a department store or at the kitchen table? Arm yourself with quick fixes. I offer my seven favorites.

### Managing Meltdowns

#### Fix #1: Agree on a plan

Before going to the grocery store or the video-game parlor, ask your child with ADHD what would [calm him down](#) if he gets upset. If he does have an episode, you will have a plan because your child has delivered it to you. His ownership of it should pretty much guarantee that he will cooperate with your enforcing it.

#### Fix #2: Acknowledge her anguish

Let her know you understand what she is going through. In a calm voice, tell your child, “I know you're disappointed that you didn't find the toy you wanted” or “I know you're angry because your friends didn't ask you to play.” Then ask your child to rate her disappointment or anger on a scale of 1 to 10. This gives you an idea of the severity of the problem, without having to nag or repeat what you say.

*[Free Download: Your 10 Toughest Discipline Dilemmas — Solved!]*

#### Fix #3: Set the bar

Explain to him that the clock is running. You can say, “Let's see how fast you can calm yourself down, so we can get on with the rest of our day” or “Even though you're upset, you need to get in control, so we can continue shopping.”

**Fix #4: Snuff out the emotion**

Ask your child to imagine that there is a candle painted on her palm. Then have her hold her hand with her palm facing toward her face, and ask her to blow out the imaginary flame. [Deep breathing settles out-of-control children](#). An alternative: Keep a balloon or two in your purse and ask her to blow them up.

**Fix #5: Get punchy**

If you're at home during a meltdown, ask your child to punch a pillow, cushion, or another soft, safe object. Pillow fights, ripping up newspapers, or squeezing a ball can short-circuit a meltdown.

**Fix #6: Press the right button**

Have your child pretend that she is holding a remote control in her hand. Ask her to press the button that turns down her emotions.

*[How to Stop After-School Meltdowns Before They Begin]*

**Fix #7: Ask for help**

If your child has frequent meltdowns that aren't responsive to interventions, don't wait until you are at your wit's end. [Work with an ADHD professional](#), to improve the chances of avoiding them.

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