



# ADHD Meltdowns: Parents, Don't Give Up! You're Not Alone!

## 5 Don'ts When Your ADHD Child Is Upset or Angry

By Robert Myers, PhD / July 15, 2015 / ADD-ADHD, Child Development, Child Psychology, Dad's Corner, Expert Parenting Articles, Family Building, Learning, Mom's Corner, Safety Issues, School.

Parents dread having to deal with meltdowns. However, parents of children with ADHD may face more meltdowns than other parents.

Children with ADHD are more prone to meltdowns for a number of reasons. Often their brain circuitry for emotional regulation is dysfunctional, meaning it takes less to trigger an anger episode that lasts for longer periods of time than other children. This is the result of faulty wiring. Working with kids on relaxation techniques such as taking deep breaths or counting to ten at the first sign of being upset can help. It's especially important that they practice these skills when they're calm.

These kids often aren't fully tuned in to what is going on around them. As a result, they miss critical information that causes them to misinterpret a situation, thus reacting to what they think is going on rather than what actually happened. If you're having a discussion with your child, frequently pause to make sure they're getting your point. Ask questions to check for understanding and encourage them to ask you questions as well.

Some ADHD kids lack the ability to be flexible, causing them to go into meltdown mode when there is a change in routine or an expected event doesn't happen. For instance, a boy may be having a great time "roughhousing" with his dad but doesn't want to stop when dad feels it has gone on long enough. This can become ugly and lead to fewer such play situations. Agreeing to use a timer and stop when the timer says to quit rather than dad might help to avoid this.

### 1. Don't Lose Your Cool

Take a few deep breaths. This triggers the relaxation response and will lower your own anxiety/anger level and make it possible for you to think clearly and model appropriate behavior for your child. Remember the preflight instruction, "When the mask comes down, please cover your own nose and mouth first before you assist your child."

### 2. Don't React – Respond

If you and your child have already agreed on how meltdowns will be handled with a behavior plan, make sure the plan is followed. As an example, you might have decided on an incentive program where your child can earn rewards for following the behavior plan. Incentives might be



earning points every time he/she can calm down before having a meltdown. Points earned can be cashed in at the end of the day for a desired activity such as screen time or a special treat.

If you do not have a plan in place, then you can respond by saying “WE have a problem here. Let’s see how we can solve the problem TOGETHER.” Find out what your child’s concern is. See if there is a way to address it. It’s not giving in if you modify a situation in a way that is more acceptable to the child while still meeting your needs as well. Good leaders listen to the people they are leading and incorporate the feedback they receive.

### 3. Don’t Dictate – Discuss

Ask, “What is making you upset?” Listen carefully and respond empathetically such as “I see you (want or don’t want), what’s up?” Find out what the child is concerned about. For instance, if the problem is not wanting to go to bed, you might say, “I understand you don’t want to go to bed right now even though 9:00 is your usual bedtime. What’s bothering you about this?” Perhaps the child says, “I need to finish my video game so that I can get to the next level.” You then can say, “So here is the problem we have. I want you to go to bed because it’s your bedtime and you need your sleep to feel good and do well at school and baseball tomorrow and you want to stay up later to finish your game. I’m not saying you don’t have to go to bed now but do you have any ideas on how we can solve this?”

For discussion let’s say it’s only for a few minutes and you decide for tonight to let him finish the game to avoid an hour or more of meltdown versus a few more minutes. You might say, “Ok, for tonight you can finish the game. Tomorrow we can talk about this and come up with a solution so that from now on you’ll be able to finish what you’re doing and go to bed on time.

”It’s ok for us to listen to our children’s perspective on difficult situations. If this is an isolated incident, then problem-solving could avoid a major meltdown. However, we need to follow up the next day with a detailed discussion on how this can be avoided in the future.

If this is an ongoing problem, then stick to the program/plan you have already set in place. If you have been working on anger management techniques such as taking deep breaths, then remind your child to practice it.

### 4. Don’t Demand – Encourage

If you have a prearranged plan to follow or have come to an agreement for this crisis situation, then you can say, “I know you’re upset right now but I also know you can do a good job of calming down,” or “You know what our agreement is and I bet you’ll do your part now just like the great job you did yesterday. I love how you’re getting better at this each time.”

### 5. Don’t Give Up – Stay Committed

Raising a child with any special need, be it developmental, psychological or medical, requires a tremendous amount of patience and strength to endure and continue to handle tough situations when they come up. Make sure you have a good support system in place. Be sure to have a break from time to time to do something fun and relaxing. Also, try to view the whole situation from the 30,000-foot level to see the progress you’ve made so far, and that meltdowns now and



then can be little bumps in the road to helping your child learn to cope with the day to day events they encounter.

If you have truly committed to following a behavioral approach under the guidance of a mental health provider and are not seeing progress, please don't hesitate to discuss this with your child's physician. A referral to a psychologist for a comprehensive evaluation may uncover other conditions that may need to be addressed. Sometimes ADHD may be misdiagnosed, or a child can have more than one disorder which needs to be examined.

When talking to a professional, you should be able to tell them when and where these episodes happen and what took place just before the meltdown; these are valuable clues that a well-trained clinician can use to modify your approach or discover an underlying skill deficit that can be improved.

Sometimes, when behavioral approaches have been in place for some time and have been tweaked all they can, medication may need some consideration. Parents should be cautious about having their child placed on medication prematurely, but when symptoms are severe and interfering with a child's ability to function in several environments, then medication can be extremely beneficial.

Continue reading at <https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/psychology/adhd-add/five-donts-when-your-adhd-child-is-upset-or-angry/#gs.8ji2y3> | [Child Development Institute](#)

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