Tips for Managing a Meltdown:

By Tony Attwood and Michelle Garnett

DO

- Have one person take control of the situation.
- Stay calm, be assertive, and feel confident. Remember to keep the role of the adult, be firm and in control.
- Use a slow, low tone of voice, and clear, simple, minimal words.
- When speaking to your child, sit to the side and look away from their face (i.e. mid-distance, to side, and down).
- Keep your body language calm, not imposing.
- When giving directions acknowledge the emotions, give the reason for a direction then give a direction (for e.g., "I can see you are feeling really worried. You need a break. Sit on this bean bag.")
- As soon as your child starts to calm down provide praise and encouragement (for e.g. "that was the smart and the right thing to do").
- Keep your child safe by removing anything that your child might hurt herself on and anyone who is not needed.
- Ask your child to sit down.
- Give your child as much solitude as possible by giving her an area to herself that is quiet. If possible, create a permanent, quiet, calm space and call it a name like "Calm Space." Ensure your child understands this space is not a punishment place like the "Naughty Corner," or "Time Out." I.e. use different spaces for these.
- Appeal to your child's special interest (for e.g. start a discussion or have your child make a list, or sort their collection).
- Give your child an emergency/calming-down box (for e.g., a box filled with twiddly toys, puzzles, trucks, catalogues, radio to listen to, stress balls, or spinning things).
- Give a compliment (for e.g. "You are a very intelligent girl").

DON'T

- Don't touch your child, unless it is a protective action to stop violence or you know it helps them.
- Don't match your child's mood with your speech, (i.e. stay low and slow.)
- Don't threaten or use punishment.
- Don't try to turn the situation into a lesson, your child's mind is not available for verbal teaching whilst in a meltdown.
- Don't say "No."
- Don't talk about consequences.