



STARTER KIT 02

Meltdown Recovery

情绪崩溃后的修复

For the moment everything falls apart, and the hour after.

SET-UP

30 minutes, with your child, when calm

YOU'LL NEED

Calm-down menu, a quiet corner, headphones or a fidget

BEST FOR

Ages 3 to 12 (adapt for teens)

What's really going on

A meltdown is not a tantrum with a plan. It is a nervous system that has run out of room: too much noise, too many demands, too little sleep, or a feeling bigger than the words available. Reasoning does not land in this state. Your job is not to win or to teach. It is to make things safer and shorter, then reconnect once the storm has passed.

Your five-step plan

1 Safety first

Clear hazards rather than moving your child, unless you have to. In public (MRT, mall, hawker centre), move to a quieter corner if you can. Safety first, dignity second, lessons last.

2 Lower everything

Fewer words, softer voice, less eye contact, no questions. One short line: "I'm here. You're safe." Dim the lights and reduce noise where you can.

3 Stay close and wait

No bargaining, lecturing or threats in the middle of it. Offer a calm-down item or some space, then wait. Waves rise and fall. Your steadiness helps them fall.

4 Recover before you talk

Water, a snack, quiet, a hug if they want one. Wait until your child is clearly calm. Sometimes that is an hour, sometimes the next day.

5 Repair, then plan

One short, kind talk: "That was really hard. What was the hardest part?" Pick one thing to try next time. Skip the lecture. Then look after yourself too.

Start here this week

Sit down with your child when everyone is calm and build the Calm-Down Menu on the next page. A plan made in advance is the only one a meltdown cannot knock over.



Our Calm-Down Menu

Build this with your child when everyone is calm, never in the middle of a meltdown. Tick the ideas they like and add their own. Keep it where they can reach it.

Move

- Wall push-ups
- Run or jump outside
- Stomp like a giant

☐ My pick _____

Squeeze

- Tight hug (if wanted)
- Hug a pillow
- Heavy blanket or beanbag

☐ My pick _____

Quiet

- Headphones on
- Dim room or tent
- Lie down alone, door open

☐ My pick _____

Breathe

- Smell the flower, blow the candle
- Five-finger breathing
- Slow count to ten

☐ My pick _____

Look and listen

- Favourite picture book
- Soft music
- Watch a fish tank or the rain

☐ My pick _____

Water and snack

- Cold water
- A crunchy snack
- Wash face with cool water

☐ My pick _____

Early-warning check (fix these first, they are cheaper than a meltdown)

☐ Hungry? ☐ Tired? ☐ Overloaded (noise, crowds, lights)? ☐ Big change coming (new place, new person, plan changed)?

Meltdown log: spot the pattern

Date, time	Where	What happened just before	What helped	How long



Adapt it for your child

Every child is different. Read the cards that sound like yours, pick one or two ideas to try, and leave the rest.

How your child is wired

Autism

Meltdowns are often sensory or change overload, not bad behaviour. Cut input first: lights, noise, people, words. Avoid touch unless your child welcomes it and don't demand eye contact. A card that says "I need a break" gives them a way out before the storm. Recovery can take longer, and alone time may be exactly what they need.

ADHD

Feelings arrive fast and leave fast. Triggers are often frustration, being told no, or a sudden switch. If your child takes stimulant medication, notice whether meltdowns bunch up as the dose wears off, and tell the prescriber. Keep the after-talk to two minutes.

Sensory-sensitive

Look at what came just before: a loud canteen, a crowded MRT, a scratchy label. Plan quiet time after loud places, carry headphones, and give a warning before known triggers.

Anxious

The meltdown may be fear in disguise. Do not push through the situation mid-storm. Afterwards, name the worry gently ("I wonder if the test felt scary") and make a small plan for next time.

Strong-willed or oppositional

If most meltdowns follow a demand, cut the number of demands and pick your battles. Give choices, avoid audiences and power struggles, and talk about consequences afterwards, calmly. If defiance is constant and intense, speak to your child's doctor.

Few words or delayed language

Behaviour is communication. Teach simple ways to say "break", "help" and "all done" with cards or gestures, and respond quickly so the meltdown is no longer the only way to be heard. A speech therapist can help.

Your family's situation

Younger children (3 to 6)

Co-regulation is the tool. Stay close, get down to their level and keep your voice slow. A cushion corner to retreat to works better than time-out. Use five words or fewer.

Pre-teens and teens

They often want privacy more than comfort. Say once, "I'm in the next room when you're ready," and don't crowd. Avoid scenes in front of friends, and talk later in the car or over food. Take any talk of self-harm seriously (see the box on the last page).

Out in public in Singapore

Move to a quieter spot such as a lift lobby, a corner or outside. Keep a small calm kit in your bag: headphones, water, a snack, a fidget. "He's overwhelmed, we're fine" is all you need to say.

Siblings and grandparents around

Move the siblings away rather than the child, and tell them afterwards it was not about them. Brief grandparents beforehand: no scolding, no sweets to stop the crying, and one adult leads.



Words that help

Try saying	Rather than
I'm here. You're safe.	Calm down!
I won't let you get hurt. I'm staying close.	One more time and you lose your iPad.
That was a big feeling. I'm not angry at you.	Do you know how embarrassing that was?
Next time, what could we try first?	Why can't you just use your words?

If it's still not working

Meltdowns in public. Plan an exit, carry headphones and a fidget, and give a short line to onlookers if needed: "He's overwhelmed. We're okay." You do not owe strangers an apology.

Hitting, throwing, kicking. Stay calm, block gently if you must, and move other people away rather than the child. Talk about it in the repair stage, not during. Frequent aggression is a reason to seek support.

It happens at the same time or place. Use the log to find the trigger. Hunger, tiredness, transitions and noise are the usual suspects. Change the trigger, not the child.

You are running on empty. Your calm is a skill that wears down. Take sixty seconds: breathe out slowly, drop your shoulders. Ask another adult to tag in.

When to get extra support

See your child's doctor if meltdowns are frequent, very long, involve injury to anyone, appear suddenly, or come with changes in sleep or appetite. In Singapore, a good first step is your child's paediatrician or polyclinic doctor, who can refer you on to a Child Development Clinic, a Child Guidance Clinic or a psychologist. The form teacher, school counsellor and SEN officer (SENO) can share what they are seeing at school.

If your child ever talks about wanting to hurt themselves or not wanting to be alive, take it seriously, stay with them and get help the same day. IMH Mental Health Helpline: 6389 2222 (24 hours). Samaritans of Singapore: 1767 (24 hours). In immediate danger, call 995 (ambulance) or 999 (police).

These kits offer general parenting and developmental guidance for educational purposes. They are not a diagnosis or a substitute for advice from your child's doctor, therapist, psychologist or teacher. Every child is different.