

5 Steps to Calm Big Emotions

A Parent's Guide to Managing Meltdowns

Big emotions can feel overwhelming—for both kids and parents! This guide gives you five simple steps to help your child calm down while building a stronger connection with them. These steps are rooted in compassion and understanding, and they'll help you turn meltdown moments into opportunities for growth.

1 Create Safety

Start by helping your child feel safe. Meltdowns often happen when kids feel overwhelmed or out of control. Get down to their eye level, use a calm voice, and say something like, "I'm here with you. We'll figure this out together." This shows them they're not alone.

2 Stay Connected

Connection is key to calming big emotions. Use touch (if your child is comfortable), like a hand on their shoulder, or just sit nearby. Let them know, "I see you're having a hard time, and I want to help." This reassures them that they can trust you.

3 Help Name the Emotion

Kids often struggle to express what they're feeling. Try saying, "It looks like you're feeling frustrated because your tower fell over." Naming their emotion helps them feel understood and gives them tools to express themselves in the future.

4 Offer a Simple Soothing Tool

Introduce calming techniques to help your child regulate their emotions. Here's some tools to try:

Bowl Breathing

5-5-5 Breathing (Breathe in through your nose for 5 seconds, hold for 5 seconds, breathe out through your mouth for 5 seconds)

Belly Breathing (Put your hands on your tummy and feel it expand like a balloon as you breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth)

Bowl Breathing

Ask your child to imagine holding their favorite soup or hot chocolate.

Smell it deeply (big breath in).
Blow on it to cool it down (long breath out).

Do this a few times together to help them calm their body and mind.

5 Empower Choices

Once your child starts calming down, give them a small, empowering choice. For example, "Would you like to rebuild your tower or play with a different toy?" This helps them regain a sense of control and encourages problem-solving.

Every meltdown is an opportunity to teach your child how to handle big feelings—and for you to strengthen your bond with them. These steps take practice, so give yourself and your child plenty of grace along the way.

You've got this!