



Autism Meltdown

3 Things To Do (that actually work)

As a parent to a child with Autism, you likely spend a lot of time, energy and resources trying to avoid, prevent and control your child's behaviors.

And still, no matter how much you prepare, preview or pray, **meltdowns happen**.

Before I provide you with 3 things to do during any meltdown, I want to lay the groundwork about what is happening, chemically, physically and emotionally, for you and your child so that you can make the best use of these strategies.

What's Happening for Your Child

We've heard it a million times, behavior is communication. And during a meltdown, your child's behavior is screaming (literally):

"I am in distress and I do not know how to emotionally regulate myself."

Why? Your child is in a survival response initiated by the limbic part of the brain responsible for keeping humans alive. When it senses danger (real or perceived), it activates the fight/flight response resulting in the release of chemicals such as adrenaline and cortisol into the bloodstream producing immediate and intense emotional and physical reactions.

Your child wants to return to a state of emotional regulation, but has no idea how to do this. So they do whatever they can to get your attention, express their discomfort, and enlist you in making it go away.

What's Happening for You

If you are in the room, vicinity or the zip code when your child is having a meltdown, it is likely that your stress response is also being activated.

This means that **you are experiencing the same chemical response as your child** while still trying to control the situation.

And it is probably not the first time this week, day or hour that you have found yourself in this emotional state making it all the more challenging to regulate your emotions and manage your responses while your child is melting down.

3 things you can do (that actually work) during every meltdown

1. Slow it Down

The central feature of a stress response is speed. Adrenaline is coursing through your veins speeding everything up: your thoughts, your words, your actions. The more we feed it, the faster it gets and the longer it lasts.

How to Slow it Down:

Do pause and breathe	Don't react immediately
Do walk away and regroup	Don't stay and fight
Do stay in the present moment	Don't project what is happening now into the future

When safety is an issue, there are still things you can do to slow it down to neutralize racing thoughts like:

- This isn't fair, no one else has to deal with this.
- If she is doing this at 5 years old, what will she be like when she is 10, 15, 20 years old?
- I hope the neighbors can't hear/see this.

These racing thoughts are fuel on the fire that strengthens the intensity of the stress response. When these thoughts come into your head, tell your brain, "No, we are not doing this now."

2. Drop Your Agenda

We all have an expectation, whether conscious or subconscious, of how we think things should be. Maybe you want to finish your coffee before the first outburst, or complete homework without blocking punches. But things are not going as you planned or hoped:

- **Your child has thrown herself on the ground** because she feels overwhelmed
- **Your child is screaming** because he doesn't want to go to school
- **Your child is punching you** because he does not want to do any more school work

How to Drop Your Agenda:

Realize in the moment, that what you imagined or planned no longer matters. Instead, focus on and fully accept the reality of what is actually happening in this moment. When you drop your agenda, and accept the reality in front of you, you will feel calmer, and open the door to Do the Next Right Thing.

3. Do the Next Right Thing

As autism parents, we put tremendous pressure on ourselves to succeed every day at the impossible task to know all and be everything to our children. And to make all the right decisions. About everything.

But face it, there is no “right” decision. There is just the decision you make, and then what you decide to do next.

How to Do the Next Right Thing:

Refocus your efforts from doing it perfectly to doing the Next Right Thing. In some instances, The Next Right Thing may be the decision that will keep you and your child safe.

- It may be leaving the grocery store
- It may be asking a family member / neighbor / stranger for help
- It may be clearing the room

Once the situation is accounted for, the Next Right Thing is whatever it is you think will move your child closer to a state of regulation. Whatever it is, you try it and if it does not work, you do the Next Right Thing.

I'm Lisa Candra, single mother to a teen with Autism – and a cognitive behavioral life coach for moms raising kids with Autism.

I know how it feels when you are hostage to your child's behaviors.

Easily triggered by your child's behaviors

Walking on eggshells trying to avoid a meltdown

Feeling helpless and melting down right alongside your child

This was me all of the time until I was no longer able to contain my son's behaviors. He needed more help than I could provide and the Next Right Thing was inpatient hospitalization. That was a rock bottom moment, and also when I discovered my foundation from which to rebuild my life.



I created a cognitive behavioral therapy-based and trauma-informed framework to handle the very real-life challenges faced by mothers raising children with Autism.

This framework is created from my own blood, sweat, tears and conviction that we have morepower than we think and the ability to bring some ease to hard things.

I want to share it with you.

If you'd like to learn how to **Be the Solid Object**, schedule a free consultation. We'll discuss where you are, where you want to be, and how my program can support you in getting there.

Let's talk. Schedule your free consultation at TheAutismMomCoach.com