

Your Literally Ausome Meltdown and Shutdown Guide

Meltdowns

- These happen when a person is emotionally overwhelmed by unpleasant feelings that can no longer be controlled or hidden from others.
- Behaviours may show extreme behaviours like shouting, self-harm, aggressive behaviour and repetitive behaviours.
- Meltdowns are time-limited.
- During meltdowns, there may be a risk of harm to the person themselves or to others.
- Meltdowns can be very distressing for the person as well as the people supporting them.

- ∞ During a meltdown, a person finds it extremely difficult to process verbal language and will be more threatened and anxious by the words coming at them which they can't comprehend or reply to.
- ∞ A child will likely operate a fight or flight response, so provide them with a safe place to go to calm themselves down. Make sure the person is safe and not a threat to themselves or anyone else.
- ∞ If destructive or aggressive behaviour occurs during a meltdown, discussing these during the meltdown is not the time.
- ∞ These behaviours need to be dealt with and discussed during times of calm not during times of crisis. Discussing the, during the meltdown will only serve to inflame the situation further. Once the young person is fully calm after the event, they can be asked about what happened and decisions about consequences can then occur.

Shutdowns

- During a shutdown, a person may either partially or completely withdraw from the world around them. They may not respond to communication anymore, retreat to their room or lie down on the floor.
- They may also no longer be able to move from the situation they are in, no matter what it is (for example, a shopping centre or a classroom).
- Shutdowns tend to be more discreet than meltdowns and may sometimes go unnoticed. However, like meltdowns, they are a person's response to reaching a crisis point.
- The only thoughts the person's having is ruminating about what caused the shutdown.

- ∞ Give the person time to withdraw and recover from their shutdown.
- ∞ Discuss with the person when they are not distressed how they would like to be supported during a shutdown.