
MELTDOWNS

Meltdown Repair Script

What to say after a meltdown to repair without shaming.

Before You Talk

Wait for your child or teen to be physically calm. This is non-negotiable. A brain in meltdown cannot process words. You're looking for reduced crying, slower breathing, or them sitting quietly — not necessarily cheerfulness.

If they're still escalating, stay nearby without talking. Use a neutral tone if you must speak:

"I'm here. We'll talk when you're ready."

The Repair Conversation

Start with **acknowledgement, not explanation.** Your job is to rebuild safety, not analyse what happened.

"That was really hard. I can see you were struggling."

"That meltdown was big. That must have been overwhelming."

Pause. Let them respond or stay silent — both are fine.

If they offer information, listen without correcting or defending your actions yet:

"Tell me what happened from your side."

Do not say:

- "You overreacted."
- "It wasn't that bad."

- "Why did you do that?"
- "Let's talk about your behaviour."

Your Own Apology (If Needed)

If you shouted, threatened, or reacted in ways you regret, name it clearly:

"I raised my voice at you, and that wasn't okay. I was frustrated, but that's not how I want to treat you."

"I said something harsh. I didn't mean it, and you didn't deserve that."

Do not:

- Over-explain why you lost your temper.
- Make them comfort you or reassure you it's fine.
- Say "sorry, but..." — the "but" erases the apology.

Reconnection Without Analysing

Your child doesn't need a debrief. They need to know the relationship is intact.

Offer something low-pressure:

"Do you want a hug, or would you rather have some space?"

"Can I sit with you for a bit?"

"Do you need a drink of water?"

Do not immediately pivot to:

- What triggered the meltdown.
- What they'll do differently next time.
- Consequences for their behaviour during the meltdown.

The Later Conversation (Not Today)

Once everyone is genuinely calm — this might be hours or days later — you can problem-solve, but frame it as teamwork:

"That meltdown happened because something was too much. I'd like to figure out what, so we can help next time."

"I noticed you got stuck on [specific thing]. Can we think about what helps when that happens?"

Use this as a **forward-looking conversation**, not a post-mortem judgment.

If They Won't Engage

Some children and teens go silent or reject comfort after a meltdown. This is okay. Do not force connection.

"I'm here whenever you're ready to talk."

Then step back. Sit in the same room if they'll tolerate it, but don't demand eye contact, apologies, or conversation.

When to Get Help

If meltdowns involve hitting, breaking things, or harm to themselves or others, and this is becoming a pattern, **speak to your GP or a psychologist who specialises in neurodevelopmental assessment**. They can help you and your child develop safety plans together.

For crisis or immediate risk, contact emergency services or your local crisis line.

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