



Parental Guidance: Emotional Regulation & Meltdowns vs Behaviour

Young people can sometimes become emotionally overwhelmed, leading to behaviours that may look challenging or out of character. Understanding the difference between emotional dysregulation and deliberate behaviour can help parents respond in ways that support safety, learning and long-term emotional development.

Understanding emotional overwhelm vs behaviour

Not all difficult behaviour is intentional. When a young person becomes overwhelmed, their ability to think clearly and regulate emotions can reduce. This may present as anger, withdrawal, refusal or heightened reactions. Recognising that these moments are often linked to stress, anxiety or sensory overload can help adults respond calmly and effectively.

Recognising early warning signs and triggers

Many young people show early signs before reaching a point of meltdown. These may include:

- Increased irritability or sudden mood changes.
- Withdrawal, avoidance or difficulty concentrating.
- Restlessness, raised voice or physical tension.
- Sensitivity to noise, crowds or unexpected change.

Identifying patterns at home or in the community can help prevent escalation.

Practical de-escalation strategies

During moments of heightened emotion, small adjustments can make a significant difference:

- Reduce demands temporarily and allow space for the young person to reset.
- Use calm, simple language rather than lengthy explanations.
- Offer choices where appropriate to support a sense of control.
- Model steady breathing and a calm tone, even when behaviour feels challenging.

The focus should be on helping the young person regain regulation rather than immediately correcting behaviour.



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Supporting recovery after a meltdown

Once a young person has calmed, supportive reflection is more effective than punishment or shame:

- Allow time to settle before discussing what happened.
- Focus conversations on understanding feelings and identifying helpful strategies for next time.
- Reinforce that mistakes are opportunities to learn rather than reasons for embarrassment.

Positive repair helps rebuild trust and **emotional confidence**.

Building emotional regulation skills over time

Consistent routines, clear boundaries and positive reinforcement can strengthen emotional regulation:

- Maintain predictable daily structures where possible.
- Praise effort when young people attempt to use coping strategies.
- Encourage healthy outlets such as movement, creative activities or quiet time.

Developing these skills gradually supports resilience and independence.

Working together with the Academy

Consistency between home and school can reduce confusion and support progress. Sharing information about triggers, strategies or changes in behaviour allows staff to respond in ways that feel familiar and supportive to the young person. Pastoral teams can work with families to review approaches and ensure responses remain calm, proportionate and focused on wellbeing.

Contacting College Pastoral Teams

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