

Questions to Ask Yourself About **Meltdown**...

1. Do I experience **meltdowns**?

- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Never

2. How often do I experience **meltdowns**...

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Every day
- ☐ Every week
- ☐ Every month
- ☐ Less than the options above

3. What are some situations that make me more likely to have **meltdowns**?

4. When I am close to a **meltdown**, my body feels... (sweaty, shaky, tight muscles, etc.)

5. When I am having a **meltdown**, I think about and feel... (anxious, overwhelmed, angry, etc.)

6. What are some things that I do in **meltdowns** that I wish I didn't? (e.g., screaming, punching things, crying, saying something I normally wouldn't)

7. Some feelings I have after **meltdowns** are... (e.g., emotional sensitivity, guilt, shame)

8. **Meltdowns** can make it difficult to do things like... (e.g., make connections, have friends)

Strategies to Cope with **Meltdown**

Here are some strategies for coping with **meltdowns** that other autistic adults find helpful:

- **Try to identify and, if possible, avoid triggers for meltdowns**
 - *Watching the news, overworking yourself, etc.*
- **Be attentive to your sensory sensitivities**
 - *A mall or grocery store with fluorescent lights, a noisy restaurant, etc.*
- **If you are out in public, plan where you can go if you think you are close to a meltdown**
- **If you struggle to communicate during meltdowns, have a portable communication strategy ready**
 - *Pre-program messages into your phone, carry a card or piece of paper with instructions that other people can follow to help you, or have a text-to-speech app ready*
- **Seek support from others**
 - *Talk to someone you trust if you feel you are about to have a meltdown*
- **Let others know if touch is helpful or unhelpful during meltdowns**
- **Let others know if you want to be left alone during meltdowns**
- **Find a quiet space where you can be alone**
 - *Shut off the lights, lie down and try to relax*
 - *Go for a walk*
- **Carry around helpful items**
 - *A list of helpful strategies, essential oils, stim toys, a notebook, headphones, etc.*
- **Practice mindfulness**
 - *Repeat positive affirmations, do box breathing, meditate, read, etc.*
- **Set aside time to stim**
- **Use an ice pack**
- **Use a weighted blanket**

- **Develop coping strategies for cancelled plans**
 - *Have a list of “backup plans” that are easy to implement on your own*
 - *Make a list of pros for the situation (e.g., this will save energy for something else you enjoy doing)*
- **If an upsetting event occurs that you are unable to change, allow yourself to be upset for a set amount of time (e.g., a few days); after the deadline, give yourself permission to let the issue go**
 - *Bottling up emotions or avoiding them entirely can make you more susceptible to meltdowns*

Below are some things that other people do that can make **meltdowns** worse. These reactions are rooted in other people not understanding autistic **meltdowns**. Educating them might help.

- Blaming the autistic person for having a meltdown rather than focusing on the thing(s) that caused it
- Wrongly assuming that crying means you are not as competent in other areas of life
- Wrongly assuming that silence during meltdowns means incompetence, laziness, or just doing it “because we want to”
- Forcing their way of doing things on you
- Dismissing or invalidating the sense of loss, extreme distress or frustration you feel during a meltdown

My Plan to Cope with Meltdowns

Using the strategies above and your own ideas, follow some or all of the prompts below to help you create a personalized plan for dealing with **meltdowns**.

What I can do **before** **meltdowns** happen...

This is a list of triggers that can cause meltdowns for me that I can try to avoid:

A strategy I already use each day to be calm is:

Ahead of time, I can tell people around me that during meltdowns: *(circle all that apply to you)*

I want to be alone	OR	be with someone
I want to talk	OR	stay silent
Touch is helpful	OR	touch is not helpful

If I sense a meltdown coming on, something I can try is:

When I am out in the community and feel a meltdown coming on, I can go:

When I am out in the community, I can take these items to help me during meltdowns:

What I can do during meltdowns...

This is how I would want to communicate (or not) during meltdowns:

If I want to be left alone during meltdowns, I can go:

If I want to talk to someone during meltdowns, I can call/talk to:

Something I might want to share with them is:

Something comforting others can say is:

What I can do after meltdowns...

After meltdowns, something I can do to feel better is:

Others can comfort me by saying/doing:

Self-Advocacy Script for Meltdown

Below are some prompts to help you create a script for explaining **meltdowns** to others. This script can be used to help you advocate for support in managing **meltdowns**.

1. Introductory sentence (how you would start this conversation):

2. Description of the problem as you see it (what is going wrong because of the **meltdown** and your environment):

3. Description of what **meltdowns** feel like for you (e.g., loss of control, anxious, angry):

4. Your request - what do you think could change about the environment (physical, sensory, and social), or what could other people say and do that would help?