

HOW TO MANAGE A MELTDOWN

by Lisa Damour, PhD | drlisadamour.com

Pause between each step to see if it worked. If not, move forward to the next step.

- 1. Listen without interrupting**
- 2. Offer sincere empathy**
 - a. “That stinks!” or
 - b. “I’m so sorry that happened.”
- 3. Validate distress**
 - a. “You have every right to be mad/sad/upset.” or
 - b. “A good cry is the right thing right now.”
- 4. Support coping**
 - a. “Is there anything I can do that won’t make this worse?” or
 - b. “Would some tea help?”
- 5. Express non-dismissive confidence**
 - a. “This is tough, and so are you.” or
 - b. “As hard as this feels right now, I do think that you’ll get through it.”
- 6. Offer to help problem-solve**
 - a. “Do you want my help trying to tackle this?” or
 - b. “Any ideas about what might work to make this better?”
- 7. Divide the problem into buckets:** things that can change and things that can’t.
- 8. Brainstorm possible solutions to the things that can change.**
- 9. Support acceptance of what cannot be changed**
 - a. “There’s always some stuff we just have to live with.” or
 - b. “Let’s focus your energy where it can make a difference.”