

# TIPS AND STRATEGIES TO AVOID MELTDOWNS

## INTRODUCTION

For some children, transitioning from the desired activity to another activity can be one of the day's most difficult tasks. Have you ever been to a crowded store or restaurant, and it is time to go? Then, your child begins to show signs of throwing a tantrum, and your first thought is, "Not here, please!" You are not alone in feeling this way. Here are some helpful tips and strategies to help with difficult transitions.

## PARENT TIPS

### 1 FIVE MINUTE WARNINGS

Many children are often unaware of time, such as how long they played. Giving children a countdown is a helpful strategy to ease into an upcoming transition. Start as simply as possible giving a five-minute warning and alert when there is one-minute remaining. Visual timers can also increase awareness of time. You can practice this at home when there is low stress, such as bedtime, so the child can gauge in their own head how long it takes them to finish an activity.

### 2 PLAN AHEAD

Before an activity, explain to the child what you will be doing and the steps that are about to occur. For example, before the trip to the grocery store, you could tell them, "We are going to the store to buy food. There will be no new toy today. If you follow the rules, you will be rewarded when you get home." If you have a calming object for your children, such as a blanket or toy, be sure to bring it along.

### 3 GIVE CHOICES

Many children desire to feel like they control the situation and their environment. If this is the case, giving children options is an easy way to feel like they are in control. For example, if it is time to leave the store and your child wants a new toy, a simple transition strategy gives them a choice. "You can have a surprise when we get home, or you can play with toys in your room." Be sure to keep a few small toys or stickers on hand for this purpose.

### OTHER TIPS AND STRATEGIES

- Always try to stay calm. When your child is aggravated, try not to complicate the situation with your own frustration. Kids can feed off your emotions.
- Try to avoid saying no as it gives the child a negative reaction.
- Preview the transition with the child. Laying out the timeline of the activity can be helpful.
- Use pictures to create a social story before the event.
- Use a favorite toy, game, or electronic to help transition (transition object).
- Break the transition into small steps.
- If needed, offer small rewards.