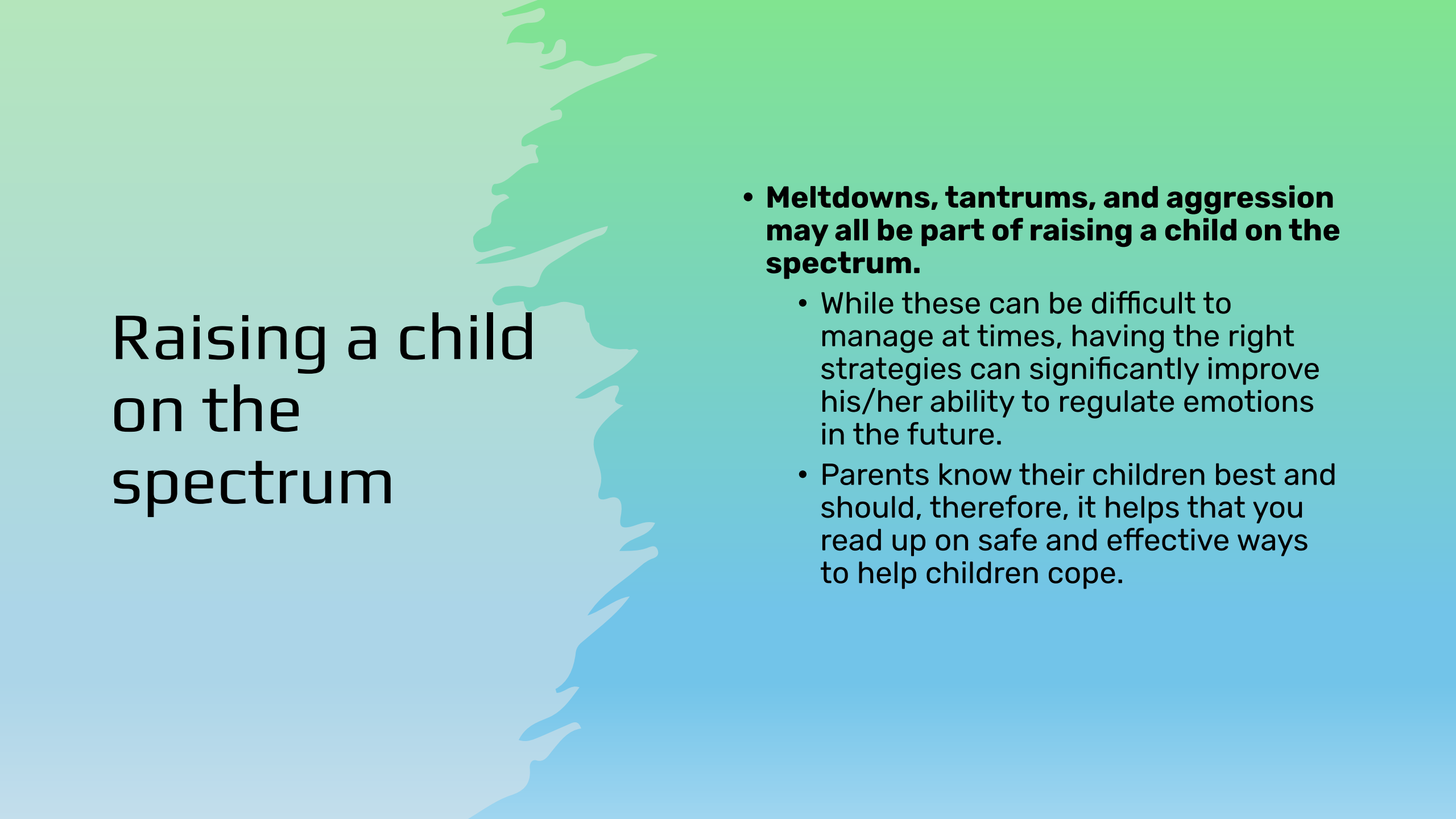


9 Ways ABA Therapy Techniques Can Help Manage Your Child's Tantrum

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Autism Center



Raising a child on the spectrum

- **Meltdowns, tantrums, and aggression may all be part of raising a child on the spectrum.**
 - While these can be difficult to manage at times, having the right strategies can significantly improve his/her ability to regulate emotions in the future.
 - Parents know their children best and should, therefore, it helps that you read up on safe and effective ways to help children cope.

Common Reasons Why Tantrums Occur


For children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), temper tantrums may be triggered for a variety of reasons.

With limited communication skills, they may engage in tantrums as a way of expressing or acting out when they are confused, afraid, anxious, or stressed about something.

A tantrum may also result when a preferred object or activity is removed.

But you should also be quick to assess because a tantrum could be a response to pain, discomfort, or other medical issues.

Whether in a classroom, when receiving specialized ABA therapy, or even at home, the reason why a child is having a tantrum is important in order to develop a plan to minimize it from happening.



Tips for managing and preventing tantrums:

- **Determining the antecedent(s):**
 - The first step to learning how to manage tantrums is determining what led up to the behavior.
 - Knowing how escalation occurs can be very helpful.
 - The usual symptoms may include more than normal stimming, or rocking, asking to leave an environment, or simply bolting to escape.
 - If you understand what triggers your child, it helps you to stop a meltdown before it happens.

Use a schedule to structure their time

Transitions can be a struggle for children with autism, and they respond best when they know what to expect.

To reduce a child's tantrums and meltdowns, you need to prepare them for what's to come.

Schedules establish a predictable environment where a child can feel safe.

It also helps them to better understand expectations and when preferred activities will occur.

For instance, you can say that play time comes after bath time.

You can also use schedules to tell them that they can have what they want after doing something they don't want to do.

When they know what to expect, it allows a child to engage more successfully in activities and prevent tantrums.

Schedules come in many forms depending on the abilities of your child.

You can use a visual schedule if they struggle reading or respond better to pictures than written words.

Visual Schedule



VISUAL SCHEDULE



- It is a sequence of photographs, videos, line drawings, symbols, text, or other visual format that is used to show its user what he or she is expected to do.
- It helps children with autism follow a routine, transition between activities, develop new skills, and reduce dependence on caretakers when completing daily activities.

Make transitions special

Always remember that kids with autism can struggle with:

- Disengaging from the current task
- Switching attention to the new task
- Re-engaging attention on to the new task

Transitions are not particularly easy for children with special needs, but a transition object or toy can help ease some of the stress.

- It should only be used during specific transitions, like going from home to school.
- By making transitions special, your child will be more excited about a new setting or activity, which can help them prepare for what's coming next.

Always remember that transitions can take a lot of practice before you see improvement!

- It may not happen overnight, but consistency and positive reinforcement can really help to build positive behaviors over time.

PREPARE AN AUTISM MELTDOWN KIT



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A meltdown kit or a calm down kit is a customized set of objects (toys, calming devices, sensory items) that help prevent or de-escalate a child's meltdown.

To create your own meltdown kit, you need to ask yourself the following questions:

- ★ What kind of toys/activities does my child like to do?
- ★ Can this item help stop or lessen a meltdown?
- ★ Does this item have the texture/shape/color my child likes?

Here are some items that can be included in your child's kit:



Fidget Toys



Sensory objects
(kinetic sand, play putty,
slime, stress ball)



Sunglasses



Noise-canceling
headphones



Favorite music



Bubbles



Weighted vest



Weighted stuff toy



Favorite toy




Puzzles



Musical instrument
(whistle, harmonica)



Note that giving this kit to your child is ideal for preventing a meltdown. It might not work if the child is already in the middle of a meltdown.



Prime the child about what's to come

- **Priming is an intervention that prepares a child for an upcoming activity or event with which they normally have difficulty.**
 - When they know what's going to happen next and are offered some suggestions of what they can do or say, it makes them less likely to engage in tantrum behaviors.
 - Priming is most effective if it is built into the child's routine.

Offer choices

- **Tantrums usually happen when the child feels like they don't have a choice.**
 - These choices can be small, such as letting a child decide what toy he wants to play with, to larger decisions like when to do activities or what kind of food to eat.
 - Offering choices between two items or activities helps the child understand that they are given some control over what is happening.



OFFERING CHOICES (CONT'D)

OFFERING CHOICES TO AVOID TANTRUMS

Offering choices works best when you present the options to your child. Present both preferred activities and non-preferred activities, since it gives your child some control over the situation.

Instead of... "What toy do you want to play with?"

Try saying, "You can choose to play with trains or Play Doh."



Break down tasks

- **Avoid giving too many instructions or complicated tasks because this can be frustrating for a child, and it may lead to tantrums.**
 - Trying to break down tasks into easy components is an ABA technique called Task Analysis.
 - But you can apply it when preventing tantrums because it allows you to give instructions for small tasks one at a time.
 - Skills that require a task analysis typically consist of multiple components that comprise a larger skill (e.g., washing dishes, putting on a coat).
 - This practice teaches your child self-help and other adaptive skills which also reduces temper tantrums.

Arrange their environment

- Environmental manipulation can help prevent tantrums before they even begin.
 - For example, if your child has the tendency to swipe things off the table when you tell him to do his homework, clear all unnecessary items first before telling him to do so.
 - By removing distractions or items that cause problem behavior, you can help your child complete more challenging activities without triggering a meltdown.



Reward each small success along the way

- **Giving positive reinforcement is one of the main strategies in ABA which can aid you in reducing tantrums.**
 - It is a great way to encourage desired behaviors, especially if you do it more often.
- **When a behavior is followed by a reward, a child is most likely to repeat it.**
 - **Keep rewarding your child** with praise and encouragement.
 - For example, you can say 'Well done!', give your child a high five or a big hug, or put a sticker on your child's reward chart.
 - Over time, this encourages positive behavior change.



Give Frequent Breaks

Most of us get frustrated especially when we're stuck in tasks that we find challenging, and children with ASD are no different.

By following these practices, you can minimize the likelihood of a tantrum. Remember to do them before a behavior occurs, not during or directly after a tantrum or meltdown.

Let your child take breaks often, especially when they're doing a non-preferred activity.

Provide frequent breaks to minimize stress around problem situations. By doing so, you can prevent problem behavior before it occurs. However, we will taper the frequency of breaks down once the child is accustomed to doing the task.

Reference

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