

AFTER SCHOOL MELTDOWNS

Parents often report the 'after school meltdown' - their child/children either comes home extremely volatile and emotional, or becomes quiet and withdrawn. Why does this happen?

Firstly, the social and behavioural expectations of children are far greater at school than they are at home. Children have to use a lot of energy and resources to pay attention, follow directions, sit still, retain information, manage friendships, follow rules, please their teacher... the list goes on. When it comes to home time, it can be challenging for children to conjure up the same amount of resources required to keep it together.

Secondly, they've had to manage all of this without their comfort person, their primary attachment figure - their parent/caregiver. This means that once school has finished, they may feel exhausted from spending 6-7 hours dealing with some pretty tough stuff on their own, or, with the support of school.

Thirdly, they feel like they can melt down at home in their home environment, because this is their comfort zone, where they know they are safe, supported and loved. No matter how big the meltdown, they know that their special big person will be there to pick up the pieces.

How can you help a child experiencing the 'after school meltdown'?



- Spend an extra 5-10 minutes with them before school
- Send them to school with a note in their lunch box from you, or a picture
- Instead of focusing on the goodbye, and telling them all of the fun things they will do that day, redirect their attention to your next hello. "Have a great day - when I pick you up, shall we go to the park or the library?"
 - Pack a snack for the journey home
- Delay asking them about their day straight away - pick the moment
- Get to know what your child needs once home (which can change from day to day). Do they need time to relax, or some physical activity?
 - Have some down time before doing homework
- Spend some time with your child after school, some real 1:1 time. This to a child means a lot
 - Listen to your child
- Offer understanding and empathy, rather than punishment/discipline for any unwanted behaviour

As always, respond the best you can with the energy and resources you have.

You can do this!

