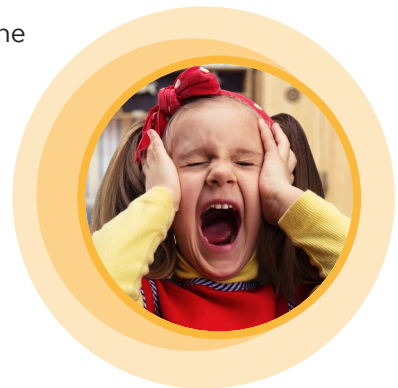
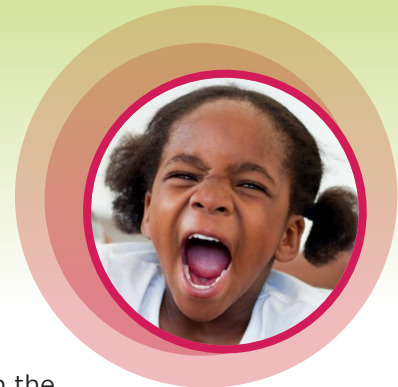


# Play Therapist's Top Tips

## Supporting emotional behaviour

### ● Understanding those big reactions

- ★ Dan Siegal, award-winning educator, and Clinical Professor of Psychiatry, describes the brain as having an upstairs and a downstairs.
- ★ Your downstairs is filled with your 'emotional people.'
- ★ Your upstairs is filled with your 'logical people.'
- ★ During a regulated state, the upstairs and downstairs can communicate with each other effectively.
- ★ However, with the emotional side of the brain being more developed, especially in the younger years, there is a risk that the two sides will not always communicate effectively.
- ★ When a child is upset, angry or fearful, their emotions often take over, causing their logical brains go offline.
- ★ This makes it impossible for them to think straight, as the connection between the two sides has been broken.



### ● A tantrum vs. a meltdown - there is a difference

- ★ Not all tantrums happen because a child is in a state of emotional turmoil.
- ★ An escalated situation can result in one of two responses... a tantrum or a meltdown.
- ★ A tantrum occurs when a child has calculated that they will get a desired response if they throw a fit - they have made a conscious decision to respond in that way.
- ★ A child throwing a tantrum is using the logical part of their brain and could stop the tantrum at any time.
- ★ A meltdown occurs when a child is so dysregulated, they are no longer able to use the logical part of their brain.
- ★ A child having a meltdown has had the emotional part of their brain take over and is therefore unable to respond in a logical manner.

### ● Top tips on how to support each response

- ★ A **tantrum** calls for boundaries and consequences.
- ★ A child thinking with the logical part of their brain can understand when boundaries are put in place and the consequences that will occur if not respected.
- ★ We can have a conversation with them about their behaviours and about what is and is not acceptable.
- ★ A **meltdown** calls for a more comforting response.
- ★ A child in this type of response needs to see that we see and understand how they are feeling.
- ★ We need to first connect and relate to them.
- ★ Once this is achieved, and they have returned to a regulated state, we can discuss with them how they handled the situation and appropriate ways of responding.
- ★ Regardless of whether it is a meltdown or a tantrum occurring, always remember to stay in control of your own emotions.

