

What do I do if my child becomes overwhelmed by their stress response?

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It can be really upsetting when our children become overwhelmed by their big feelings and often a difficult time for us to offer our support to them as they are struggling to regulate their emotional response. Some tips that may be useful:

- Early on in behaviour, before your child loses control, techniques in distraction may be useful. Redirecting your child's attention to focus on something new may be helpful to change the direction of the behaviour.
- Validating your child's feelings using emotion coaching statements may support your child to feel understood "I think that you are feeling anxious."
- If your child is unable to be redirected and becomes overwhelmed by their emotions, think fight, flight or freeze.
- Reduce language to reduce the stress load for your child.
- Make sure that your child is safe, be available but reduce attention.
- Allow time for your child to self calm.
- Maintain a calm tone of voice and acknowledge their feelings "I can see that you got angry and now you're feeling upset."

- Label the child's behaviour (it's important to not label the child).
- When appropriate explain the consequences to the child's actions.
- If needed offer a relaxation technique to support regulation.

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