

Mentos and Meltdowns

This activity follows on from the 'The Coke Bottle Effect' Activity



Learning aims

- To identify clues/warning signs before a meltdown

What you will need

- Bottle of diet coke
- Pack of mentos
- Post-it notes
- Invisible ink pen



Preparation

Using the invisible ink pen, write various indicators of dysregulation on post-it notes. *e.g. Feeling hot, going red in the face, talking loudly, feeling less in control, shaking, feeling rushed, everything seeming loud, heart racing, unsettled stomach, sweating, struggling to think clearly, feeling easily irritated, feeling breathless.*

Instructions

- 1 Demonstrate the 'eruption' caused by pouring mentos into a bottle of diet coke. We suggest using safety glasses for this activity. Place the bottle on a flat surface outdoors (there will be spillage), pour in a roll of mentos, and step back quickly.
- 2 Remind your child that in 'The Coke Bottle Effect' Activity, the coke bottle exploding represented a child having a meltdown, which was caused by the stress they encountered during the day. We found that identifying some of the stressors and making suitable accommodations could make a huge difference to the child's day.
- 3 Explain that in this activity, the bottle exploding represents a meltdown which seems to come 'out of the blue' (i.e. with no apparent warning). Whilst meltdowns can be triggered very quickly by a particularly distressing or dysregulating event, there are often 'clues' that we are becoming dysregulated prior to these apparently 'out of the blue' meltdowns. Learning to recognise these clues gives the opportunity to regulate.
- 4 Invite the child to hunt for the 'clues' (i.e. post it notes) and use the torch to reveal them. Your aim is simply to introduce the idea that there are often clues/warning signs before a meltdown, and identifying them can be helpful. If appropriate, you can also discuss whether any of the 'clues' are applicable for them.

Therapeutic Relevance

We need to recognise signs of dysregulation in order to self-regulate. This activity introduces the idea that there may be some clues which they can learn to recognise. Many clues involve interoceptive awareness, which they can be supported to develop.

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