



Top 10 Tips for Parents

Emotion Management for 4-6 year olds with Asperger's Syndrome

1. Engage in self-care. Develop your own Emotional Toolbox. If you are calm it is more likely that your child will be calm.
2. Know your child's triggers. These are likely to be both social and sensory, and to include the words, "no," "change," or 'wait."
3. Give advance notice of change and visual schedules for the day and the week. Predictability and consistency will help your child (and you) stay calm.
4. See a meltdown coming. Easier said than done with AS. Watch, listen and observe. There may be idiosyncratic signs your child will give that a meltdown is on its way, when he she cannot tell you and the signs are not apparent in his or her face or body language. Maybe s/he starts to hum, maybe s/he becomes more pedantic or more rigid, or stops talking.
5. Have a plan for the meltdown. Develop a plan for home, kindergarten or school, the shopping centre, grandma's place etc. If you have a plan you will know what to do. Just this knowing what to do can help you keep calm. Involve others in the plan.
6. Talk to your child about feelings on a daily basis. Make the words happy, sad, angry, like, relaxed and anxious a regular part of your vocabulary with your child. Start talking about degrees of these feelings as well, even if you just use numbers at the start.
7. Don't make negative feelings the enemy. No one enjoys feeling angry or anxious, but that does not make the feelings bad. They exist for a reason. Validating and naming your child's feelings will help your child accept them, which is the first step to managing them. Use the mantra in your home: "it is okay to be angry, it is not okay to be mean."
8. Try using this mantra on a daily basis: 'I am doing the very best I can and my child is doing the very best he (she) can.'
9. Pick your battles. Your child definitely needs to learn to face some things, but doesn't need to face everything at once. Choose the easier battles first. Reward effort.
10. No matter what the outcome, praise yourself. Maybe it went well, maybe it didn't. No matter what, you are a good parent and the fact that you beat yourself up and feel guilty proves it. Nourish yourself, remind yourself of the bits that did go well. Treating yourself like your own best friend teaches your child to treat themselves like their own best friend.

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