

# SENSORY MELTDOWNS VS. TANTRUMS

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Heather Greutman is a Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant. Sharla Kostelyk is a mom of 7 with personal experience in raising 5 of those children with sensory processing disorder. This product is for educational use only. The advice and tips given are not a replacement for medical advice from a physician or pediatrician. Please consult their advice if you suspect any medical or developmental delay with your child. This book and tips do not replace the relationship between therapist and client in a one-on-one treatment sessions with an individualized treatment plan based on their professional evaluation. Please ask your local Occupational Therapist for an evaluation if you suspect any delays in sensory processing skills or other developmental skills with your child or student.

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# SENSORY MELTDOWNS VS. TANTRUMS

When we see a child flailing, crying, kicking, and screaming, our first reaction can be to judge the child or even the parent. But there may be a lot going on behind the outward behavior you see. It can be helpful to learn to recognize the difference between a classic tantrum and a sensory meltdown.

## TANTRUMS

Short description: A behavioral reaction based on the child not getting something they want or need.

- The child is seeking attention or a specific reaction.
- The child asked for or demanded something prior to their reaction.
- The child is still aware of their surroundings and others.
- The tantrum may end abruptly, particularly if the child gets the outcome they desired.
- Behavior is purposeful and meant to manipulate the situation or person.
- Tantrums are a choice.

## SENSORY MELTDOWN

Short description: A biological reaction to feeling overwhelmed by a situation, environment, or sensory input.

- The child is not concerned about your reaction to the behavior.
- The child is usually not asking for or demanding anything before the reaction.
- The child is not in control and does not appear to be aware of their surroundings or others.
- Meltdowns can last longer and the child can need more time to fully recover afterwards.
- The behavior is a biological response.
- Meltdowns are not a choice.

**ALL BEHAVIOR IS COMMUNICATION.**