Welcome to *Hidden Sparks Without Walls*. We will be starting shortly...

To alleviate background noise and ensure a quiet session, your phones have been automatically muted. Questions and comments can be submitted via the **CHAT FEATURE**.

While we are waiting, activate the chat feature by clicking in the “Chat” tab that is located below the attendees list on the right of your screen.

**When chatting, please remember:**

- Select “**All Participants**” if you would like everyone to see your message. Select “**All Panelists**” if you would like only the presenter and facilitator to see your message.

- If you have any clarifying questions about the format, or the topic, you may click on the “**Q&A**” tab located below the presenter list and enter your questions.
Hidden Sparks is a non-profit whose purpose is to help children with learning differences reach their full potential in school and life. Hidden Sparks develops and supports professional development programs for Jewish day schools to help increase understanding and support for teaching to diverse learners.

Guided by a philosophy that helping schools meet the needs of children with learning and behavioral differences will ultimately benefit all students, Hidden Sparks’ programs combine professional development in learning and positive behavioral support, guided classroom observation and one on one coaching.

Since inception, Hidden Sparks has trained 190 coaches in 65 Jewish day schools in the New York Metro area, Baltimore, MD, Boca Raton, FL, and Chicago, IL, and 3 Israeli cities (Jerusalem, Ramle, Ra’anana).
Managing Meltdowns and Taming Tantrums: Practical Strategies for Everyday Challenges

With Amanda Morin
December 13, 2016
Amanda Morin is a parent advocate and former teacher. She worked in classrooms and as an early intervention specialist for 10 years, providing education and training to parents of children with disabilities and leading multidisciplinary teams in developing and implementing Individual Family Service Plans.

Since 2007, she has been working as an education writer and, more recently, as a parent advocate to empower parents and affirm the pivotal role they play in their child’s education. Morin received a Bachelor’s degree in education from the University of Maine and special education advocacy training from the Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates.

Overview of the Session:

• Can you tell the difference between a tantrum and a meltdown? They can look very similar when you see a child having one. But for children with sensory processing challenges or self-regulation issues, a meltdown is very different from a tantrum.

• Learn to understand the differences and have strategies at your fingertips to respond in a way that better supports the child.
Session Goals:

• Identify the differences, similarities and connections between tantrums and meltdowns.

• Learn proactive ways to tame tantrums and manage meltdowns.

• Understand how to create an action plan.
A Few Notes About Tantrums and Meltdowns

• **Meltdown** isn’t a clinical term. It’s not a word doctors use to describe certain behavior, but it’s become a shorthand for parents and providers to talk about what they’re seeing.

• Many people use the terms interchangeably, but parents of kids who “melt down” don’t!

• They can look alike, but they’re very different types of outbursts.
A Big Question: How Are They Alike?

• Both are emotional outbursts. They have crying, yelling, lashing out in common.

• Both are ways kids handle things they don’t have the skills to manage.

*Things That Kids May Find Hard to Manage:* Frustration, anger, information / sensory / emotional overload.
The Line Between Them Isn’t Always Clear.

A tantrum can lead to a child being overwhelmed and become a meltdown.

The Hot Dog Dilemma
### Some Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tantrums</th>
<th>Meltdowns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child has some control over his behavior</td>
<td>Behavior is beyond a child’s control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually to get something he wants or needs.</td>
<td>Usually a reaction to feeling overwhelmed (&quot;fight or flight&quot;).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watches for a reaction and adjusts behavior to match.</td>
<td>May be panicky and not know what he wants or needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May be able to negotiate, adjust intensity and process information.</td>
<td>Lowers ability to self-calm, solve problems and make decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ends when he gets what he wants or realizes he won’t get what he wants by acting out.</td>
<td>Ends when child wears himself out or input is reduced enough to restore calm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What Does a Tantrum Look Like?

• An angry or frustrated outburst.
• A child might yell, cry, lash out, and hold his breath.
• A child typically has some control over his behavior during a tantrum.
• The behavior tends to stop when he gets what he wants. (But tantrums can become overwhelming and evolve into meltdowns.)
What Triggers a Tantrum?

• Frustration

• A desire to get something, avoid something or for a specific reaction.

• Not being able to communicate needs.
Signs It’s a Tantrum

• You know what the child wants or is reacting to.
• The child is choosing to engage in the behavior.
• He’s able to pay attention to what’s going on around him.
• He watches other people’s reactions and adjusts his behavior to match it.
• He may be trying to bargain for a solution while he’s yelling.
• The behavior ends once when he gets what he wants or realizes he won’t get what he wants by acting out.
What Does a Meltdown Look Like?

• A reaction to feeling overwhelmed.
• A child might yell, cry, lash out, run away and/or shut down and withdraw.
• It seems to be out of a child’s control.
• The behavior tends to stop when he wears himself out or when there’s a change in the amount of sensory input he is experiencing.
What Triggers a Meltdown?

Sensory, information or emotional overload.

Intense frustration

Sudden changes in routine or expectations.

Not being able to communicate needs.
Signs It’s a Meltdown

- You may not know what the child wants or is reacting to.
- The child doesn’t seem to have control over his behavior and appears panicky.
- He is shutting down or trying to escape. He’s not able to process what’s going on around him.
- He doesn’t respond to people’s reactions or attempts to talk to him.
- He loses his ability to problem-solve and negotiate solutions.
- He needs time to calm down and recover, even after a situation has been resolved.
4 Proactive Tips to Manage Meltdowns

1. **Agree on a frustration signal.**
   What signal you can use when you see a child getting frustrated? What should he can do when he sees it?

2. **Create a calm space.**
   What’s the calm down place in your house/classroom? How do you convey this is a safe, quiet place, not punishment?

3. **Set clear expectations and consequences.**
   What do you expect? Why? What happens when they're not met?

4. **Teach ways to self-calm.**
   What can he do when he’s upset? Where can he go to calm down?
Is This Escalating to a Meltdown?

Signs to watch for:

- Trouble thinking clearly or making decisions
- Increased agitation & movement
- Complaining of physical symptoms (trouble breathing, dizziness, heart pounding, etc.)
- Increasing frustration
- Trouble answering questions or getting words out
## Phases of a Meltdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Triggered</th>
<th>Escalation</th>
<th>“Explosion”</th>
<th>Recovery</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| A trigger is a stressor or stressful situation that overwhelms a child.  
1. Sensory, information or emotional overload.  
2. Unexpected changes.  
4. Frustration. | Stress builds, may be warning signs that child’s having trouble coping.  
1 Kids have different “tells.”  
2. Kids escalate at different rates.  
3. Intervening and redirecting during this phase may stop a meltdown | What people think of as the "meltdown."  
1. Screaming, crying, lashing out or completely withdrawn/shut down.  
2. Not able to respond to or engage with other people. | After the explosion passes, child may be:  
1. Crying and upset.  
2. Able to process information.  
3. Embarrassed, regretful or scared.  
4. Physically exhausted / asleep. |
3 Tips to Manage Meltdown Triggers

1. Keep track of the triggers you can identify.

2. Be proactive (but careful) in pointing them out and identifying potential solutions.

3. Know that some triggers are not visible or obvious.

You can’t avoid all the things that may trigger a child, but you can choose your battles wisely.

If you know it’s a trigger, ask:
- Is there another way we could do this?
- How important is this outcome?
3 Tips to Manage Meltdown Escalation

1. Try to manage your reaction first.

2. Try to redirect the child away from the trigger.

3. Be patient and kind.

Remember that the child is probably scared and may feel out of control. You may feel that way, too. An overly reactive response will magnify these feelings.

Assess:
- Can you be calm?
- Empathetic?
- Do you need help?
- Do you have signals to use with the child to indicate he’s escalating?
3 Tips to Manage Meltdown “Explosions”

1. Be reassuring and present.

2. Provide a safe space.

3. Try to stay calm and think about what you'll do when this ends. (And it will!)

Coping with the explosion is about making it through the storm.

It’s important to support the child, provide time and wait until the explosion subsides.
3 Tips to Manage Meltdown Recovery

1. Let both of you recover.

2. Decide what is necessary to address.

3. Be brief and create a plan of action.

Know that you don’t have to address what happened right away.

Some kids may truly not remember what happened during a meltdown, so discussing it after the fact can be tough.
Creating a Simple Plan of Action

1. **A simple plan helps you predict.**
   It lists known triggers and signs of escalation.

2. **A simple plan helps you be prepared.**
   It provides ideas of what to do based on past experience.

3. **A simple plan helps everyone stay calmer.**
   Knowing what to do and what to look for can help you feel more in charge.
# An Example Action Plan

## TRIGGERS:

**What we know:** Changes in routine, hunger/fatigue, loud sounds, frustration w/homework  
**How to manage:** Give plenty of warnings, use visual schedules, use noise-canceling headphones, provide extra time

## ESCALATION:

**Signs we know:** Pacing, repeating questions w/out listening too the answer, hands over ears  
**Way to manage:** Give space & offer a place to go, use short & concrete sentences, provide picture options

## EXPLOSION:

**Signs we know:** Yelling, hiding under the table, bolting, crying  
**Ways to manage:** Clear the room of people, sit on the floor nearby, offer quiet reassurance
Final Takeaways
3 Key Takeaways

1. Tantrums and meltdowns can be connected.

2. Taming tantrums and managing meltdowns require different approaches.

3. It’s important to have plans for being proactive and reactive.
## Upcoming Hidden Sparks Without Walls Parent Connection Sessions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Presenter(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Presented by Zipora Schuk</td>
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| Wed. Feb. 8, 2016 | For Parents             | Digital Parenting Tips in the Age of Social Media  
|                |                          | Presented by Rabbi Efraim Clair and Rabbi Dov Hochbaum |

If you are interested in bringing Hidden Sparks to your school or city, please contact us at:  
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