

# Responding to Tantrums and Meltdowns

By Colby Pearce

**1. Keep Calm** (hard to do, but models emotional control. I recommend *holding in mind* that *the child is feeling overwhelmed and needs your help*, as opposed to that they are being deliberately difficult. Also, keep in mind that showing a little of your own distress at the child's distress, and then self-regulating to calm, facilitates a normal process whereby an emotional connection is established between you and the child and, as you self-regulate to calm, the child will be helped to regulate to calm via their emotional connection to you)

**2. Be Present** (Stay close by your child, but don't interact with them – at this stage. Remaining close, but not too close, will reassure most children that you are available to help them).

**3. Drape a heavy blanket across the child's shoulders** (it's soothing).

OR

**4. Give the child something to suck or chew on** (sucking and chewing are also soothing).

OR

**5. Put on some of the child's favourite music** (favoured music is calming).

OR

**6. Put on a DVD the child likes** (this can also be calming).

**7. Offer the child the opportunity to have a warm bath or shower.**

**8. Engage in interactive repair once the child is calm again** (Do a favoured activity together. This is important to reassure the child that they are still loved and that challenging behaviour and conflict does not mean the end of relationships).