

Tips and suggestions to support the social-emotional needs of SPF families

After School: How to best support your child after a long day

Why kids hold it together at school and then fall apart at home?

Something that may seem familiar to a lot of caregivers is picking up your child after school, hearing from their teacher how great of a day they had, getting them home, just for them to have a complete meltdown! This is what parenting experts call "after school restraint collapse." Read on for tips and tricks on how to help children deal with it.



Take a peek inside this issue:

- The After School Emotional Collapse
- Transitions
- Worries to Wonders
- Book and online resources for encouraging coping and calming down.



Transitions

Imagine being told to do things that don't come naturally to you, or that you truly don't want to do ALL day long. I'm sure we can all agree that we wouldn't be in the best mood after that. However, as adults, we have different coping strategies that we've been able to develop over the years to help adjust when transitions arise.

Some children are not yet equipped with these skills and as a result, struggle to regulate after a major transition. This can look like a tantrum, burst of energy, a crash, whining, etc. As a caregiver, you may not understand and recognize this in the moment, but try to take a moment to think about how you feel after a long day of work. Your child may be feeling similarly, and are unable to articulate that into words.

Worries to Wonders

When your child expresses a worry to you, especially during transitions, try reflecting their feeling and changing their worry into a wonder:. For example:

"None of my old friends are in my class"... "That sounds hard, I wonder how many new friends you'll make this year?"

"I don't want to ask a question because I feel stupid"... "I wonder if others have the same question too and would be grateful if you asked it."

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The After School Emotional "Restraint Collapse"



WHAT THE AFTER SCHOOL MELTDOWN IS REALLY ABOUT AND WHAT TO DO

A classroom setting places enormous demands on a child. Beyond learning the alphabet or how to read, students are honing their social and emotional skills, like figuring out which new classmate could be a friend. They are also regulating their frustrations, sorting out how to share a block with 20 other kids. The beginning of the school year is particularly demanding as all of this is happening in a new environment, with new people and new demands to learn and remember.

Experts believe this release at the end of the day is incredibly healthy. It's a sign kids are learning to cope and determine where and how to release their feelings. Although it still may not feel great when your child is yelling at you from the backseat of the car. Next time though, try reframing your thought process from "I wish they would calm down" to "wow my child feels safe to release these feelings around me."

Don't Fight the Collapse - Embrace it

- **Offer connection right away.** Make sure you smile and hug your child to let them know you missed them too. Commit to some uninterrupted time together after school, even if it's just for five minutes.
- **Avoid questions.** Questions can be very overstimulating after a long school day. It forces them to make another decision when they are experiencing stress.
- **Prepare a snack.** Choose something in advance that you know they enjoy, so you don't put them in a position of making decisions.
- **Establish a routine.** Children find routines very calming and comforting. Create an after school routine that works for you and your child.
- **Help them disengage from "thinking brain."** You can do this through calming strategies or music. Model deep breathing or observing nature.
- **Get moving.** Set up some physical activity to help release pent-up energy.
- **Pre-planning- in the morning** Remind them how proud you are of them for doing hard things all day and ask what they would like after school.

Tantrum	Meltdown
A child's big reaction when something happens that they feel was out of their control	The release of stored emotion, with or without a clear and identifiable cause

Both resolve naturally when the adult is present, loving, and supportive

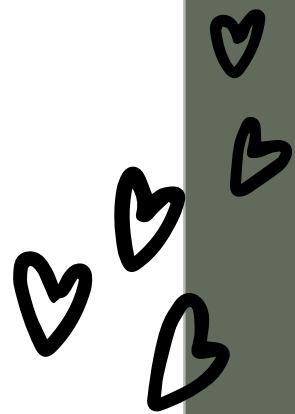


Resources



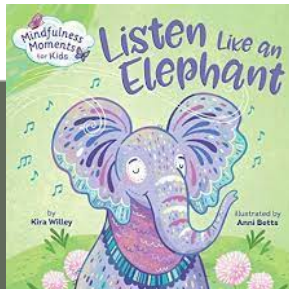
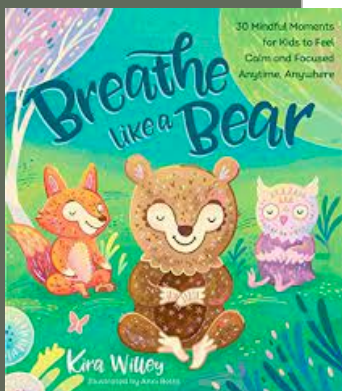
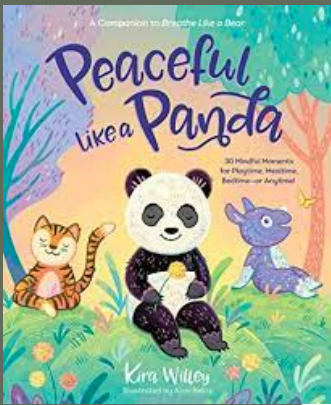
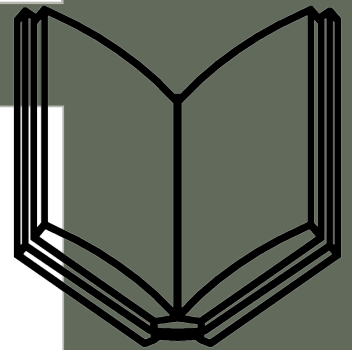
ONLINE RESOURCES

For some, knowing what to expect, and having a visual to guide them can help sooth the after school meltdown. Click the image before for printable check lists.



BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

Restraint collapse? Homework Frustration? Friendship problems? All of these challenges present an opportunity for us to grow coping and calm down strategies in our kids. Try author *Kira Willey's* mindfulness books for kids!



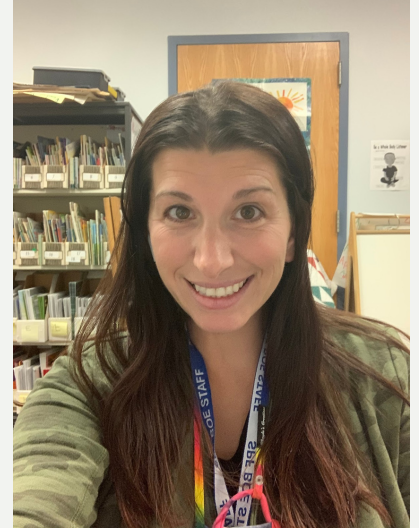
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