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# IMPRESSIONS

INSIGHTS FROM THE PRACTICE of CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

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*is published by  
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a clinical  
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topics which may  
be of interest to  
professionals  
providing services  
to children,  
adolescents, adults  
and their families.*

Young children have meltdowns which seem to explode out of nowhere. With some sleuthing, parents or teachers can observe and predict, much like weather forecasters, when conditions are becoming right for stormy behavior.

Adults need to look for subtle signs and sounds of discomfort. For example, a child becomes more talkative or silent or begins complaining. Perhaps children merely start mumbling, whining, or talking to themselves. Sometimes a child may become restless, clumsy or less adept at doing something such as walking, picking up toys, or listening.

### When Conditions Are Right for a Tantrum

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Once these behaviors have been noticed, the goal is to prevent the child from escalating into a tantrum. Begin by removing the child from a setting which has become overstimulating. Take the child out of the grocery store, park, or situation where the demands for the child are too great a challenge to self control, such as an adult party or church

service. Create a code phrase as a way to signal the child to begin stress reduction techniques which will have been learned beforehand.

During calm periods, help the child learn deep breathing or muscle relaxation techniques. If discharging tension is more helpful, have the child run in place, yell, or run around the back yard for 30 seconds.

With a caring adult present to guide the child through these stress relief exercises the child learns skills that can be used when the adult notices that a meltdown is imminent.