# WHEN A CHILD GETS ANGRY OVER SOMETHING SMALL

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## WHAT YOU MIGHT NOTICE

- A small problem leads to a very big reaction.
- They shout, cry, slam things, argue or storm off.
- They seem unable to let something go.
- Their reaction seems much bigger than what happened.
- Later, they may struggle to explain why they got so angry.
- You find yourself thinking, "But nothing really happened."

## WHAT MIGHT BE BEHIND IT

- The small thing may be the last thing, not the whole thing. Stress can build until one more frustration feels like too much.
- They may be tired, hungry, worried, overwhelmed by noise or activity, or already upset about something else.
- They may have spent hours coping with demands, frustration or difficult social situations.
- Something that seems small to an adult may feel very important to a child.
- Anger may be covering another feeling, such as hurt, fear, embarrassment, disappointment or feeling left out.
- They may not notice they're getting overwhelmed until they've reached their limit.
- Once they're very upset, it's harder to think clearly, find words, listen or solve the problem.
- Some children need more help with frustration, changes, waiting or things not going as expected.

## "IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT THE BROKEN PENCIL."

Sometimes it really means:

"I was already struggling. This was just the last thing I could handle."

## WHAT CAN HELP

**Keep your response calm.**

A child who's overwhelmed needs less intensity around them, not more.

**Don't argue about whether the problem is "small."**

In that moment, it doesn't feel small to them.

**Help them settle before trying to teach.**

Save explanations, consequences and problem-solving for when they can think and listen again.

**Use fewer words.**

"You're really upset. I'm here. We'll sort it out when you're ready."

**Look at what came before.**

Was there tiredness, hunger, worry, too much noise or activity, disappointment, conflict or a difficult day?

**Talk about it later.**

Once they're calm, help them work out what was building up and what could help next time.

## THE TRIGGER MAY BE SMALL. THE FEELING BEHIND IT MAY NOT BE.

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# FREE PDF DOWNLOAD

## When a child gets angry

When a child gets angry is a one-page visual support sheet about big emotional reactions to small triggers. It explains why a minor frustration may be the final straw for a child who is tired, worried, overstimulated, hungry or carrying other difficult feelings.

Parents, carers, teachers, SEN staff and children's practitioners can use it as a calm-down and reflection prompt after an incident. The practical suggestions support co-regulation in the moment, while the follow-up questions help adults and children identify triggers, unmet needs and helpful coping strategies for future meltdowns.