Strategies to Minimize Meltdowns for Students with ASD

**Intervene in the Rumbling Stage**

- **Low and Slow**
  - Reduce volume and movement approach slowly and from below

- **Distraction/Redirection**
  - Drawing attention to a favorite topic or calming strategy to refocus emotions

- **Home base**
  - Student returns to a location where he/she can process with a trusted staff member

- **Acknowledge difficulties**
  - Simply articulating the difficulty and reassuring the student that everyone faces difficulties at times can help a student save face and de-escalate the situation

- **Just walk and don’t talk**
  - Physically moving away from the location of the stress without discussion can allow the situation to diffuse without a meltdown

- **Humor**
  - Using humor to diffuse the situation by making a faux pas or directing the stress into laughter aimed away from the student can resolve a tense situation

- **Silent signal**
  - A mutually determined nonverbal signal can be provided that alerts the student to the rumbling and encourages prevention strategies

**Precursors to a Meltdown**

- Increasing vocal intensity
- Decreased eye contact
- Downward gaze
- Tensing of muscles
- Quick or jerky motor actions
- Muttering about “unfairness” or “stupidity” of situation
- May shut down

**Practices to Avoid**

- Public castigation
- Power assertions
- Rigid body language
- Sarcasm
- Comparison with peers
- Approaching quickly/from above
- Hands on—even gently
- Violation of instructor’s “rules”
- Threats (perceived as inevitable)

**Explosion**
- Verbal outburst
- Stomping out
- Property destruction
- Self-injury

**Implosion**
- Tears
- Head on desk
- Inertia/Freezing

**Recovery**
- Student often sorry, but does not recall event well
- May be physically exhausted
- If pushed too fast, may rage again
- Student must process incident after all emotion is subdued

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