



360 Treatment Tools & Tips

An ADHD 360 3T's paper

Who is in control?

Many families ask the 360 team about the 'temper tantrums' or 'meltdowns' that they witness their children suffering.

Without any doubt this is a stressful time for both parents, carers, and the child. Standard responses from society expect the child to behave, and therefore demand that the family control the child and 'parent better'. Those ill-informed judgements serve to damage the esteem of the parents and carers and also damage the confidence of the suffering child.

But what can be done to help families in these scenarios, or better still, what can be done to prevent these unfortunate occurrences happening in the first place?

The first thing to be discussed is the effect of medicine on this. Without any doubt the period of trialling medicines with a young child is stressful, and it may be that through the trial processes of working out what medication works well and at what dose, the patient may have some behaviours that prove trickier than 'normal' to manage.

But experience tells us that to truly be on 'top of things' and preventing 'tantrums and meltdowns' in problem solving terms, we have to be solving the right problem.

If we examine the structure of the 123 Magic Programme, and blend this with other psychological interventions, we see that one of the common themes is about control. The question I ask parents when discussing things like this is 'who here is in control?' If it's not the parents or carers, then it's likely to be the child. And that will not work.

CRAFT

There are five main rules for regaining and keeping adult control. And developing these as skills, or **crafts** is key to giving your child, our patient the best you can. Any chink in parental armour, any break in these rules, will inevitably lead to those stressful and emotional outbursts described as 'meltdowns' and 'tantrums'.



Consistency
Rigour
Adult leadership
Firm but fair
Temper management

Consistency

Act and work as a galvanised team, with all the adults in your child's life being fully aware of why, how and the details of the approach to 'control' that you are using. If you are using 123, and we recommend it as a programme, make sure everyone uses the programme in the same way. It's no use Mum always counting to 3 as required, but Dad ignoring this and threatening new punishments that the child knows are impossible to fulfil. Control is lost at that point. 'If you don't stop doing that, I'm going to cancel Christmas' just isn't going to work. You know you're not going to do that and so does your child! But the rigour of a managed, appropriate time out will. Always deliver this as the child expects, as you would have previously explained consequences of breaching the count to 3, it will work. It puts the adult back in control.

Rigour

You can't pick and choose when to be a carer or parent. No matter how tired you are, how many times you've 'done this already' you must do it again, and again. In the same way. Calmly counting to 3, imposing the same consequence of a bedroom "time out" and no matter how bad it makes you feel, having the rigour to carry things through. There's no place for the 'good parent -v- bad parent' here, this isn't a popularity contest for carers, this is parenting and gaining control back for keeps. You need to be tenacious. And if you offer a reward for good behaviour, deliver it. If you offer the Xbox in return for 30 mins quiet time, just make sure that if you get the 30 minutes quiet time, you're in a position to deliver and allow, graciously, the Xbox. A rewards system needs consistency and works much better if you play your part. We would advocate that rewards systems work much better than punishment and are worth all the additional effort.

Adult Leadership

You're the 'grown up' here and it is fair to say that with that comes responsibility. The expectations are upon you not your child. It's widely accepted that children and adolescents with ADHD can be up to a third behind the emotional development of those without. And that's going to have an impact. You can't rationally expect an 'adult' rationale from your child, you shouldn't expect them to always be reasonable in arguments. By the mere nature of what's at stake and being discussed, you should expect behaviours of a child. That places you, the adult, at the helm of this ship. Captaincy and all that comes with it is yours. Don't sail the family ship without a good plan.

Contract with your child - this is what is not acceptable and if you do this you have 3 attempts to stop then we see consequences. Plan and discuss the consequences in advance and consistent. 123 Magic suggests a bedroom-based time out. This is simple and easily enforced. It is also a happy place for your child to go to. Note the words here, not 'agree' the consequences with your child, 'plan and discuss'. It is not a democratic debate. Control the execution of the plan. Calmly, be the grown up here, act with civility, rationale and stick to the plan.



Firm but Fair

Remember that you are in control. Being in control is all about being firm and fair. You must act from your head not your heart. You need to remove your emotions from the situation, rely on the plan, grit your teeth and count to 10 in your head whilst counting to 123 with your child. You can't react to the emotion you're exposed to; you can't afford to become engaged in emotional words, and you can't ever afford to lose your temper. When you do, you have handed control over to your child, on a silver platter, and you will have eroded some of the good work you previously put into place. It's not easy to act from your head, when your child is approaching a tantrum or having some form of crisis and lashing out at you. You have to be the grown up, always on duty, always consistent and always acting from pre-planned and well thought out plans. You're not the one reacting emotionally, nor reacting with unrealistic threats and you are not the one in this dynamic losing control. The 'duty grown up' as we call it, is then always 'firm but fair'.

Temper Management (yours)

Imagine for a second that you are watching your 'moment' with your child from the outside. The child is really 'rattling your cage', demanding something unrealistic, being rude, obnoxious, and calling you 'fit to burn'. You see yourself saying 'OK we have discussed this and it's not acceptable. You know this. That's 1'. You would be proud. But imagine the opposite that you could see 'If you don't stop this, I am going to cancel our holiday to the beach'. 'I've told you to stop, you're not getting what you want and that's final' leading to 'I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF THIS, STOP SCREAMING AT ME, WHY DO YOU DO THIS TO ME, WHY ARE YOU SO HORRIBLE?' Who is in control at this point?

Create Headroom

CRAFT your parenting skills and make it a skill set to be proud of. Doing this is within your grasp, it's your role and it's your responsibility. And if we are genuinely truthful, you can't expect your child to make this easy for you.



For many different reasons your ADHD child lives close to 'tantrum' a lot of the time. Imagine a high-jump bar. The bar sitting above the ground is the 'explosion' point. The higher the bar, the greater tolerance there is, and the more room there is to negotiate, cope and deal with things. But now imagine living everyday just below the bar, struggling to cope emotionally, with little negotiation space and almost no chance of being tolerant. If that's where your child is, it takes very little to break through the barrier of the bar. It's your role to increase the space between the bar and your child. Creating the headroom to allow for more time to cope, more space to explore emotionally and for there to be more happiness, for you and your child.

This *360 Treatment Tools and Tips* paper is a quick guide to "Control". We strongly recommend 123 Magic and encourage you to read the many books by Dr Tom Phelan. You may also be interested in the interactive courses run by the many ADHD support organisations on this subject.

Your ADHD 360 team.



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