

UNDERSTANDINGAUTISM.INFO

Meltdowns, Shutdowns, and Self-Harming Behavior

Some of the most confusing and alarming autism behaviors to neurotypical people are meltdowns, shutdowns, and self-harming behaviors. But why do these behaviors occur, and what can be done to manage them? We explore those questions and share our own experiences in this podcast episode.

EPISODE 5 PART 1

What is Self-Harm?

0:00-4:46

- "When someone intentionally damages or injures their body."
- Examples of self-harm
- Reasons for self-harm
- Self-injurious behavior "When someone is not seeking to intentionally damage or cause injury to themselves, but injuries still occur."
- Why would someone want to cause pain to themselves to distract from other types of pain?

Our Personal Experiences

4:46 - 23:19

- Nicole shares her experiences with self-harming behavior
- Bret shares his experience as a parent of an autistic child
- Self-harming experiences we see as teachers in our classrooms
- Nicole offers advice for teachers of students who self-harm in their classroom

Meltdowns and Shutdowns

23:20 - 24:50

- What do they have in common?
- What are some common causes of both?

Meltdowns

24:54 - 29:00

- What is a meltdown?
- What are manifestations of a meltdown?
- Meltdowns are not tantrums
- Meltdowns as a physical release of stress build up
- Meltdowns can happen to children as well as adults with autism
- The stigma around meltdowns

UNDERSTANDING AUTISM PODCAST

SHOW NOTES SEASON 1 EPISODE 5 MELTDOWNS, SHUTDOWNS, & SELF-HARM



Meltdown artwork by Nicole Kubilus



Shutdown artwork by Nicole Kubilus

SHOW NOTES

Meltdowns, Shutdowns, and Self-Harming Behavior

Some of the most confusing and alarming autism behaviors to neurotypical people are meltdowns, shutdowns, and self-harming behaviors. But why do these behaviors occur, and what can be done to manage them? We explore those questions and share our own experiences in this podcast episode.

Shutdowns 29:00-34:30

- What is a shutdown?
- What are manifestations of a shutdown?
- Causes of a shutdown
- Not the same as stonewalling
- May be misperceived as escape or avoidance
- The stigma around shutdowns

Our Personal Experiences With Meltdowns and Shutdowns Part 1 34:41-46:50

- Bret shares his experience as a parent of an autistic child
- Meltdowns are like a story-plot diagram
- Why are meltdowns common among children?
- Can you have meltdowns as an adult?
- Nicole explains her meltdown experiences as "blind fury"

EPISODE 5 PART 2

Our Personal Experiences With Meltdowns and Shutdowns Part 2 0:00-19:23

- Nicole's seven day meltdown experience
- The need to continually adjust coping skills and have down time
- Nicole's meltdown as a new teacher
- Her first public meltdown as an adult
- Nicole's husband's reaction to her meltdowns
- Nicole shares her parents reaction to her meltdowns
- Bret shares his experiences to try to help his son manage his meltdowns

What Is It Like to Experience a Meltdown? 19:24-24:42

- Primal physical expression
- No rational connection to your body
- Feelings of being powerless
- Remorse, guilt, and shame afterwards

Tips on Handling Self-Harm 24:45-30:34

- Understanding the reasons behind self-harm
- Social media can contribute to self-harming behavior
- Establishing healthy choices to take away self-harming thoughts

UNDERSTANDING AUTISM PODCAST

SHOW NOTES SEASON 1 EPISODE 5 MELTDOWNS, SHUTDOWNS, & SELF-HARM

["Self Harm" article by The National Autistic Society](#)

[Aspergers Syndrome and Anxiety](#)
by Nick Dubin (book)

["Autistic Shutdowns: The Complete Guide for Neurodivergent Adults" from My Soul Balm \(blog\)](#)



SHOW NOTES

Meltdowns, Shutdowns, and Self-Harming Behavior

Some of the most confusing and alarming autism behaviors to neurotypical people are meltdowns, shutdowns, and self-harming behaviors. But why do these behaviors occur, and what can be done to manage them? We explore those questions and share our own experiences in this podcast episode.

EPISODE 5 PART 2

Tips on Handling Shutdowns 30:35-31:19

- Tips for caregivers
- Tips for autistic adults

Tips on Handling Meltdowns 31:20-35:00

- Tips for caregivers
- Tips for autistic adults
- Sensory tools that can help
- The importance of sleep and taking a mental health day
- The role of shame in these behaviors

Advice for Teachers 35:00-41:26

- Know your students' IEP and 504 accommodations
- Give them space, a place to wind down and recover
- Know your in school supports for helping manage these behaviors: counselors, administrators, special ed. coordinators
- How does a room clear impact a child on the spectrum?
- Does a shutdown look like student non-compliance?

Advice for Autistic Adults in The Workplace 41:27-52:15

- Do you disclose your autism to your employer?
- Can you ask for reasonable accommodations at work?
- The importance of knowing yourself, your triggers
- Taking mental health days or sick leave.
- Have a plan, identify safe spaces, and route
- Create a support team to help you
- ADA accommodations may be appropriate
- Therapists can help develop plans and help process these behaviors

UNDERSTANDING AUTISM PODCAST

SHOW NOTES SEASON 1 EPISODE 5 MELTDOWNS, SHUTDOWNS, & SELF-HARM

TouchPoints With Wristbands
(product)

