

FREE PRINTABLE

# Meltdown Tracking Log

From reactive to proactive in two weeks

In the moment, every meltdown feels random. Look back at two weeks of notes and the patterns are obvious. This log gives you the structure to capture what's happening, so you can connect the dots and walk into the next IEP, therapy session, or pediatrician appointment with data, not vague memory.

*"Data is your most powerful advocacy tool. Specific notes turn 'meltdowns have been bad lately' into 'eight meltdowns in two weeks, mostly between 3 and 5 PM, and deep pressure helped six of them.'"*



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## How to use this log

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Pick a notebook, a notes app, or print the template on page 4 of this guide. Fill in one entry every time your child has a meltdown or significant behavior. Keep it brief; a half-completed entry beats a perfect one you never wrote.

### Capture nine fields per entry

- **Date and time.** Patterns often cluster around certain times of day.
- **Location.** Home, school, store, car, in transit between two places.
- **What happened just before.** The antecedent. A transition? A demand? A sensory trigger? Something unexpected?
- **What the behavior looked like.** Describe without judging. "Screamed, covered ears, dropped to the floor" is more useful than "had a bad meltdown."
- **Duration.** Roughly how long it lasted from first sign to baseline.
- **Intensity.** Rate 1 (mild) to 5 (safety concern).
- **What you tried.** List the strategies in order, even the ones that didn't work.
- **What helped, even partially.** This data is gold.
- **Recovery time + contributing factors.** Sleep, illness, missed meal, schedule change, sensory-heavy day.

#### A NOTE ON LANGUAGE

*Describe what your eyes and ears actually recorded. "He hit his head on the carpet for about thirty seconds" tells a therapist exactly what to look for. "He was being defiant" tells them nothing actionable.*

### What to do with the data after two weeks

After 10 to 14 entries, read them straight through and look for clusters in time, location, antecedent type, and what helped. Page 5 walks through what to look for. Then bring a one-paragraph summary to your next IEP, therapy, or doctor visit.

## Sample entry

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Here is a realistic filled-out entry. Specific, descriptive, and judgment-free language makes the data far more actionable than vague notes.

**DATE**

*Tuesday, March 11*

**TIME**

*4:15 PM*

**LOCATION**

*Living room, home*

**WHAT HAPPENED JUST BEFORE**

*Came home from school, had a snack, then I told him it was time to turn off Minecraft and start homework. He asked for five more minutes. I said no because we were running late.*

**WHAT THE BEHAVIOR LOOKED LIKE**

*Threw the controller, screamed "no no no," dropped to the floor, hit his head on the carpet. Escalated for about three minutes before full meltdown.*

**DURATION**

*25 minutes from first outburst to calm*

**INTENSITY**

*4 of 5 (head-hitting present, no injury)*

**WHAT I TRIED**

- 1. Tried to reason and explain. Made it worse.*
- 2. Gave a verbal warning and walked away. No effect.*
- 3. Moved to a quieter room and sat nearby without speaking.*
- 4. Offered weighted blanket. Accepted after about ten minutes.*

**WHAT HELPED**

*Quiet room and weighted blanket. Once I stopped talking and he had the blanket, he gradually calmed.*

**WHAT DIDN'T HELP**

*Explaining and reasoning while he was escalating. Repetitive verbal instructions.*

**RECOVERY TIME**

*About 20 minutes from peak to baseline. Homework was done 45 minutes later without incident.*

**POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTING FACTORS**

*Field trip earlier (lots of noise and unpredictable schedule). Barely ate lunch. Transition from preferred (Minecraft) to non-preferred (homework) with no warning.*

**NOTES FOR THE TEAM**

*Fourth meltdown this month triggered by the homework transition after school. All four happened on sensory-heavy school days. Asking the ABA team if a longer post-school decompression window plus a visual transition timer would help.*

## Printable template

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Print one copy per entry, or paste into a notes app and duplicate as needed.

**DATE**

**TIME**

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**LOCATION**

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**WHAT HAPPENED JUST BEFORE (ANTECEDENT)**

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**WHAT THE BEHAVIOR LOOKED LIKE (SPECIFIC, NO JUDGMENT)**

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**DURATION**

**INTENSITY (1 TO 5)**

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**WHAT I TRIED (IN ORDER)**

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**WHAT HELPED, EVEN A LITTLE**

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**WHAT DIDN'T HELP**

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**RECOVERY TIME**

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**POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTING FACTORS (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Short or poor sleep last night | <input type="checkbox"/> Schedule change or surprise   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Illness or off day             | <input type="checkbox"/> Transition from preferred     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Skipped or short meal          | <input type="checkbox"/> Increased demands             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sensory-heavy day              | <input type="checkbox"/> Social difficulty or conflict |

**NOTES FOR THE TEAM**

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## Identifying patterns

After two to three weeks of entries, read them straight through and look for the following clusters. Write your conclusions next to each.

Look for	Question to answer
<b>Time patterns</b>	Do most meltdowns happen at a particular time of day? After school? Before bed? Around meals?
<b>Location patterns</b>	Are certain environments consistently difficult? Is school harder than home, or vice versa?
<b>Trigger categories</b>	Are transitions the biggest trigger? Sensory overload? Demands? Social conflict? Hunger or fatigue?
<b>What works</b>	Which strategies show up under "what helped" most often, even partially?
<b>Escalation signs</b>	What happens in the 10 to 15 minutes before a meltdown? Those early signs are your prevention window.
<b>Day-before factors</b>	Do hard days follow short sleep, missed meals, or sensory-heavy events?

### Sample summary you can hand to a provider

#### **TWO-WEEK SUMMARY**

*"Nine incidents in three weeks. Seven of nine happened between 3:30 and 5:30 PM at home, after school. The most consistent antecedent was transitions away from preferred screen activities. Weighted blanket was helpful in six of nine. Verbal explanations during escalation made things worse. My hypothesis: the after-school window is his most dysregulated time of day. I'd like to try a 30-minute no-demands decompression period before any homework or chore transitions."*

That paragraph beats handing over a stack of raw notes. It signals to the team that you are a data-informed partner and tells them exactly what hypothesis to test.

## Tracking on paper vs. digital

Paper logs work. They are also easy to forget, easy to lose, and impossible to filter for "all the times deep pressure helped." If a digital tracker fits your life better, use one.

### Beacon's Behavior Tracker is built for this

**Beacon** is our AI parent companion at [beacon.spectrumunlocked.com](https://beacon.spectrumunlocked.com). The Behavior Tracker (free at every tier) captures the same fields you see in this log, plus:

- **30-day heatmap** that shows you the time-of-day clusters at a glance
- **This week vs. last week** comparison so escalation or improvement is visible
- **Pass the Baton:** a single link any caregiver (sitter, grandparent, IEP team) can read to see what's been happening, no login required
- **Memory:** Beacon remembers what you've already tried so the next time you ask "what helped last time?" it can tell you

→ [beacon.spectrumunlocked.com/foundation/behaviors](https://beacon.spectrumunlocked.com/foundation/behaviors)

### What to bring to the next provider visit

- The completed log entries from the last two to four weeks
- A one-paragraph summary like the one on page 5
- One question you want them to help answer
- One change you'd like to try and want their input on

#### **IF YOUR CHILD HAS A BCBA**

*Ask which specific data fields are most useful for them. They may have their own tracking format, and aligning home and clinic data so they tell a consistent story makes their job (and yours) easier.*

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# You are not making this up

If your gut says something has been getting harder, your gut is probably right. Two weeks of entries will prove it, and a paragraph of patterns will turn that proof into a plan. You don't have to walk into the next meeting trying to remember everything from memory. You can walk in with the data.

*"Patterns you can see are patterns you can change."*

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