The Hidden Reason Why Kids Meltdown Over Small Things (It's Not What You Think) Transcript

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Why Small Triggers Cause Big Meltdowns

Your child melts down over not having chicken nuggets when they've handled a full day of school? Well, that's not the real problem. I've worked with a kid, his name was Harry, and his parents said to me, like many parents have said, he gets upset over everything.

Not getting the food he wants, being told no, small change in plans, every little thing seemed to turn into a big reaction. And like most parents, they were exhausted because from the outside, it looked like overreacting, being difficult, constant pushback.

He was doing this on purpose. You know the list. It's all the stuff you ask yourself. And they really, what they did, like many of the other parents that I work with, they kept asking, why is everything such a big deal?

Can't he just do it? His sister does it. I did it." All that stuff you say to yourself. But when we slowed things down and really looked at it all, it wasn't just everything.

It felt like everything, and here's the reality. When we stepped back and looked a Harry's day through the lens of the stress cup, if you haven't heard me talk about the Stress Cup, go back to listen to those episodes.

because it's really important and it is going to change everything. And what happened is they realized it wasn't just that moment about the chicken nuggets.

It was really all the moments that came before that. And it was everything that his nervous system had been carrying all day, which seemed invisible. But when we took a look, we saw that every demand, every transition, and every moment, he had to push through frustration or stay in control.

The Stress Cup Explained

Each one was adding a little bit more to that cup in his system, being an overload. And here's what became super clear. By the time Harry got to dinner, his dress cup wasn't just filling.

It was already close to full. And that's when they were like, we always are looking for that exact cause. The stress cup helps you understand that it's little bits that build in the day.

Don't you worry because in The Disregulated Kid, I make it real simple for you and your child to be able to take things out of the stress. Because we can't live like this.

Harry, he just wasn't melting down about those chicken nuggets. That's just where his nervous system ran out of room every day. That was the place. And I hope that's an aha moment for you.

I just had a great conversation with one of my all-time favorite parents. They're just such good people dealing with really hard stuff. A kid who has pans and is overdrive and OCD.

Please know, this is not uncommon. So what I'm sharing, I've had the same conversation 100 or 200 other families. But what happens in this case is they couldn't figure out what is going on with sleep.

And what we decided was that it wasn't bedtime. It was the whole day. So we made a plan for that. But this is why things become easy to miss, because in Harry's case, it was everything.

He was managing everything on his own. he was trying to stay focused, which was hard for him. He was following directions.he was manging frustrations, handling social interactions, which on the surface, look like Harry was pretty good at, but he was bubbling in the inside.

And again, moving through transitions were pretty darn hard for him. Most people just didn't see the problem, But that effort, that constant effort costs something.

It has a cost to the nervous system. So let's talk about the Nervous System. For many dysregulated kids, regulation is effortful. not automatic. It means they got to work their tail off to transition, regulate emotions, filter input, whether that's noise or annoying kids or whatever.

Nervous System Capacity and Daily Overload

Staying engaged and that uses real energy. And again, if you're not in there, working to pull things out of that stress cup is just going to build. Don't you worry.

Remember, I got the antidote in here in our dysregulated kids show and in the dys-regulating kid book. But so over the course of the day, his capacity was really being used up.

And when things get low, the nervous system becomes more reactive. I think you understand this for yourselves. Your kids are not any different. You just feel like, well, they should do it because you did it.

But did you? I don't know. We didn't have the same pressures. It's not that. So the child is not choosing this. This is important for parents to hear because we often feel that kids are acting like this on purpose.

It's that his nervous system or her nervous has less ability to regulate. We need capacity. You cannot walk around with an overflowing cup. And that's what happens to a nervous when we are not building back some regulation moments.

Okay. And so when Harry didn't get the chicken nuggets, it wasn't about the dinner. It was about no capacity. His nervous system didn' have enough to handle anything.

And that just is the thing. Harry didn't just break down at dinner. I mean, it was like a lot of random things at night. So that was part of the being perplexed.

They heard the show and they started to put things together and that's the beauty of this. That's why you've got to share this with your friends, leave reviews, all those things because it makes a huge difference.

Don't know if anybody knows this, but if you left one review, Just one, one of you says, oh, my gosh, I didn't know this, Dr. Rowe. I'm going to do this for you.

Leave one review. It will help my show jump up like you can't believe. So please be that person, please, because it then means it gets shown to other parents.

And my, gosh. Don't we need a more regulated world? We really do. So here's the shift I want you to make in this conversation about why your kids melt down over little things and what it means is that when your child has a big reaction, don't just look at that moment.

A Simple Pause to Regulate First

Do one thing, mentally rewind the day. And you might not be there and maybe you want a journal. I mean, my mom that we were just talking about the sleep problem is we looked at the journal, we did.

And we had to walk it back to make sense of all the demands that were happening throughout the day. You know, where did they have to push through? And, you know your kid, these are going to be those same little bubble

challenges that maybe had put a little extra elbow grease when they were little.

These are still the same challenges even though they appear to have it together. Listen, we're not talking about cutting your kids slack and being like, oh, yeah, homework is hard for you.

You don't have to do it. No. Dr. Rowe is saying no to that. What I'm saying is we got to find our opportune moments to regulate. Think about when did their system start working harder?

Because when you understand what filled that cup, you really understand the reaction. So let's talk about one micro tool you can use in that moment, because I always want you to have something that you're like, I got this in my pocket, got Dr.

Rowe in pocket. I can do this. In that movement, before you correct, explain or redirect, pause. You're going to lower your voice, you're gonna slow the pace, reduce the input, and then you are going say something really simple like, that was a lot today.

Because what we want your kid, what they need first is help bring their nervous system back down into a parasympathetic, relaxed state. And maybe not saying anything because a three-second pause, my love pause is about giving that space for you and them.

It's about loving yourself, it's loving them and just being quiet, but also it can mean saying something very kind that you know is regulated. Don't put any fuel on the fire.

If you say a word and it annoys your kid, well, if they're teenagers, everything annoies them, but I mean on the regular, then we've gotta just be a calm presence.

So instead of asking, why are they reacting like this? Start asking how much has their nervous system been carrying all day? That's totally different perspective.

And Harry, he wasn't just melting down because the problem was big. He wasn' freaking out over chicken nuggets because of the cheap chicken nugget. he was melting because his nervous had reached It's limit.

And I think we can all relate to that. I had such a fun conversation today with another podcaster and she was literally asking me on air for parenting advice for her teenager.

She was like, you know what, Roseanne? I came away from this conversation and I just got to remember, I got a regulate myself and that it's perfectly normal for teenagers to be cranky.

Reframing Reactions and Next Steps

Absolutely. But in Harry's case, you know, once his parents understood that everything was just adding in there, they just learned to respond differently.

So if this sounds like your kid, teenager or young adult, and you really want to understand What is driving these reactions that are keeping you in a reactivity cycle?

That's exactly what I walk you through in The Disregulated Kid. I mean, it's literally a parenting playbook that not only helps you understand what's filling your child's stress cup, but shows you how to exactly change it for yourself in real life and for your kid.

And you go to drrosanne.com, diff forward slash dysregulate kid, and remember, you're gonna get incredible bonuses. And I don't even want you to think of them as bonuses because really what they are is you can get started today and you use these tools.

When you pre-order this book, you really send a signal to the Amazon gods that this is important or wherever

platform you're buying it from to publishing gods.

So just remember when your kid is at their limit, And you're really trying to figure out what's going on. They're like trying and that be that parent detective that I talk all about.

It's all in the book, too. You have to think what is happening? It is not the chicken nuggets. it's not. The homework, it is. Not the bedtime. Everything their nervous system has already been carrying all day.

and then really start to say, I get it. Okay, so your number one thing you're doing today is you are going to have a three second love pause and you will let that do the heavy lifting for you.

I swear it works. You just need consistency and remember when you take one step towards regulating first, everything changes. Want more insights and solutions?

Well, subscribe to our dysregulation insider and it will show up in your inbox every week.