



Your child may seem to have big stress responses out of nowhere. When your child has big feelings and behaviours, and you know that fatigue, hunger and overstimulation are not the cause, it can be helpful to **track these stress reactions** to see if a pattern emerges over time. For instance, notice:

- What was the time of day?
- What was their response?
- What was happening right before?
- What helped in the moment?

Other things to be curious about:

- How am *I* feeling in this moment? Is my child sensing *my own* stress?
- Does my child's stress response seem larger than you might expect for their age or the situation?
- Is there something that could be reminding my child of a past stressful experience?
- Does this response happen during transitions or when things feel rushed?
- Does it help when I tell my child ahead of time what is happening next?
- Have there been big changes in our family or life?

Over time some patterns will emerge and your child's stress responses that once seemed random will start to make more sense to you.

Each child has different triggers to stress, and how big their stress or worry feels. Learning and developmental differences, physical and mental health issues, or even past stressful experiences can play a part too. The good news is that little brains are constantly learning and growing, and with more understanding will come a greater ability to handle these triggers.

“Children and adults really aren't that different when it comes to stress triggers. Nobody copes well when they are tired, hungry, overwhelmed or feeling controlled.”

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