

PARENT

NEWSLETTER



HELP YOUR CHILD

**CATCH UP ON
READING LEVEL**

02

IS YOUR CHILD OVERSTIMULATED?

Help them feel better, and what to do to prevent future meltdowns from occurring.

03

HELP YOUR CHILD CATCH UP ON READING LEVEL

10 tips from teachers for when they lose interest or fall behind in their reading skills.

04

KID CRAFT: ADORABLE LEAF LIONS

Fall is the perfect time to get try out a leafy craft in just a few minutes.

STRONGER TOGETHER

TMI is a model solution partnering police, school, health, and education to prevent substance use.





IS YOUR CHILD OVERSTIMULATED?

HERE'S WHAT TO DO.

BY ELISA CINELLI

It's no secret that little kids have big emotions, and it's not all that uncommon to witness meltdowns in small children, even when things seemed fine a moment ago. Many factors can contribute to tantrums or emotional behavior in kids, but one major culprit is overstimulation.

Sensory overload can easily wear a child out, and they may hit a breaking point. Despite the appearance of a sudden meltdown, there are usually a few key signs that signal overstimulation is on its way. We talked to the experts about how to recognize when your child is overstimulated, how to help them feel better, and what to do to prevent future meltdowns from occurring.

WHAT IS OVERSTIMULATION?

Overstimulation is the body's response to excess activity or stimuli. We constantly interact with environmental stimuli, but everyone has different capacities and limitations. What may feel like too much varies from person to person.

WHAT IS OVERSTIMULATION?

Young babies may be more easily overstimulated than older children, while some kids have lower thresholds at any age. And while any child can experience overstimulation, some children with autism, anxiety, or other diagnoses can be more prone to it.

Often, many factors play a role in overstimulation. “A child may be able to handle a busy park in the middle of a summer afternoon on one occasion but may get overstimulated by all the environmental stimuli if they are stressed, didn’t get a good night’s sleep, or skipped breakfast,” says Kerri Milyko, PhD, BCBA-D, LBA (NV), board-certified behavior analyst and the Director of Clinical Programming at CentralReach. Basically, many variables at play affect a person's ability to tolerate external stimuli.

WHY DOES IT HAPPEN?

Overstimulation can occur when the level of sensory stimuli exceeds a child’s current capacity. Each child has their own limit for stimulation, and their ability to take in sensory stimuli can change regularly. It may be higher if a child is well-rested and recently ate a balanced meal or snack, while it may be lower if they need a nap or haven’t eaten in a little too long.

Any kind of sensory stimulation, visual, auditory, tactile, or any other type, can overload a child. Sometimes, it will be a combination of the different types of information the child is taking in. “Overstimulation can occur in routine situations at home with loud TV volume and music, as well as in special cases such as a crowd of people at a party and outdoor events,” says Pierrette Mimi Poinsett, M.D., pediatrician and consultant for Mom Loves Best.

Neurodivergent individuals, such as those with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), or individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) may have a lower threshold for stimulation. For example, a t-shirt tag, fluorescent lighting, the hum of electronics, or certain textures of foods are common sensory triggers for autistic individuals that may lead to overstimulation. “These children experience stimuli in unique ways,” adds Dr. Milyko. “They may be more sensitive to sensory experiences in comparison to experiences of neurotypical individuals.”

Overstimulation can occur when the level of sensory stimuli exceeds a child’s current capacity.

SIGNS YOUR CHILD IS OVERSTIMULATED

Signs of overstimulation vary with age and temperament. Babies may respond to overstimulation by crying, limbs jerking, and/or turning their heads away. Toddlers and preschoolers could exhibit behaviors akin to temper tantrums. Older children may also have tantrums, seem out of sorts, or be able to verbalize feeling overwhelmed.

Kids having difficulty processing environmental stimuli may engage in behaviors to avoid, escape, or minimize those stimuli. You may notice that your child seems irritable, restless, or zoned out. They may engage in repetitive behaviors to help calm them down when feeling overstimulated, such as rocking back and forth, pacing, or humming.

Some children's behavior escalates and becomes more extreme, such as crying, yelling, flopping to the ground, or even engaging in self-injury. When these behaviors occur from overstimulation, it is called a meltdown. "Meltdowns can look like tantrums, but they are not 'to get something' or a response when your child is told 'no,'" says Dr. Milyko. "It is often an involuntary response because the culmination of the sensory stimuli is too much to handle."

Overstimulation: Signs to Watch Out For:

BABIES

- Crying
- Jerking limbs or clenching fists
- Turning head away from the source of stimuli

TODDLERS

- Crying
- Seeming cranky or irritable
- Dropping to the floor

SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN

- Acting cranky, overtired, or irritable
- Acting wild or aggressive
- Experiencing tantrum-like behavior



HOW TO HELP YOUR OVERSTIMULATED CHILD

Once you realize that your child is overstimulated, the best thing you can do is remove the stimuli or the child from the environment. Try to bring them into a nurturing, low-stimulation space instead.

If you cannot do that, you should attempt to reduce the stimulation level however you can. You might hold your child close, cover their ears, or dim the lights. "Some young infants respond well to being swaddled or placed in an infant carrier wrap," says Dr. Poinsett. "Toddlers and preschoolers may be helped by engaging in a quieter activity, such as being read to or singing a familiar song."

You should not try to reason with an overstimulated child or expect them to "just deal with it." They need your help. You can assist your child self-regulate by giving them space to relax and be soothed. "They may be able to self-soothe, or you may need to help soothe them," says Dr. Milyko. "Avoid shaming your child and remember that sensory overload is neither intentional nor manipulative."

If you feel like your child is overstimulated regularly and impairs your daily life, you might seek advice from a healthcare professional.

[LEARN MORE HERE](#)

How to Prevent It From Happening

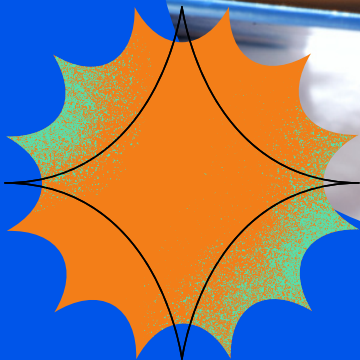
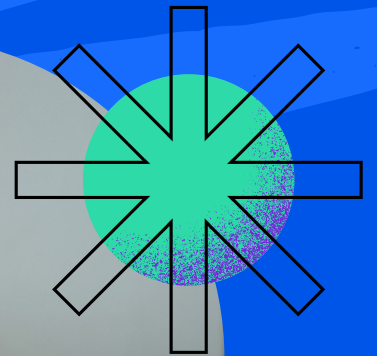
You can help prevent overstimulation in your child by doing your best to learn and anticipate their needs. "Be aware of what sensory experiences are unfavorable to your child and try to minimize exposure to them if possible," says Dr. Milyko. "A little pre-planning can help mitigate any potential sensory overload."

For example, babies and toddlers often do better if activities and errands are short and contain breaks. They may benefit from having a nap or quiet time after a noisy activity, such as going to the playground or a party.

Being mindful of your child's unique temperament helps as well. For example, some kids need more breaks or lower tolerance for big crowds. If that sounds like your kid, avoid what you can and try to help your child keep their level of stimulation low when you cannot. "If you know that your child may be more sensitive to loud noises, bring headphones to places that could be loud," offers Dr. Milyko as an example.

It's important to communicate your child's needs to other caretakers, such as family members, nannies, or teachers, so that everyone can know the best strategies.

10 TIPS FROM TEACHERS TO
HELP YOUR CHILD CATCH
UP ON READING LEVEL



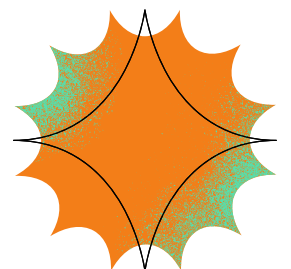


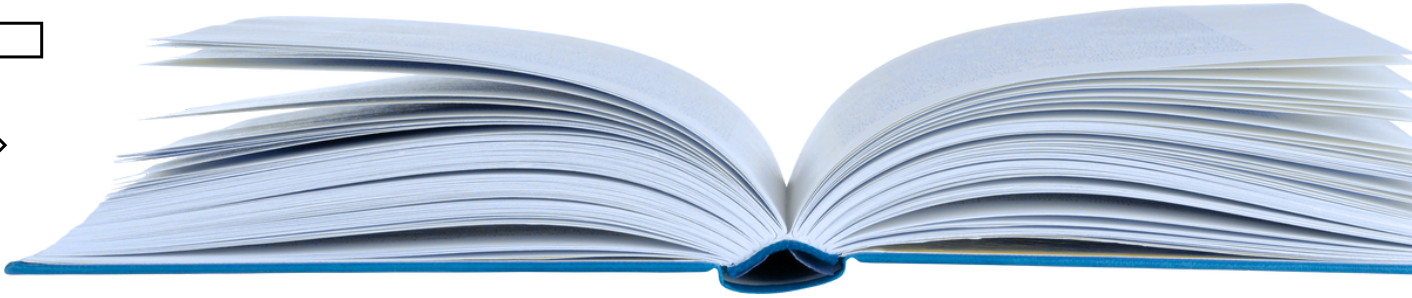
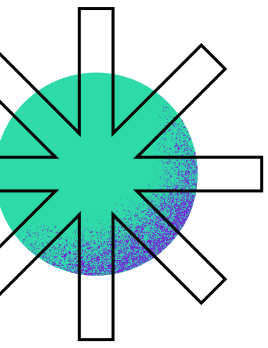
Developing good reading habits and skills early is key to creating a lifelong love of reading in children. Sometimes, however, kids need extra help when they lose interest or fall behind in their reading skills.

In fact, according to the Scholastic Kids & Family Reading Report, most children will experience a phenomenon called the Decline by Nine, where their interest in reading wanes at age 9. The good news is that there are ways that parents can help their children not only increase reading levels at home but become avid and voracious independent readers at any age. All it takes is some planning, a few good tips, and much excitement for reading!

Here are top tips from teachers Wandiza Williams, Leana Malinowsky, and Kris Hart on how to help your child advance their reading skills when they need extra support.

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE >





Identify the signs.

Knowing and recognizing when your child is struggling is the first step to remedying the problem. “Have kids do the Five Finger Rule to help them determine if a book is a good fit,” says Williams. “Students will go into the middle of the book, begin reading a page, and put a finger up for every word they don't know. If they have five fingers up by the end of the page, that is an indication that this book may be too challenging to read independently – but could be a good choice for shared reading or read-aloud.”

Once you are familiar with your child's unique reading needs, you can communicate with their teacher for the next steps.

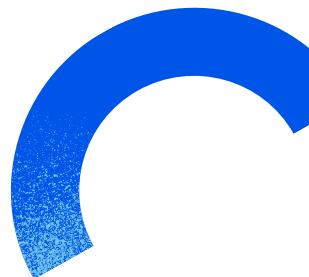
“When children struggle to read or become embarrassed in front of their peers because they see them as higher readers, they can become discouraged and stop trying,” says Hart.

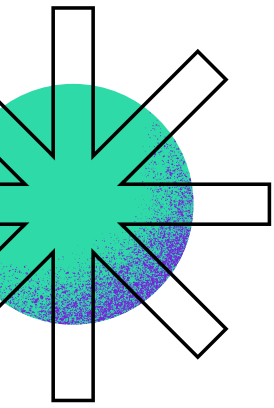
“You will notice as they start to dislike reading at night. They might struggle with some words but don't try to sound them out or figure out their meaning.”

One of the best things you can do is develop a relationship with their teacher, says Hart. Check-in with them to see how your child is doing in class. Are they avoiding reading, fake reading, etc.? Don't rely solely on test scores – their reading habits in class will help you get a full picture.

Sometimes, the underlying cause of reading struggles is dyslexia. Screening for dyslexia requires a trained expert: The best way to get help and guidance is by connecting with your child's school district for support.

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE >





Find their interests.

According to the Scholastic Kids & Family Reading Report, children are more likely to want to continue reading when they can choose what they want.

“Support striving readers by encouraging them to choose books they would like to read,” says Malinowsky. “There’s evidence that proves children who can select books they want to read show more interest in reading, and they continue to read.”

If your child prefers fiction books and graphic novels, find out the kind of stories they’re interested in, whether fantasy, comedy, or anything in between and find a series you can enjoy together.

If your child leans more towards nonfiction books, find out what captures their imaginations the most – whether it’s space, animals, or history – and have fun choosing new books to explore together. Here are simple questions to gauge your child's interests.



Bond over reading.

Remember to share your own love of books by being a reading role model. When your kids see how excited you are to continue reading, they’ll be just as enthusiastic about their own books.

“Parents can support their striving readers by showing how important reading is to them,” says Williams. “Ask their kids what they are reading and what kinds of books they like. Let your children see you reading and give books as gifts. Praise your child when you see them reading.”

Also, don't limit what your child reads too much: Let them explore different mediums, such as websites, newspapers, magazines, journals, cookbooks, and more.

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE >



Be patient.

It may be tempting to read for your child, but Williams recommends that parents take a step back.

"In their attempt to help their striving reader, many parents foster dependency and discourage risk-taking by telling kids the words," says Williams. "As difficult as it may be, encourage your kid to try it and ask, 'What do you think this word is? What do you think we should do now?'"

Williams adds that these questions will guide kids to use strategies and techniques learned in school to help them figure out unknown words. Also, avoid correcting every single mistake. Let your child make them and then say, "I am so proud of you for getting through this text. I think we should reread this text tomorrow to ensure we understood the message the author wanted us to get." This will help kids get comfortable with rereading, which we want them to do when they are confused.

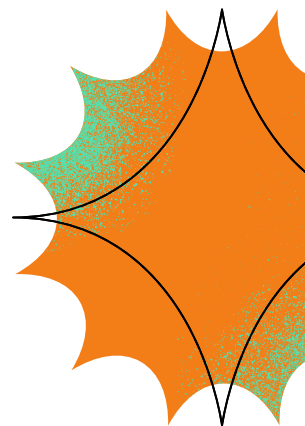


Always encourage.

Finally, staying positive during moments of frustration will also give your child the boost they need when feeling unsure of themselves.

"Remind them that they are a reader, and we all start somewhere," says Hart. "We have to practice reading to become better readers. It's like anything we want to become better at."

[LEARN MORE HERE](#)



EVERY CHILD DESERVES A GOOD START

If you have an Infant or toddler at home and have concerns about their development with moving, talking, hearing, vision, playing, learning, or growing, we are here to help.

West Virginia's Infant and Toddler Early Intervention Program. Telehealth and In Person appointments are available at NO COST TO YOU.



(304) 267-3595 ext 132



LEAFY LIONS

They're easy and fun and always look unique since no two leaves are exactly the same! This project is perfect for kids or adults and only takes a few minutes to complete.

MATERIALS

- Leaves
- Brown construction or butcher paper
- White paper, black paper
- Scissors
- Glue
- Black markers or paint markers (or use black paint)

STEP 1

The first step is to create the lion's mane. To do this, simply gather a bunch of leaves and place them in the shape of a lion's mane, with the leaf stems facing the neck.



STEP 2

Next, you will need to cut out the head of the lion from the brown piece of paper. You can freehand this or use templates for various rounded shapes.

STEP 3

To start building the face, add the eyes. Its eyes can be made from white paper trimmed to look like lion eyes. Glue them to the lion's head, then paint the pupils. Use a black marker, charcoal pencil, or paint to add the pupils.

FINISH IT

Finally, add the nose and whiskers with more paint, markers, or scrap pieces of black paper.





A MODEL SOLUTION

TO A NATIONAL PROBLEM

Our mission is to prevent substance use disorders, build strong families, and empower the Martinsburg community through police, school, community, health, and education partnerships.

1

Increase awareness

of how to prevent substance use disorder through community empowerment.

2

Mitigate negative consequences

Resulting from substance misuse or trauma through community interventions, medication overdose.

3

Identify, risk stratify and offer appropriate interventions

for individuals experiencing risk factors of trauma or substance misuse.

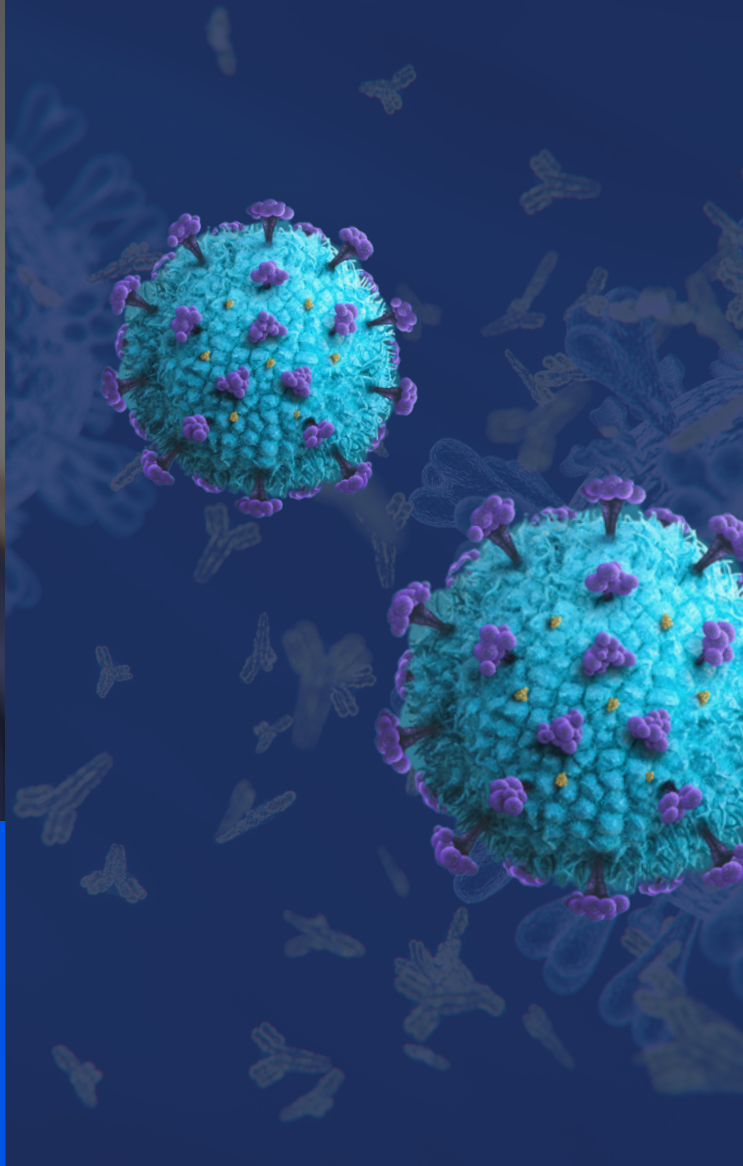
4

Evaluate and report performance.



THE
MARTINSBURG
INITIATIVE

A POLICE, SCHOOL, COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

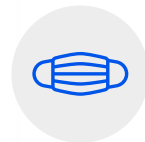


COVID IS STILL ALIVE AND WELL.

Protect yourself
and others.



GET YOUR VACCINE



WEAR A MASK



WASH YOUR HANDS



West Virginia
Immunization Network

A PROGRAM OF The Center for Rural Health Development





It's a family affair.

Get your family and friends vaccinated for COVID-19, Flu, Pneumonia, Meningitis, Shingles, and mpox.

Everyone 6 months and older should get a COVID-19 vaccine.

All adults need an annual flu vaccine.

1 in 3 will develop shingles in their lifetime, but vaccines can reduce the risk

CDC recommends meningitis vaccines for all preteens and teens.

Children under 2 and adults over 65 are most at risk for pneumonia.

People at risk of mpox should get both doses of the vaccine to get the most protection against infection.



Community
Education
Group

Join our list for updates.



[vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov)

1 (833) 734-0965

#BoostUp!

STRONGER TOGETHER

 themartinsburginitiative.com

515 W. Martin Street, Martinsburg,
WV 304-267-3510, x 13519



FIND US HERE >

BERKELEY HEIGHTS ELEMENTARY

BURKE STREET ELEMENTARY

EAGLE SCHOOL INTERMEDIATE

ORCHARD VIEW INTERMEDIATE

OPEQUON ELEMENTARY

ROSEMONT ELEMENTARY

TUSCARORA ELEMENTARY

WINCHESTER AVE ELEMENTARY

PIKESIDE PRE-K LEARNING CENTER

NORTH MIDDLE SCHOOL

SOUTH MIDDLE SCHOOL

MARTINSBURG HIGH SCHOOL

Contact us to be a mentor.

