

SHUTDOWN / MELTDOWN SUPPORT CARD SET

SHUTDOWN IN PROGRESS

I am currently experiencing a shutdown.

During shutdowns I may:

- stop speaking
- respond slowly
- freeze
- avoid eye contact
- struggle to move
- seem emotionally flat
- lose access to verbal language
- need extra processing time

This is neurological overload. Reducing pressure and stimulation helps me recover more safely

BACKSIDE INFORMATION

Student Name:

Approved Supports:

Preferred Eating Location:

Support Staff Contact:

Case Manager:

Authorized Signature:

MELTDOWN IN PROGRESS

I am experiencing severe nervous system overload.

I may:

- cry
- panic
- yell
- become unable to communicate clearly
- need movement
- struggle to follow directions
- become extremely overwhelmed

This is not intentional misbehavior.

Escalation, punishment, crowding, or confrontation may worsen distress.

Please focus on safety and regulation first.

BACKSIDE INFORMATION

Student Name:

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WHAT HELPS RIGHT NOW

Helpful supports during overload:

- ☐ quiet
- ☐ dimmer lighting
- ☐ fewer people talking
- ☐ water
- ☐ movement
- ☐ headphones/ear protection
- ☐ reduced demands
- ☐ written communication
- ☐ sensory tools
- ☐ a calm adult
- ☐ silence
- ☐ access to safe space

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WHAT MAKES THINGS WORSE

These things may increase distress during overload:

- ☐ repeated questioning
- ☐ loud voices
- ☐ being touched
- ☐ being cornered
- ☐ public attention
- ☐ sarcasm
- ☐ fast instructions
- ☐ threats/punishment
- ☐ multiple people talking at once
- ☐ forced eye contact
- ☐ demanding immediate explanations

Reducing pressure helps me regulate faster.

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PLEASE TALK LESS

My brain cannot process large amounts of verbal information right now.

Helpful communication:

- ☐ short sentences
- ☐ calm tone
- ☐ one direction at a time
- ☐ written instructions
- ☐ pauses between questions

Too much language can increase overload.

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PLEASE DO NOT TOUCH ME

Physical contact may increase distress during shutdown or meltdown.

Please avoid:

- grabbing
- restraining unless safety requires it
- tapping
- hugging
- blocking exits
- crowding my body

Space helps my nervous system regulate.

BACKSIDE INFORMATION

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I NEED TO LEAVE THE ROOM

I need temporary access to a quieter or safer environment.

I am attempting to regulate before this escalates further.

Approved locations:

☐ counselor

☐ sensory room

☐ library

☐ support classroom

☐ nurse

☐ other: _____

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I CANNOT SPEAK RIGHT NOW

Verbal communication is temporarily difficult or unavailable.

I may still be able to:

- ☐ write
- ☐ type
- ☐ point
- ☐ use AAC
- ☐ answer yes/no questions
- ☐ communicate later

Please do not force verbal speech during overload.

BACKSIDE INFORMATION

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SAFE ADULT REQUEST

I need a trusted support person.

Preferred adult(s):

Familiar support helps me regulate more effectively.

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AFTERCARE CARD

I may still be recovering even if I seem calmer.

After overload I may experience:

- exhaustion
- shame
- headaches
- confusion
- emotional sensitivity
- slow processing
- difficulty returning to tasks

Helpful supports after recovery:

- ☐ quiet work
- ☐ reduced workload
- ☐ extra time
- ☐ hydration/snack
- ☐ minimal discussion
- ☐ gradual re-entry

Recovery takes time.

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DISSOCIATION / FREEZE RESPONSE CARD

I may appear disconnected, frozen, or “zoned out.”

This can happen during severe stress or overload.

I may struggle to:

- respond quickly
- process language
- move
- make decisions
- speak clearly

Calm support and reduced pressure help me reconnect safely.

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HIGH DISTRESS RED CARD

This should be visually distinct.

I am in severe distress.

Please:

- ☐ reduce stimulation immediately
- ☐ stop asking questions
- ☐ allow silence
- ☐ allow accommodations
- ☐ contact support staff
- ☐ help me access a safe space
- ☐ avoid confrontation

The priority right now is regulation and safety.

BACKSIDE INFORMATION

Student Name:

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Case Manager:

Authorized Signature:

Student Name:

Communication Preferences:

☐ speaking

☐ writing

☐ AAC

☐ gestures

☐ typing

Known Triggers:

Helpful Supports:

Emergency Contact:

Case Manager:

Authorized Signature:
