**4 Tips for When Children With Autism ‘Shut Down’**

You’re out shopping with your child. It’s busy, so lots of people are walking past with shopping carts and baskets. They’re all wearing different varieties of clothing, textures and contrasting colors. Some of them have on deodorant or perfume. Some don’t, but should.

There’s bright packaging and tins on the shelves, different smells of bakery bread and doughnuts. People are discussing what to have for dinner, a baby screams and someone laughs loudly. Tinny music plays, machines beep and the 50 hertz drone of the freezers hum.

The overhead strip lighting blinks 60 beats a second.

Your child silently sinks to the floor and lies down.

For most parents, their first reaction is to try to get them up. The floor’s not clean. They’re embarrassed. People tut and make a big thing of going around you with their shopping carts.

What they don’t realize is that your child with autism is grounding.

With the overload of sensory invasion, the floor begins to tilt and the room starts to sway. They need proprioceptive feedback, something cool and solid to regulate themselves on. So they do what anyone would want to do when feeling like they just got off a roller coaster — they sink down.

It’s not a meltdown or a painful sensory overload. It’s a need to regain control — to breathe and feel something solid beneath their cheek and palms as the world and surrounding environment slows down. The feeling is best described as disorientation and loss of balance, and this “shut down” typically happens in five phases:

1. Sink.

2. Ground.

3. Regulate.

4. Recover.

5. Rise.

When this happens, what should you do? Here are some tips.

**1. Sit down with your child.**

Yes, it’s in the middle of the supermarket/street/bank, but pulling them onto their feet before they’re ready will cause a meltdown of epic proportions.

**2. Firmly rub their back and offer low words of encouragement.**

This will help your child know that you are there and they are safe.

**3. Help them up, but slowly.**

When they are ready, sit them up and then slowly help them up. It’s best to move slowly as they may be unsteady.

**4. Find a quiet place.**

They need to be somewhere quiet. If that means abandoning the shopping, then so be it.

When your child with autism lies down in the street, his or she is not being naughty or stubborn. As someone with autism, I can say from my perspective it’s like being on moving floor and desperately trying to stay upright. Grounding is a way to regain that control.

<http://themighty.com/?p=46678?st=pinterest>