For Grown-Ups

A meltdown is not a child being bad. A meltdown can happen when a child's nervous system becomes overwhelmed and their body can no longer carry everything it has been holding.

In this story, Ben's backpack represents the stressors that build during the day. The Backpack Goblins represent the many kinds of "too much" that can pile up: scratchy clothing, loud sounds, bright lights, hunger, food frustration, rushing, changed plans, disappointment, and too many demands.

Grown-ups may only see the final burst, but the burst is often made of many things that came before it.

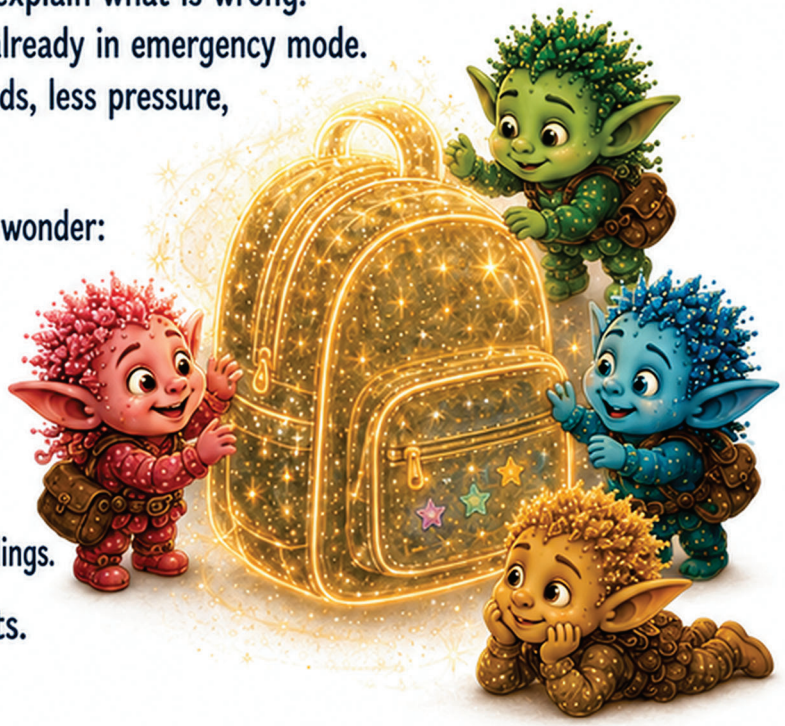
During a meltdown, children may not be able to explain what is wrong. Their words may disappear because their body is already in emergency mode. In the moment, they often need safety, fewer words, less pressure, and a calm adult nearby.

After the storm has passed, grown-ups can gently wonder:

- What was in the backpack?
- What made the backpack heavier?
- What could make the next hard thing smaller?
- What can we carry together?

The goal is not to make sure a child never has big feelings.

The goal is to notice the backpack *before* it bursts.



ACTIVITY

What is in my backpack today?





- [ ] Is something too loud?



- [ ] Is something too bright?



- [ ] Is something scratchy?



- [ ] Am I hungry?



- [ ] Am I tired?



- [ ] Did the plan change?



- [ ] Am I being rushed?



- [ ] Do I need help?



- [ ] Do I need quiet?



- [ ] Do I need one thing to be smaller?