

Anger Management



Parents must teach their children many things. How to appropriately express feelings, including anger, is one of the most important. Anger is a very real and true feeling—it's a way children express feelings of frustration.

Anger or temper tantrums are common in young children. As their language improves they are able to express their feelings better. This often results in improved behavior. All children can learn self-control with consistent feedback and guidance from the adults in their lives. Try these ideas for teaching your child about how to deal with anger.

Model the Behavior

Your child learns how to cope with anger by watching you. Use "I" statements, such as "I'm angry when I see those crayon marks on the wall." This helps children see how best to express themselves when they are angry. It also shows them that you are angry about what they did, not who they are.

Stay Calm

Try to stay calm. If you yell back or spank a child, you may be "teaching" them this is the way they should handle themselves when they feel angry. If need be, delay talking to your child until you feel under control.

You can say, "I am too angry to talk to you right now—please wait in your room for 15 minutes until we can talk calmly." This also teaches children a lesson in self-control.

Don't Dismiss Feelings

Take your child's feelings seriously. Sometimes parents dismiss a child's feelings because they may seem illogical. A child's feelings are very real to them. The feelings won't go away if ignored, scolded or made fun of.

Help Your Child Calm Down

Calmly acknowledge your child's anger and let him know you will talk to him when he is calm.

Set a Routine

Calmly repeat a phrase you choose up to three times (e.g., "I know you're angry; we can talk about this when you are calmer and polite."). After the third time, try putting your child on a "time out" until he is calmer.

Using Time Out

Time outs work best when the child is put in a place where you can observe and where they won't get attention from others (e.g., in a chair facing the corner). It is best to give one minute of time out for each year of life—e.g., a 4-year-old child gets a four-minute time out—not longer. Start timing when the child is sitting and quiet.

When to Ignore

Ignore statements such as, "I hate you...you're a mean mommy." This is one way your child tries to show you he is angry. The best way to get a child to stop a certain behavior that isn't harmful to self or others is to ignore it.

Restore Calm Before Moving On

Children need to behave well before you can move on. Talk about what it is that frustrates them. For instance, "We can talk about watching T.V. after you have calmed down."

Praise Behaviors

Praise your child each chance you can. Try to be specific. For instance, "It's great that you calmed down so quickly."

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Don't be dismayed if your child's behavior seems to worsen before it gets better; this is their way of testing to see if you are really sincere about this change you want them to make.

Seek help if you are really concerned about your child's anger, or behaviors that persist over a long period of time.

Booklist

This list includes some of the many books for parents on this topic. Visit a local library or bookstore to choose those that best fit your needs and style of child rearing. You can also check out many of these books at the Family Resource Center at Children's located in the Train zone on the 5th floor.

Books for Adults

**Kids, Parents, and Power Struggles:
Winning for a Lifetime**
Kurcinka, Mary Sheedy, 2001

**Taming the Dragon in Your Child: Solutions for
Breaking the Cycle of Family Anger**
Eastman, Meg, 1994

The Emotional Problems of Normal Children
Turecki, Stanley, M.D., 1994

**The Explosive Child: A New Approach for
Understanding and Parenting Easily Frustrated,
Chronically Inflexible Children**
Greene, Ross W., Ph.D., 2001

**The Incredible Years: A Troubleshooting Guide for
Parents of Children Aged 3-8**
Webster-Stratton, Carolyn, Ph.D., 1992

**When Anger Hurts Your Kids:
A Parent's Guide**
McKay, Matthew and Paleg, Kim, 1996

Books for Children

Hands Are Not For Hitting
Agassi, Martine, Ph.D., 2000
Ages 2-6

I'm Frustrated, 1992
I'm Furious, 1997
I'm Mad, 1992
Crary, Elizabeth
Ages 4-8

The Way I Feel
Cain, Janan, 2000
Ages 2-8

**When Sophie Gets Angry—Really,
Really Angry...**
Bang, Molly Garrett, 1999
Ages 4-8

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For More Information

- Your health care provider
- Children's Resource Line:
(206) 987-2500 or 1-866-987-2500
toll-free Washington, Alaska, Montana, Idaho
- www.seattlechildrens.org

This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Children's Hospital. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's health care provider.

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