
Ideas for Parents

Helping Children Deal With Anger

STEP 1

- Let your child know that there is nothing wrong with feeling angry – *anger is okay*, it's a *normal* part of everyday life.
- *What we do* with our angry feelings – *how we act* – can be a problem, though. Let your child know that expressing or showing anger in *aggressive* ways like *hitting, biting, throwing things or name-calling* is *not* okay and you won't put up with it.
- The best method you can use in helping your child control their anger is to be aware of how *you* express and control your own anger. For your child to learn to manage their anger effectively *you* need to model the skills for them.

STEP 2

- Anger '*triggers*' or '*buttons*' are the cause of our anger.
- Help your child identify *what* makes them angry so they become more aware of their feelings. Ask yourself how *you* can tell when *you're* getting frustrated. Now think about how you can help your child to identify their frustration before it gets out of control.
- Learn to identify your child's triggers – once you become aware of them, then you can teach your child to recognize the signs.
- When talking with your child, make sure you describe the *behaviour*, for example: "You felt angry and threw a tantrum. You were screaming, throwing things and kicking the walls."
- Next explain that tantrums are not proper behaviour, for example: "Tantrums are not okay. In our family we don't scream, kick or throw things. That behaviour is *not* acceptable." Make sure you separate the deed from the doer – let your child know that you love them but you do not like their behaviour.
- Give your child some alternatives, for example: "I know you felt angry. When you are angry, what you can do is say, 'I'm angry!' Can you say that?" Have your child repeat the phrase after you.
- Here are some '*cues*' that are common in children who are getting angry and/ or out-of-control:

Tensed body

Clenched teeth

Behaviour and/ or speech becomes intensified

Tone of voice changes to whining and/ or yelling

Restlessness, withdrawal, unresponsive

Easily provoked

Deep breathing and/ or noises (growls)
Pouting
Rolling the eyes and/ or other facial expressions

STEP 3

- Children don't need to stay angry. One of the most important skills for children who are angry is to learn to talk instead of acting out. Spend time with your child and listen to their concerns and help them discuss their problems.
- Monitor what your children watch on TV and keep violent shows to a minimum so that your children do not learn from inappropriate role models. TV often glorifies violence as an answer to dealing with problems.
- Teach your child to take a break from a difficult situation and take some time alone.
- In some cases, words just don't work. Help your child channel their physical anger in a controlled setting where you can supervise them. All children need a physical way of letting off steam. Some ideas include:
 - Punching a pillow
 - Pounding or hammering appropriate toys
 - Jumping up and down on the floor
 - Stomping feet
 - Running around outside
 - Blow out angry feelings into a balloon (adult supervision is necessary)
 - Say the alphabet or count to 10 – count to 100 if necessary
 - Singing out loud or dancing to the radio or a favourite music CD
 - Dancing a "mad" dance
 - Pounding, twisting or kneading clay or play dough
 - Kicking a ball outdoors
- If your child is overtired or over-stimulated and unable to calm himself, a hug and/ or some cuddle time may also do the trick. Kids also need some soothing ways to unwind, such as:
 - Hugging, cuddling or rubbing your child's head or back
 - Relaxing and listening to music
 - Deep breathing exercises
 - A warm bath (always supervised by an adult)
 - Reading stories
 - Singing
 - Cooking or baking together
 - Colouring or painting pictures
 - Playing with water or sand
 - Finger painting
 - Journaling (for older children)