
Ideas for Parents

SIX WAYS TO HELP KIDS HANDLE ANGER

MODEL CALMNESS: The best way to teach kids to deal with anger is by showing through example. Use those frustrating situations as 'on-the-spot' lessons to teach your child ways to calm down. For example: your mechanic calls and says your car estimate has now doubled from its original quote. You are furious and standing nearby is your child. Muster every ounce of calmness and use it as an instant anger control lesson for your child. Say, "I am so angry right now. The auto shop has just doubled the price for fixing my car." Then offer a calm-down solution: "I'm going for a quick walk so I can calm down."

EXIT AND CALM DOWN: Anger is contagious, so it's best to make a rule in your home – "We solve problems when we're calm and in control." Consistently enforce this rule, for example: if your child is angry and wants a quick solution, you might say, "I need a time out. Let's talk about this later." Then, exit calmly and don't answer back. When your child has calmed down then re-visit the issue to look for a solution.

DEVELOP A 'FEELINGS' VOCABULARY: Many children display anger because they don't know how to express their frustrations any other way than kicking, screaming, yelling, swearing, hitting or throwing things. To help your child express their anger, create a 'feeling' word poster together by saying, "Let's think of all the words we could use that tell others we're angry." Then list the ideas on a chart and hang up the chart. Practice the words often.

CREATE A CALM DOWN POSTER: Talk with your child about more acceptable replacement behaviours when they are angry. You may want to make a big poster to list them. For example: walk away, count to 10, take a deep breath, draw pictures, listen to music, run a lap, shoot basketballs, talk to someone. Once your child chooses a calm down technique, encourage them to use it on a consistent basis.

DEVELOP AN AWARENESS OF EARLY WARNING SIGNS: Explain to your child that we all have little warning signs that tell us when we're getting angry. Help your child recognize what their warning signs are. Say to your child, "When I'm getting angry I talk louder, my cheeks get flushed, my heart pounds and I breathe faster." Once your child is aware of their own warning signs, start pointing them out whenever they first start to get frustrated. The more we help our children recognize their early warning signs, the better they will be at calming down. Anger escalates very quickly and waiting until the 'meltdown' to try to get them back in control is usually too late.

TEACH ANGER CONTROL STRATEGIES: An effective strategy for helping kids calm down is called "3+10." As soon as you feel your body sending you a warning sign that says you're losing control,

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do two things. First, take 3, slow deep breaths from your tummy.” Model this with your child by showing them how to take a deep breath and tell them to pretend they are riding on an escalator – start at the bottom step and as they take a breath ride up the escalator slowly – hold it – and then back down, slowly. “That’s 3. Now count slowly inside your head. That’s 10. Put them all together, it’s 3+10 and it helps you to calm down.”