

Help your Child Deal with Anger

Anger is a natural and helpful emotion that we all experience, even our children. Many times we get caught up in thinking anger is bad or wrong but that is not the case. Our response to anger is what can be detrimental, not the emotion itself. When anger goes unresolved, the intensity rises. This causes complicated issues to occur that could possibly be avoided if children knew how to handle this complex emotion. There are several important things to remember when helping your child deal with anger.

It is very important to be aware of how we, as adults and parents, handle our emotions. Keeping a close check on your responses to anger is a helpful way to model to your children appropriate reactions when faced with an intense emotion. Also, it is essential to be mindful of staying calm when your child is responding in an inappropriate way when angry. Matching his or her strong reactions will not make the situation deescalate quickly.

Help your child learn cues for the onset of an anger explosion. With your assistance, your child will learn how to recognize that an outburst may be close to occurring. Some common signs of anger may include: tense body, clenched teeth or fist, deep breathing or noises such as growls, pouting, increased intensity or speech or behavior, restlessness or withdrawal, and unkind words or tone of voice. There are many more cues that could occur in your child, so it is important to observe your child to see how he or she specifically expresses the signs of getting frustrated. Once you recognize the cues, begin to point them out to your child to teach him or her to also recognize them. Eventually, this will help the child move from frustrations to action and problem solving without the loss of control in between.

Another important action for parents to remember is that it is okay to take a break. Taking a step back from the situation to allow yourself and your child to calm down can be a helpful and practical tool for teaching anger management. Giving your child this space can allow them time to rethink the situation and possibly come up with a solution or a new direction. It also aids in preventing damaging words and resentment from occurring. Anger is an emotion that can take you over before you know and a lot of destruction can be caused in the meantime. Try not to engage in your toddler's tantrum or your teen's ranting. Allow the issue to deescalate before you begin talking through the situation.

Lastly, aim for teaching your child problem solving skills. This skill is one of the most important techniques to teach your child for a healthy life. Many times parents respond negatively to their child's anger and outbursts but it is important to respond in a positive manner to help them turn the situation around. Provide three solutions: "talk about it, get help, or slow down and persevere" (Effective Parenting, 2006) and work on each skill in response to anger. Get your child to understand that anger is effective for identifying a problem but it is not useful in problem solving. Ask your children what they think the solution might be and work through it together.

All the while, provide positive feedback for your child's efforts, accomplishments and progress in working on anger management. And give yourself credit too! This isn't an easy emotion for adults or

children to always manage effectively. If the task becomes too overwhelming and resentment has begun, do not hesitate to ask for help. Having a third party assist in guiding and providing suggestions may be the motivation you need to help your family.

KidLutions. (2009). Helping your child deal with anger. Retrieved from www.kidlutions.com.

Effective Parenting. (2006). Helping children deal with their anger.