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C H I L D R E N ' S H O M E S O C I E T Y O F C A L I F O R N I A

MANAGING ANGER

YOUR CHILD'S AND YOUR OWN



Everyone feels angry at times; it is a common emotion. You may not be able to change the person or situation that makes you angry, but you can control how you respond to feeling angry. The goal of anger management is to control and express anger in a positive and effective way that is safe and appropriate.



Adults and children can have many different reactions to feelings of anger. It is important to know when you feel angry, where the anger comes from, and how to control the anger. Anger can be expressed in a healthy manner that is socially acceptable or in a destructive way that may hurt you or another person. By practicing and developing habits of effective anger management, parents and caregivers can promote a peaceful environment, while helping children understand and manage their own anger too.



★ RECOGNIZING ANGER ★

By paying attention to your body and signs of growing anger, you can “cool down” and deal with your anger before losing control.

Some signs are:

- Rush of adrenaline
- Rapid heartbeat
- Tense muscles
- Snapping at others
- Sweaty palms
- Feeling warm
- Feeling trapped

Children learn by observing those around them. You can be a positive role-model by managing your feelings of anger proactively instead of reactively.

Children need adults to help them understand, recognize, and manage their own feelings of anger.

Some signs that a child is getting angry or frustrated are:

- Pulling on/out their hair
- Tightening their fists or muscles
- Clenching their teeth
- Hitting themselves or a wall
- Yelling or crying
- Throwing items
- Heavy breathing

★ ANGER “TRIGGERS” ★

Situations and people around you can trigger feelings of anger. Identifying “anger triggers” for you and your child allows you to be better prepared to respond in a positive manner. You and your child can use anger management skills if you know when to apply them. Common triggers are:

For Adults:

- Unmet expectations (appointment canceled after rearranging your schedule)
- Unexpected events (your car tire gets a flat)
- Stress (financial struggles, medical issues)
- Being extremely tired, hungry, or overstimulated

For Children (Because each child is different, it is important to observe which situations or activities trigger your child’s anger.):

- Conflict with another child (other child takes their toy)
- Feelings of disconnect (other children do not let them play in the group)
- Not able to communicate clearly what they need
- Being overly tired, hungry, or overstimulated
- Sickness



Anger is a healthy emotion if it is processed in a healthy way. Children can develop self-confidence by learning how to self-regulate (or control) their emotions and set healthy behavior boundaries for themselves.

★ COOLING DOWN ★

Different activities can help adults and children release feelings of anger and “cool down” in safe and healthy ways. Both children and adults can benefit from the following cool down activities:

- Drink water
- Eat a snack if you are hungry
- Read a book
- Move your body (stretch, work out, go for a walk, play a sport)
- Get some rest
- Listen to music
- Take deep breaths
- Craft (color, draw, paint)
- Move to a calmer location
- Talk to someone you feel comfortable with

★ EXPRESSING ANGER ★

It is important to find healthy ways to express and address feelings of anger. Ignoring anger does not necessarily make it go away; unexpressed anger may build up and lead to later outbursts. In some instances, your anger may go away after you “cool down;” in others, you may need to communicate or express your anger to find a resolution.

Adults:

- Once you have cooled off and reflected on what happened, determine what triggered your frustration and feelings of anger. If the source of anger is a situation rather than a person, try writing down what it is about the situation that was upsetting, and think of ways to fix it or prevent it from happening again. For example, if you are angry that the car tire was flat, a solution might be taking a minute or two each morning to walk around your vehicle to check for possible issues.
- If the source of the anger involves another person, consider what is within your control. Apply strategies such as perspective-taking, empathy, and problem-solving to see whether your anger can be resolved or minimized. If possible, find a way to communicate directly with that person. Remember to focus on the action that made you angry, not the other person. Use “I” statements, such as “I feel angry when... (describe what happened) because... (how it affected you) and I need... (express what you need to happen).” For example, “I feel angry when I ask a question and there is no response, because I feel ignored and have to ask again. Please answer me when I ask a question.” or “When Mommy is on the phone, I want to play with you, but I need to finish the conversation before we can play. Please wait for me to end the call before asking me to play.”
- Brainstorm possible solutions together to meet everyone’s needs and prevent the situation from happening again.

Children:

- Help guide your child to identify and understand their own emotions.
- Acknowledge your child’s feelings. For example, “I see you are stomping your feet and frowning. Can you talk to me about how you are feeling?”
- Describe how they might feel by providing language to help them express their emotions, such as “I can hear in your voice that you might feel angry. Can you please tell me what happened? Maybe I can help.” Using books or flash cards to discuss different emotions is a fun and interactive strategy to help guide these conversations.
- Try to understand why they are feeling angry or upset. Be patient and present. Move down to the child’s eye level and listen.
- Provide your child with a safe space where they can self-regulate and cool down. For example, go outside for a walk to observe nature or to a quiet area where they can draw or play for a few minutes alone.
- Acknowledge and praise your child’s healthy coping skills and work together to think of possible solutions when needed.

★ LONG-TERM EFFECTS ★

As you encourage children to take steps toward learning effective anger management skills, they can also benefit by:

- Becoming more responsible
- Growing independent by knowing they have choices
- Developing greater self-esteem
- Expanding problem-solving and critical thinking skills
- Becoming more self-aware; understanding themselves
- Forming healthy attachments with responsive adults

TO LEARN MORE

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

WHEN SOPHIE GETS ANGRY - REALLY, REALLY, ANGRY...

Molly Bang

THE COLOR MONSTER

Anna Llenas

BOOKS FOR ADULTS

LOVE AND ANGER

Nancy Samalin with Catherine Whitney

RAISING GOOD HUMANS: A MINDFUL GUIDE TO BREAKING THE CYCLE OF REACTIVE PARENTING AND RAISING KIND, CONFIDENT KIDS

Hunter Clarke-Fields, MSAE

WEBSITE

www.HealthyChildren.org