

Anger

Helping children deal with the anger they feel

You & Your Child

Young children get angry. They may get red-faced, scream, cry, stomp, hit, kick, and even break things when they do.

Everyone gets angry once in awhile. It's a natural and normal experience. Young children often express their anger with actions or crying or screaming because it may be hard for them to put their feelings into words.

Some professionals feel it is good to express anger, rather than keep it bottled inside.

But children need to learn how to handle the anger they feel the right way. They must be taught self-control and how to express anger without being hostile or violent.

The ways children learn how and when to express anger are through trial and error, by observing adults and other children, and by imitating what they see.

The stakes are high. Children who fail to learn how to manage anger may pay a high price later, experiencing poor mental and physical health, damaged careers, and flawed relationships.

On Back

Helping your child learn to handle anger.

A publication of the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development made possible with help from the Frank and Theresa Caplan Fund For Early Childhood Development and Parenting Education.

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Helping children deal with the anger they feel

Remember, getting angry is part of healthy development

For 3-4-year-olds, being able to direct anger toward something that frustrates them may be a sign of healthy development. They become motivated to master frustrating tasks and situations.

Expressing anger can also be a sign of self-respect. The child is showing a desire to stick up for himself or herself.

When your child is angry, get him or her to talk about it

Children who can say, "I'm really mad!" have learned a good way to get their feelings out.

Sometimes, you can get your child to calm down by having him or her talk about why they are angry. Try saying, "I know you are angry. Why don't you tell me why in your best calm voice."

Everyday rules help children learn self-control

Children need to learn there are acceptable and unacceptable ways to express anger. Make some rules to help them learn.

The rules should be simple and clear. For example:

- "You hit, you sit."
- "Use your words, don't hit."
- "It's okay to be angry, but it's not okay to hurt."

Show that your child can get your attention without getting angry

After an angry outburst has passed, try playing with your child or engaging him or her in some quiet activity.

Doing so shows children that they don't need to act up to get their parent's attention. It also tells them that their parents love them even if they get angry.

Be a good role model yourself

Are you an angry parent? Many of us are. In the average American home, anger is expressed 2-3 times more often than affection.

You must set a good example for your child to imitate.

- Avoid destructive outbursts of anger that you would not accept from your child.
- Show your child that you accept your own anger as a normal experience. For example, after you quarrel with your spouse, make a point to show that there is still love and affection between the two of you.
- Show that you are able to keep anger from dominating your relationships.

Settle your child down when anger is getting out of control

Suggest that your child count to ten, or take a nap, or draw a picture about what is making him or her angry. Do whatever you can to help your child cool off.

Then, go back and ask if your child wants to talk about why he or she was angry.

Don't get angry when your child has an angry outburst

One of the most basic things you can do to be a good role model is not to respond angrily to a child's outburst.

By responding to anger with anger, you may only worsen the situation.

Tell children you love them, even when they are angry

Being angry at someone does not mean you do not love them or that they will stop loving you. Make sure your child understands that.

