

ANGER MANAGEMENT FOR KIDS



36
BEST TIPS
+
17 ACTIVITIES BOOKLET

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DISCLAIMER

It is important to emphasize the following points:

- the purpose of this document is to share information that may be useful when dealing with everyday behavior and anger issues
- it is not meant to substitute professional advice and I am not in any way engaging in rendering any type of professional service
- if professional or other expert advice is required , the services of a competent professional should be sought.
- while some tips may work wonders for some kids, they may not work for others
- I've made my best effort to compile accurate and updated information, but I can't guarantee that it will always be the case.

Anger Management for Kids: How to Deal with Anger and Challenging Behavior

Being a parent is never an easy task. And our parenting job gets even harder when kids struggle with challenging behavior, anger issues, lack of impulse control or underdeveloped coping skills.

The underlying reasons may be varied, but there are a number of strategies that can help our children develop coping skills, improve behavior and appropriately express their anger.

The advice I will be sharing can be split into two big categories:

- Tips that focus on us, parents. Advice that will revolve around our parenting styles and the know-how we need to develop in order to be able to coach our kids through their struggles
- Tips that focus on our kids. Specific actions or strategies that will help them cope better with big emotions

I. Anger Management For Kids Always Starts with Best Parenting Practices

Why do I start talking about us, parents, first?

One of the characteristics of therapeutic intervention in childhood is that it usually focuses on modifying the way parents or adults are interacting with the child. Research has shown that our parenting styles have an effect on our children's development.

An authoritative parenting style that balances control with clear limits but allows exploration, and is responsive, warm and nurturing, is considered the best parenting approach. It

helps kids develop high self-esteem, high social competence and optimal academic performance (Baumrind, 1975).

Positive Parenting is probably a better known term for this type of approach these days. No matter which one you favor, they are mostly overlapping concepts.

Taking into consideration best practices recommended in these parenting styles, these are some behavior management tips that will be a foundation for our anger management strategy:

1. Be responsive, affectionate, warm.

2. Establish clear, firm and fair limits

3. Don't create rules just for the sake of having rules.

Make sure they make sense: they keep them safe, they teach them values, they help them thrive, they help them live in society. And be ready to explain and make them understand why those rules are necessary.

4. Praise positive and appropriate behaviors:

- Do it immediately after it happens
- Praise when other people are present

5. Apply consequences to the bad behaviors.

6. Consider natural and logical consequences (without adult intervention).

For example, your kid forgets to bring home his school homework. You don't WhatsApp another parent to get a copy. He goes to school the following day and deals with whatever consequence the teacher decides (I know, it is an example, I would probably WhatsApp another parent myself!!)

7. Be consistent.

8. Verbalize rules in a positive way.

It's better to use a "do" instead of a "don't"

9. Promote their independence.

It is good to have rules, but make sure there is room for exploration.

Specific Anger Management Tips

10. Be their role model.

What does it mean to model appropriate anger management skills?

- Verbalize your feelings. They will not be able to know that you also go through the same type of emotions unless you share it with them.
- Verbalize those feeling in an acceptable way
- Show them how you cope with your feelings
- If you lose your temper, apologize and show them how you could have done it better.

11. Understand Anger Yourself.

It will not be easy to try to teach your kids anger management if you don't have some basic understanding of this emotion yourself.

12. Seek professional help.

If your kids' anger management problems are difficult to manage you need to seek professional help. Tantrums and meltdowns may be absolutely normal. But there are also cases in which those episodes are very intense or happen too often. Your doctor will also assess if they are developmentally appropriate.

Some of the reason why aggressive behaviors may be present can be:

- Learning disabilities

- Autism
- ADHD
- Sensory processing issues
- Anxiety

You need professional help to assess if there is an underlying problem that requires specific interventions.

13. Track Behavior

Use a behavior chart to track your child behavior. It will help you make some assumptions on what is causing and maintaining the problems.

Read more about this topic in my post [“How to Track Behavior like a Pro: Behavior Charts”](#)

II. Anger Management for Kids: Useful Anger Management Techniques and Tips for my Child

14. Find time to talk to your child.

You may be thinking you talk to your child all the time. But, we need to find nice quality time when we can talk about the things that happen in their lives. It can be as simple as creating a bedtime routine where you spend a few minutes chatting about how the day went.

Behaviors communicate messages. Anger is also a sign that there is a problem somewhere. So, finding the opportunities to explore what may be going on.

15. Talk about emotions.

Talking about emotions helps them:

- Build an emotional vocabulary
- Recognize different emotions in others and in themselves
- Be comfortable expressing a range of different emotions.

16. Talk to your child about anger, specifically

Now that you have educated yourself about anger, you will be also able to help your child understand anger. This strategy has worked really well for us. It provides a “reason why” for all those unwanted feelings and sensations.

These are some of the things I’ve explained to my kids:

- Anger is not bad. It is just a useful emotion.
- Anger has a function: your body is telling you that something is bothering you.
- When I feel angry I may feel irritable, tense, and anxious. I may also have negative thoughts
- We all feel angry sometimes. Mum and Dad also feel angry sometimes (and we all share examples of situations in which we felt angry)
- We can learn ways that help us control our anger
 - Sometimes we will need to solve a problem.
 - Some other times we will not be able to fix what is bothering us, or we will not know exactly what is causing these feelings. In those cases, we can still learn ways that help us control our anger.

17. Develop a feeling vocabulary.

18. Teach your child to label his feelings.

By labeling our own feelings, we are teaching our kids how to label their own feelings.

19. Teach your child to recognize the anger signs.

More on this topic: [“How to teach kids about Anger Signs”](#) (this post provides a comprehensive list of anger signs and free downloadable anger worksheets for kids)

20. Help your child express his feelings.

A visual scale or a “feeling thermometer” is great to help them develop emotional talk. It provides kids with clues that help

them express the intensity of an emotion, feeling or sensation (anxiety, anger, pain ...)

21. Understand anger triggers and discuss them with your child.

Most common anger triggers include frustration, tiredness, being hungry, stopping an activity that they enjoy or anxiety. It is very useful for both, you and your kid, to be able to identify those triggers and act upon them.

22. Prevent the situation.

Once you understand the triggers, you may be able to prevent some of the explosions. Some examples could be:

- Feed your kid earlier if being hungry makes them grumpy
- Get them to bed earlier if fatigue is a trigger.

And if you can't completely avoid the situation, you may still be able to implement some distraction tactics when you see an outburst about to start:

- Change scene
- Change conversation topic
- Tickles
- Ask about a favorite topic
- Tell a funny story

23. Teach your kids the role their “thoughts” may play sometimes in becoming angry.

Often it is not what happens that makes us angry, but our thoughts about the situation. Just an example:

My brother has taken my toy and it makes me decide I want it now, because it is mine. But if we change my thought into: “I had not even remembered about that toy, and I’d rather play “Snakes & ladders” with Dad”. Then, that same situation is not making me angry.

24. Allow your child to be angry.

Anger is a useful emotion and it is ok to be angry. It is just a message that tells your kid that there is a problem to be solved. Allow them to be angry and use that situation to help them learn coping skills.

25. Establish anger rules

Being angry is ok, but this anger needs to be expressed in appropriate ways. Teach your kid the do's and don'ts:

- Hitting and hurting are not appropriate ways to express anger.
- Expressing it with words, leaving the room and looking for a place to be alone are appropriate ways to express anger.

26. Teach substitute behaviors.

27. Teach problem-solving.

Anger may be a signal that a problem needs to be solved. But some kids have not developed problem solving abilities. You could work on developing your kid's problem solving abilities by helping him:

- Identify a problem and describe it
- Generate alternatives
- Predict consequences for those alternatives
- Choose the alternative that best solves the problem
- Action it.

28. Teach a Variety of Calming Techniques

Sometimes our kids will be angry and they will not be able to solve the underlying problem. Or else, they will not know why they are feeling that way. In those cases, we will need to develop a range of coping skills. Calming techniques will be an essential part of your anger management strategy.

Once you have taught and practiced a range of calming techniques, you will be able to identify which ones work better for your kid and focus on those ones.

Calming techniques may include:

- Breathing exercises- For kids I specifically recommend Lazy 8 Breathing, an easy and “portable” breathing exercise that always works wonders for us. You can read more about it in “Breathing Exercises for Kids: Lazy 8 Breathing”
- Moving into another situation - Abandoning the setting where the anger outburst is happening and moving into a calm place or a pleasant activity
- Physical exercise- “Burning energy” and focusing on a physical activity unrelated to the anger situation (jumping, running)
- Expressing it through drawing or writing
- Swapping bad thoughts for good thoughts.
- Using your imagination. Imagining a calm place, imagining that a shield protects you from your bad thoughts, imagining that you flush your bad thoughts down the toilet.
- Yoga and mindfulness exercises

You may find interesting my post “[How to Help an Angry Child: 17 Anger Management Activities for Kids](#)”. If you check it out, don’t download the pdf with the activities, as I am including them at the end of this pdf too.

29. Practice those skills while your child is calm and happy.

30. Don’t try to “reason” in the middle of a tantrum or a meltdown.

Wait till the situation has finished to discuss what happened and what the right way to express anger would have been.

31. Create a Calming Routine.

Do you remember how you created a sleeping routine when your kids were little? And how some cues from the environment would help afterwards to ease them into sleep. Your calming routine may have the same effect.

Just to give you a personal example. We have been using a “feeling thermometer” to help my son express his feelings. We often resort to that visual scale when he is feeling angry. As a result, at present, the simple act of grabbing this feeling thermometer already exerts a calming effect on him. He knows he is a step closer to being able to share how he is feeling. And he is confident that he will get the help he needs to alleviate anxiety or anger.

32. Calming Toys & Products Kit

If there are some toys or products that have proven useful to help your kid relieve his anxiety, create a stress relief kit and have it at hand (fidget spinner, a vibrating pillow, a body sock, a flowing sand panel)

33. Challenge his automatic negative thoughts and rigid thinking.

Show your child how you can replace negative thoughts (e.g. I can't do anything right") with positive thoughts (e.g. This is difficult to do, but it may be a fun challenge)

34. Teach Social Skills.

It may be interesting to help your child improve a range of social skills, for example:

- How to request somebody to stop a behavior
- Problem solving in social situations
- Conversational skills

35. Learn how to safely hold your child to prevent harm to himself and to others.

If anger leads into dangerous situations for your child or others (head-banging, biting, scratching) you will need to use safe holds. My advice here, would be to seek a trained professional to teach you how to use safe holds for crisis intervention.

36. Medication.

Although pharmacologic intervention may not be the first choice of treatment, it may be required in some cases like:

- crisis intervention
- short term treatments
- underlying conditions.

A typical antipsychotics like Risperdal is often used in aggressive behavior. Your health specialist is the only one who can give you guidance you on this.

And one last very important tip:

Sometimes, in the middle of a meltdown full of tears and unhappiness, the only thing that works for me is holding my son tight while I rock him and tell him how much I love him.

17

ANGER MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES FOR KIDS



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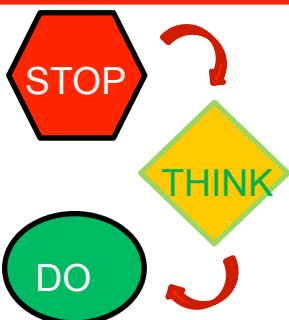
What can I do when I'm feeling angry?

1



HELP

Ask Mom for
help

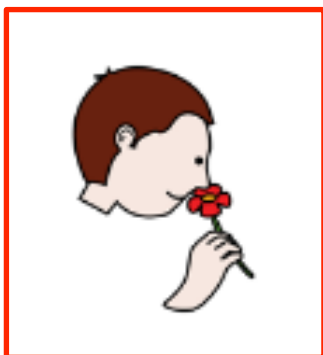


Stop, Think,
Do

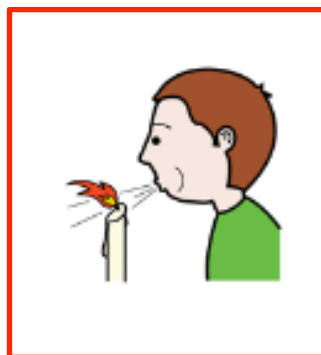
1, 2, 3,
4, 5, 6,
7, 8, 9,
10

Count 1 to 10

Breathing Exercises

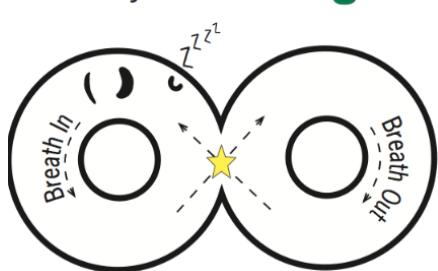


In like smelling
flowers



Out like blowing a
candle

Lazy 8 Breathing



Lazy 8 Breathing



Breath In
& Out
while ...

Mom counts 10

What can I do when I'm feeling angry?

2



Leave the situation (physically)



Go to another
room



Step out to the
garden



Go for a walk with
Mom / Dad

Leave the situation => change activity



Watch TV



Mom tells a
story



Computer /
Games



Board
games

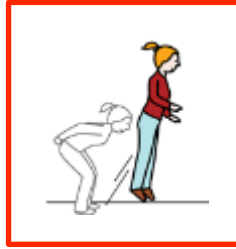
What can I do when I'm feeling angry?

3

Physical Activity = Burn Energy



Bounce
on ball

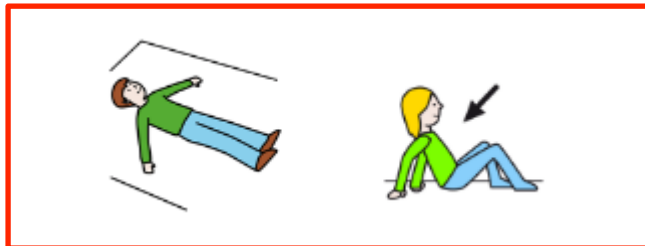


Jump



Run around the
couch

Progressive Muscle Relaxation for kids



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