

Anger Management for Children

Michelle Pendzimas

What Is Anger?

Anger is a strong emotion, but it is not the child's first feeling. Anger usually comes after another painful feeling, such as hurt, frustration, fear, jealousy, or sadness. For example, if a child is doing homework and suddenly tears up her paper and throws her pencil, she is showing anger. However, her first emotion was probably frustration or pain triggered by a memory or her feelings of worthlessness.

How Does the Body React to Anger?

An angry person's heart rate increases and his blood pressure goes up. His muscles become tense. He is prepared to fight! When a child is at this point, he cannot think clearly. So, when he is very angry, he may not be able to listen or communicate well. This is not the time to tell him about the consequences of his anger. You will only make him angrier.

It is normal to feel angry. But sometimes anger can become hurtful. That happens when children do not know what to do when they feel angry. They need to learn to manage their anger.

How Do You Teach Anger Management?

Build Healthy Relationships

When children feel safe, they are calmer and more likely to allow you to help them. This is the time to talk about anger, not when they are furious about something.

Think Prevention

Develop consistent routines, a clear structure, and predictable responses for children so they know what to expect.

Whenever possible, prevent situations that make a child angry. This may be through changing something in her environment or changing the ways other interact with her.

Prepare a child for disappointments. For example, if it is raining and you will not be able to go outside, tell the child that the routine will be different today. Let him know what will happen instead.

Teach New Skills

Teach children the names of different emotions. If they can name their feelings, they are better able to express and deal with them. For example, a child saying, "I am disappointed because we cannot go outside" is much better than throwing a temper tantrum!

Teach children relaxation skills. This can include deep breathing, prayer and meditation, and muscle relaxation techniques. Identify a place where children can go to calm down. Encourage them to do calming activities, such as reading, drawing, singing, and praying.

Teach children what you want them to do when they are angry. Put up posters as reminders. For example, "When I am angry, I will take deep breaths. I will count to 10."

Teach children to problem-solve. Encourage them to give you the answers to 2 questions when they are angry.

- What is the problem?
- What are some solutions to this problem?

In time, they will learn to identify why they are angry and what they can do to manage their anger.

Anger management is a skill that needs to be learned. Change will not happen immediately. You will need to practice and model these strategies many times. But through your consistent efforts, you can make a difference in a child's life forever.