



Helping Kids Manage Their Anger

1. Develop a feeling vocabulary

Many kids display aggression such as kicking, screaming, hitting, biting because they simply don't know how to express their frustrations any other way. They need an emotional vocabulary to express how they feel, and you can help your kid develop one. Here are a few words to start with: angry, upset, mad, frustrated, agitated, furious, apprehensive, tense, nervous, anxious, irritated, furious, ticked off, irate. Once your child learns emotion words, encourage them to "talk out his anger."

Beware: Your child might yell, "I'm really angry!" Or blurt out: "You make me so mad." Do *not* discipline them. It's exactly what you want him to do so he learns to express his anger instead of lashing out or holding the anger in.

2. Use self-talk

Teach a simple, positive message your child can say to himself in stressful situations. For example: "Stop and calm down," "Stay in control," "I can handle this."

3. Pound it out

Pound clay, hit a pillow, shoot baskets, punch a punching bag, throw rocks at a wall (away from people), hit a wall with a foam bat. Help your child find the most effective way to calm his temper, and then encourage them to use the technique. Caution: some research finds that this strategy can backfire and increase the impulsivity. Use it only if you see a decrease in your child's anger.

4. Go to a calm spot

Ask your child to help you set up a place where they can go to gain control. Offer a few soothing things- such as books, music, pens, and paper- to your child and then encourage them to use the spot to cool down.

5. Tear your anger/frustration into little pieces

Tell your child to draw or write what is upsetting him on a piece of paper. Then tear it into little pieces and "throw the anger away." They can also use the concept by imaging that his anger is slowly leaving him in little pieces. Make sure you provide scratch paper!

6. Teach: “Stop and breathe”

Show your child how to inhale slowly to a count of five, pause for two counts, and then slowly breathe out the same way, again counting to five. Repeating the sequence creates maximum relaxation and reduces stress that can turn into anger.

7. Teach “1 + 3 + 10”

Explain the formula: “As soon as you feel your body sending you a warning sign that says you’re losing control, do three things. First, stop and say: ‘Be calm.’ That’s 1. Now take three deep, slow breaths from your tummy. That’s 3. Finally, count slowly to ten inside your head. That’s 10. Put them all together and you have 1 + 3 + 10, and doing it helps you calm down and get back in control.” (Teach a younger child use DRAGON BREATHS. Blow your anger out just like a dragon!)

8. Imagine a calm place

For instance: the beach, their bed, grandpa’s backyard, a tree house. The second your child feels their body warning signs kick in, tell them to close their eyes and imagine the spot, while breathing slowly. Taking a photograph of the actual “calm place” or drawing a picture of it and then framing it and putting it by your child’s bed can be a great visual reminder.

9. Draw it!

Some kids find drawing to be relaxing. If this is your child stock a basket with markers, crayons and a sketch pad and encourage him to go “draw out his anger.” You can also keep a spare drawing pad in the bottom of their backpack.

10. Write it!

Other kids find that writing out their anger can be effective. If this is your child then provide a journal and a pen or a paper and pencil and encourage them to go to a calm spot and “write away their anger.” Some kids prefer to write a letter to the person they are irritated with – though caution the child about actually presenting the letter to the person. Best to write it when you’re upset, and then rip it up.

Calming a hot-temper is not only teachable, but also essential for growing up in a sometimes violent, unpredictable world. Besides, eliminating this behavior will do absolute wonders in creating not only a child who is far more enjoyable to be with, but also a more peaceful family. If you’re consistent you’ll be able to help your kid learn a healthier way to handle their anger. So don’t wait and don’t give up! (And one more thing...make sure you are calm when you teach your child the tip!)