
Temper Tantrums

Temper tantrums are violent outbreaks of anger. Common tantrum behaviors include screaming, kicking, rolling on the floor, holding one's breath, etc. Tantrums are not unusual in children, and most common at ages two to four. As children grow older and are able to express their thoughts and feelings verbally, tantrums tend to decrease. Temper tantrums reflect a serious behavior problem when they become the only, or favorite way a child solves problems over a long period of time.

Ignore tantrums when the child's safety and the destruction of property is not in question. At times you may have to move your child to a safe "time out" area before you begin ignoring. Occasionally a child may lose control so completely that physical restraint, or holding, may be needed to prevent the child from hurting themselves or property. This approach should not be seen as punishment, but as a way of helping a child regain self-control. Parents should not hold a child any tighter than necessary. Sit with the child on your lap with the child facing away from you. Use a soft calm voice. Avoid threatening or talking about what is upsetting. Console the child e.g., "I know it feels bad to be so angry, I'm sorry you feel so bad."

As the child regains self-control, your grip should relax, offer a glass of water and cool cloth. Talk about what happened after some time has passed.

Books For Children

I'm So Mad by Mercer Mayer

When Emily Woke Up Angry by Riana Duncan

Mean Soup by Betsy Everitt

Don't Rant & Rave on Wednesday's by Adolph Moser

Fighting Fair for Families by Fran Schmidt & Alice Friedman

Books For Parents

Taming the Dragon in Your Child: Solutions for Breaking the Cycle of Family Anger by Meg Eastman & Sydney C. Rozen

Love and Anger: The Parental Dilemma by Nancy Samalin and Catherine Whitney

When Kids Are Mad, Not Bad: A Guide to Recognizing and Handling Children's Anger by Henry A. Paul, MD.

Resources

Your child's doctor.

School social workers, counselor or psychologist.

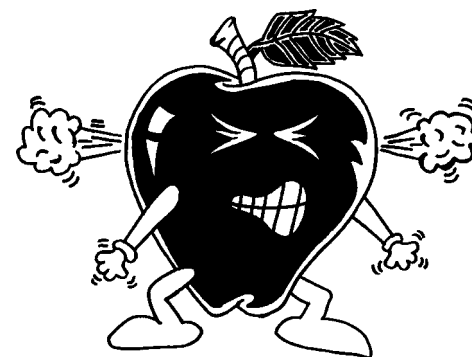
Counselors in the community. See both the yellow and blue pages of the Aliant Communications Telephone Book.

A resource provided by LPS School Social Workers...because families matter.

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HELPING YOUR CHILD WITH ANGER



Anger is a feeling we all have, both children and adults. Like all feelings anger serves a purpose. It lets us know something has displeased us or challenged our values or beliefs. It gives us energy to express ourselves and resolve problems. Anger often comes from feelings of hurt, sadness, fear and/or frustration. Anger that doesn't go away can sometimes be a sign of depression. If ignored, anger can build and result in health problems. It can also cause unexpected explosive behaviors or a negative outlook on life. Anger is often an emotion which, when expressed, can make those around us uncomfortable. It must be expressed in some way, however, to stay emotionally and physically healthy. The way in which anger is expressed is influenced by one's culture. Anger needs to be communicated in ways that are safe for oneself and others.

Anger and Gender

Our society seems to give more permission for males to show anger than it does for females. However, because males are not given as much permission to express sadness and hurt, these emotions are often confused and expressed as anger. Society tends to provide males with physically aggressive models for showing anger while females are often expected not to get mad. Females tend to turn their anger inward and may become depressed.

Families and Anger

It is natural for children, parents and partners to be angry with each other at times. It is important that children learn that anger doesn't replace love in relationships. Families generally have spoken, or unspoken rules about anger and how it is communicated (or not communicated). Families differ in how they allow anger to be expressed. Children learn how to act out their anger by watching and copying the behaviors of their parents and other significant adults. Often, both children and adults need a cooling down time before they can listen, talk and work on problems effectively. It is very helpful to talk to your children at times when there is not conflict about acceptable ways to show their anger. **Only non-hurtful ways of expressing anger should be allowed in any family.**

Sometimes parents and/or children, may use alcohol and other drugs as a way to cope with the discomfort of conflict. However, alcohol and other drug use can intensify angry feelings, interfere with positive problem solving and further complicate relationships. Following are some guidelines to help your family deal with this complex emotion in positive ways.

Do

Agree as a family that anger can be expressed only in non-hurting ways.

Express your own anger in ways you want your children to express theirs. Use words and take responsibility for your feelings. "I get very upset when . . ." or, "I am angry with you because . . ."

Help your children put their feelings into acceptable words.

Agree that **any** family member can call a "time out" (time to separate and cool down) when tempers are so hot that communication can not be helpful and only hurtful.

Recognize your children's "body language" (restlessness, tension, sulking, moodiness) as a signal to ask if something is bothering them.

Teach your children to recognize signals their body gives them as they become angry, (clenched fists, rapid heart rate and breathing, etc.).

Go back and discuss situations which contributed to anger when family members are calm and can better share their feelings and listen to others.

Try to listen and understand what another family member is angry about. Give your children feedback about what you hear them saying, "I understand you're mad because..."

Apologize and/or talk to your children if you communicated your anger in a hurtful way.

Be willing to apologize and change **unreasonable** consequences you set for your children in the heat of anger.

Make sure your children are getting enough sleep and having meals/snacks on time.

Try to respond calmly when your children get angry.

Be aware that others may not wish to be touched when they are angry.

Encourage positive activities as a release for anger; e.g. art, writing, clay, music and/or physical activities.

Limit and monitor your children's use of TV.

Use your sense of humor, especially for the things you have no control over.

Take care of yourself and your needs so you can be at your best to handle the challenges of parenting.

Ask for help if anger is hurting you physically, if you are afraid of your own or another's anger or if anger is getting in the way of your, or your children's ability to enjoy life.

Don't

Don't take away all outlets for your children to express their anger.

Don't expect your children to never be angry at you, their siblings, or others in their lives.

Don't allow your children (or partner) to hurt you, or each other, either physically or emotionally through aggression, name calling, intimidation or threats.

Don't give in to your child's wishes because their anger makes you uncomfortable.

Don't set unnecessary rules on your children's behavior.

Don't physically punish your children in the heat of anger.

Don't use physical aggression toward others, pets, property or yourself when angry.

Don't ignore your angry feelings.

Don't use name calling, belittling, intimidation or threats as ways of showing anger.

Don't expect perfection from yourself or your children while learning to express anger in productive ways (keep trying).

Don't blow little things out of proportion.
