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Coping With a Child's Anger

Everyone feels angry sometimes. Anger is an emotion. Young children express their emotions. When they are angry, it shows.

A child's anger is not quite the same as an adult's anger. Young children are learning to react to what goes on around them. They get angry because they are hurt, frustrated, scared, sick, or anxious. They may be having an "off day."

Parents must teach their child how to deal with those feelings in a positive and non-violent way.

It is not enough to tell a child what she cannot do. Parents often punish when their child displays anger. Instead, a child needs to know how to handle her angry feelings without aggressive behavior. Discipline teaches; it shows her what she should do.

Parents find it hard to deal with an angry child. They often get angry when their child gets angry. Angry people lose their control. When a parent and child both become angry, no one is in control. Parents should never respond to an angry child with anger.

What can you do when your child gets angry? You can teach positive skills to use.

- Stay calm. Your child is watching you. Act as you want your child to act. You will teach your child to do the same.
- Ignore bad behavior if possible. Children can use tantrums and angry outbursts as a play for attention. However, step in if your child could hurt himself or others.
- Praise good behavior often. Children seek their parent's attention. If you give attention for positive behavior, a child will be more likely to display that behavior in order to get your attention.

- Be empathetic. Help your child figure out why she is angry.
 - Show your child how to cope with the situation without getting angry.
 - Give your child words that express how he feels. For example, "When you take my toy from me, I feel mad."
 - Stay close to your child. Sometimes, this calms a child.
- Give your child a hug. Hugs and gentle touching can help a young child regain control.
- Create a diversion. If a child is ready to throw a toy at someone, ask to look at the toy. Talk about how the toy works. Play with the toy.
- Use physical restraint if necessary. Children who are really out of control may need someone to gently—but firmly—hold them. You may need to take them out of a room. This must always be done in a calm and loving way.
- Take control of the situation. Set limits. Have a rule, "Treat others and their things with respect."

As a parent, your goal is to teach your child self-respect and respect for others. It takes years of loving, careful discipline. *Harsh words and punishments fail to teach*. Let children know what behavior is acceptable to others.

Make your home a place where your child can express his feelings and anger without making you angry. Your calm and loving actions will model and teach.

Call the Parent Help Line. We listen. We can find you help. 1-217-544-5808 or 1-888-727-5889 from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. , 7 days a week.