

INTRODUCTION

My brother said I hit him,
but I didn't.
My father growled at me.
I got mad at my Dad.
When I get angry it's like
I've got a volcano in my tummy.

—A story by L, aged 9.

Children often have problems with anger. Teachers often have problems with anger. Parents often have problems with anger. Why? Because we're afraid of anger. It may mean that someone is out of our control. It may mean that someone won't like us. It may mean that someone acts violently.

This book is about living successfully, healthily, happily, nonviolently, with motivation, without fear and with good relationships.

Put aside your fear and have some fun. This book gives activities, stories, articles, games and learning for all. It is designed for schools and community groups. Parents can easily adapt the lessons for home use. We invite you to use the activities for your children, build them into a program – and enjoy anger!

Specifically, we aim to help children:

- To be aware of when they become angry in the early stages so that they have some choices about what they do with the feeling.
- To distinguish between emotions and behavior.
- To find whether they really need to be angry.
- To learn how to take Time Out and keep safe.
- To learn alternatives to physical and verbal violence and express themselves positively and assertively.
- To take advantage of anger as a motivator for change.
- To identify recycled or dirty anger and personal triggers.
- To discover the ways they have learned to express anger and to choose new ones.
- To learn how to handle other people's anger.
- To develop their self esteem.
- To learn how to deal with authority.

We hope all who use this book will enjoy their anger and benefit from it.

KEY CONCEPTS

- Anger is an emotion.
- Anger is good, it's healthy, it's normal.
- We need anger to protect and motivate ourselves.
- Bottled up anger can become explosive, depressive and bad for health.
- Violence or abuse is behavior. It can be learned and unlearned. It is not OK.
- Violence has many forms—verbal, ethnic/racial, domestic, institutional.
- Power or control tactics which frighten people are abuse.
- Abuse can be physical, verbal, sexual, emotional or to property.
- We are all responsible for stopping violence and abuse.
- We need to know what we want and how to ask for it.
- Other people's anger is their problem.
- Letting others solve their problems is healthy.
- Good self esteem means we have less need of anger.
- Time Out is for everyone's safety. It stops abuse but doesn't solve the initial problem.
- Safe expression of anger is healthy.
- Stating what makes us angry is healthy.
- We need to learn the words to express our anger in a constructive way.
- Learning what triggers our anger makes it easier to control.
- Owning our feelings is healthy and reduces conflict.
- Behind anger there are feelings of hurt or fear or powerlessness.
- We need to know the words to express anger.
- We don't always get what we want.
- Good listening helps dissipate anger and increase self esteem.
- Children learn how to behave from adult models. They learn more from what adults *do* than what they say.
- Labelling people is not OK.
- Children have rights.
- There should be consequences for abuse.
- Other people's abuse doesn't have to be accepted.
- Parents and teachers have extra power to use justly and responsibly.
- Adults and children are fearful of anger because of negative past experiences. It does not have to be so.
- Anger rules keep everyone safe.

THE ANGER RULES

The Anger Rules

It's OK to feel angry *BUT*

- Don't hurt others
- Don't hurt yourself
- Don't hurt property

—*DO* talk about it.

Anger is OK.

Parents too feel angry. Every time we express our own anger positively we give our children a lesson in anger management. As parents, we can help our children by learning to understand our own feelings better.

You might ask yourself some of the following questions:

- How do I react when I get angry?
- How did my parents react when they got angry?
- What happened at my school when someone was angry?
- What did my teachers do when they got angry?
- What did I learn about anger as a child?
- How did I feel as a child around angry adults?
- What do I want my children to know about anger?
- How might they learn this?

Anger is a feeling and feelings just *are*.

Anger is OK.

Abuse and violence are *not* OK.

Somehow, through firm, fair limit-setting, good communication and love, we can let our children know this important message. Every time we do this we contribute to the establishment of a more peaceful society and world.

ESPECIALLY FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

Being a parent or caregiver can be satisfying and fun. It can also be challenging and frustrating. Children's anger often provides us with a challenge or a dilemma.

- How do we allow our children to express their feelings without being abusive?
- How do we cope with the variety of advice we are offered?
- If we in turn react abusively, our children learn that such behavior is OK.
- We learn what we live. So what can we do to see that all our needs are met?

Children need to learn safe limits to their behavior for their own security and for the safety of others. They also need to know that their feelings are understood.

When this happens a child feels validated and is helped to develop a healthy sense of self.

When setting limits we can use the 'I' statement format on pages 45 and 46.

I feel

When (something happens).....

Because

I want/would like

Or we can be very direct (especially effective for little people).

"We don't hit. Hitting hurts."

"I won't let you hit me. Hitting hurts."

"We don't bite. Biting hurts."

We may need to remove children from the person they are hurting or, if it is us, hold their hands. Eye contact is very effective, but don't force it.

To let children know we have understood their feelings we can offer one of the following:

"It sounds like you're angry."

"Boy, you look furious!"

If we are wrong, our children should have an opportunity to say so.

This kind of communication models for our children a way of coping with their own feelings and provides a vocabulary for doing so. Little children soon learn that what they are feeling has a name. They can use that name to tell people how they feel without acting it out. It also gives children a chance to tell you what their problems are. You might give them a further opportunity by adding:

"And then?" or "That must be hard" or "Tell me some more" or "Do you want to tell me about it?"

Like adults, children do not think too well when they are fired up with anger. They don't listen too well either. It might be better to say: *"We'll talk about this when you are feeling calmer."*

When that happens you might say: *"I want to talk to you about something important. Where shall we go to talk?"*

Then you can use an 'I' statement to express your feelings about the problem and invite your child to suggest a solution.

By the time we reach adulthood most of us have developed methods to stop ourselves going 'over the top' with anger. Children need help to learn this. They may need someone there to say 'Stop' firmly, or provide the calmness they don't have at that point. In time they will make that control part of their inner wisdom. Until they do they will need yours.

This is particularly true of pre-schoolers who sometimes throw tantrums. Tantrums come about for many reasons, but toddlers are not reasonable when they are having a tantrum. Retaliation just makes them worse. They need an adult to be there to keep them safe and to hold them when it is all over.

Children can be very frightened by the force of their own anger. Parents need a safe way of expressing their own anger about the situation and they need support and someone to talk to – a friend, a parent, a family member, etc. who will support them.

We can often prevent tantrums from happening by child-proofing the environment or organizing our day so that children don't get over-tired and get adequate attention. This is not an easy task for a busy parent. Parenting is hard work. Workers need time off.

Sometimes children are angry with one another. We can assist them at a time like this by:

- stating what we see—*"I see two children fighting over a ball."*
- not taking sides—*"I only know what I see right now."*
- separating the children if there is danger of violence—*"I see someone about to hit someone else. Someone will get hurt. You sit there and you sit there."*
- seeking to find out the reason for the fighting.

Reasons for fighting are many. Children may feel unloved just at that moment. They might feel put down. Or they might be just plain hungry, tired or bored.

Anger can be a positive motivating force:

- Anti-apartheid campaigners in South Africa were angry when they worked to get rid of apartheid.
- Charles Dickens was angry when he wrote to protest about living conditions for the poor in Victorian England.
- William Wilberforce was angry when he worked to abolish slavery.

Key Concepts:

- Adults and children are fearful of anger because of negative past experiences. It does not have to be so.
- Parents and teachers have extra power to use justly and responsibly.
- Children have rights.
- We need anger to protect and motivate ourselves.

BUILDING CHILDREN'S SELF ESTEEM

Prevention is always the best medicine, and although children's anger should not be dismissed or denied, adults can help to prevent volcano-like explosions of anger by nurturing self esteem in the children they live and work with. With healthy self esteem, children will be more able to handle anger in positive and constructive ways. Here are some suggestions.

1. Children need to be acknowledged for what they are:

You can do this by what you say:

- *You're a neat kid.*
- *I like you.*
- *I'm glad you're my son/daughter.*
- *I'm pleased you're in my class.*
- *I'm glad to see you're back at school.*
- *Come and tell me about ...*
- *Come and sit beside me for a while.*
- *How are you?*

And do:

- Make sure they get a turn.
- Help them individually for a moment.
- Pat their shoulder as you pass.
- A smile.
- Meet their eyes.
- Remember their name.
- Ask about something they previously told you

2. Children need to be acknowledged for what they do:

- *I like the way you finish a job.*
- *You draw dogs really well.*
- *That letter 'f' is the best letter on the page.*

3. We need a lot of praise before we can take in criticism without damaging our self esteem. Use the 5:1 rule. One piece of criticism to five pieces of praise or acknowledgment.

4. Don't use generalizations, they are rarely true, e.g. *"You never get to school on time,"* or *"Your work is always messy."*

5. No name calling. Remember labels are sticky, even the seemingly good ones can be harmful. *"You're a good girl!"* – a child can infer this means *"I'm only OK when I behave like a little angel."*

6. No put-downs.

7. Don't put unrealistic expectations on children. Get to know the capabilities of children at each stage of development, e.g. adults often say to a child, *"How would you feel if ...?"* Little children don't know, and—it is hard to catch a ball with one hand when you're six!

8. Don't compare one child with another.

9. Criticize the behavior not the child. *"I didn't like what you did,"* instead of *"You're a naughty boy."* The latter puts down the whole child and doesn't leave room for hope. The first means—if I change my behavior things will be better for me.
10. Give children a chance to learn. Behavior doesn't change overnight. Children are in the process of becoming, as we all are.
11. Put yourself on the child's side. *"We've got a problem here. What can we do?"* This gives the child a stake in what's going on.
12. When children feel threatened or frightened they may react with anger. Here are some things children often feel fearful of:
 - I might fail.*
 - I might not be good enough.*
 - I might not be safe.*
 - I might not be loved.*
 - I might be powerless.*
 - I might not be wanted.*
 - I might not be liked by other children.*
 - I might be hungry.*
 - I might not belong (to family, culture, peer group).*
 - I might be shown up/embarrassed/shamed.*
 - I might not understand.*
 - I might not know the rules.*
 - I might get hurt.*
 - I might not know what you want of me.*
 - I might lose something important.*
 - I might have something important taken away.*

Key Concepts:

- Good self esteem means we have less need for anger.
- Labelling people is not OK.

WHAT CAN ADULTS DO WHEN A CHILD IS ANGRY?

1. Don't retaliate. (Joining in the child's anger will wind her/him up even more. It will also teach her/him poor ways of resolving conflict.)
2. Model the behavior you want a child to learn. If you hit, s/he learns to hit. If you get out of control, s/he may learn to fear her/his own anger (or teachers, or school, or men).
3. Let her/him know you understand how s/he's feeling. *"I can see how angry you are,"* or *"It seems like you're really mad about that."*
4. Leave explaining another point of view until the anger has been expressed and acknowledged.
5. Ask what s/he would like to do to improve things.
6. Acknowledge what s/he says. Reaffirm the feelings and then help look at the options, e.g. *"What might happen if you did that?"*
7. Don't force children into apologizing when they don't feel sorry. You may be forcing them to bury their anger and be teaching them to be hypocritical.

If two children are angry with each other:

1. Reflect what you see happening. *"I see two children fighting over a ball."*
2. Separate the children if need be for safety's sake. Say, *"Someone might get hurt."*
3. Give them both a way of venting their anger. *"When you've got your anger out, we'll talk about it. You run to the front fence, you run to the back fence and come back to me."*
4. Find out what they each need. *"It looks like you need something to play with."*
5. Find out what they are afraid of. *"Are you worried you won't get a turn if you give him the ball?"*
6. Ask for some solutions.

You can give a child a sheet of paper and say, *"It seems that you're furious. Draw me a picture and show me how angry you are."* Acknowledge the picture. *"I can see you're really mad. What do you want to do with this picture? How are you feeling right now? What might you do the next time you feel as angry as that?"*

If a child has hurt another. Look the offender in the eye and say firmly, *"We don't hit. It hurts."* Attend to the victim and reflect their feelings. *"You were kicked on the leg. I bet that hurts. Draw me a picture and show me how you feel."*

Key Concepts:

- Children learn how to behave from adult models.
- Children learn more from what adults do than what they say.
- Good listening helps to dissipate anger and increase a child's self esteem.

A ONE-TO-ONE ANGER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Each one-to-one session (once a week) needs to include a few minutes' talk:

- *Did you feel angry today?*
- *What did you feel like yesterday when ...?*
- *When did you feel angry at home this week?*
- *How angry did you feel?*
- *What happened?*
- *What did you do?*
- *Was that a good idea?*
- *Did you stick to the anger rules?*
- *What did ... do? (other person)*
- *Was that a good idea?*
- *Did s/he stick to the anger rules?*
- *What are the anger rules?*
- *What could you do to handle this better?*
- *This week I'm going to ...*
- *Congratulate yourself for doing ... well.*

The Anger Rules

It's OK to feel angry *BUT*

- Don't hurt others
- Don't hurt yourself
- Don't hurt property

—*DO* talk about it.

- Make a sign for the child to scribble over with colored crayons and display at home.
- Talk about property and what that might include—at home, at school, in the street.
- Talk about how s/he might hurt her/himself.
- Talk about how others might hurt him/her.
- Communication with the family/school is important.

A notebook can go backwards and forwards between home and school and for each day we can make comments, e.g.:

Ripeka was friendly to ... today.

Ripeka remembered to stamp her foot when she was angry.

Stephen didn't hurt anyone today.

Stephen hit/kicked ... today, but he learned that ...

Stickers or stars can go in the notebook. At first this may need to be done two, or even three times a day, but then cut down. Teachers can take this notebook to another teacher or the principal for further praise, comment, or a stamp or sticker.

When the child slips up:

1. Remove him/her from the situation if possible.
2. Allow expression of anger first – *“Punch this cushion (or push my hands or push the wall or tear this paper) and show me how angry you feel.”*
3. Reflect how s/he’s feeling. *“I can see you feel angry ... How do you feel now? ... Still angry? ... Punch the cushion some more ... How do you feel now?”*
4. *“Did you stick to the anger rules? What did you do right? What did you do wrong?”*
5. Don’t **make** her/him say s/he’s sorry.
6. How can the child help to make things better for ...? Do a job for them. Fetch them a drink of water. Share a story book with someone. Pick up some paper so that the room is clean for them. Help with the washing-up. Draw a picture for them. Make them a card. Don’t do it (violent behavior) again.

One-to-one activities:

1. Paint and brushes and sheet of paper
“Show me how angry you felt when ... Here’s a brush, paper and some paints.”
2. Old newspapers
“When I feel angry I sometimes feel like screwing up newspaper. Use this old newspaper and show me how angry you felt when ...”
3. Crayons and paper (newspaper)
“When I feel angry I sometimes feel like scribbling like this.” Demonstrate. *“Show me how angry you felt when ...”*
4. Playdough or plasticine
Get the child to talk about when s/he felt angry at someone (home or school). Get her/him to make the figures with plasticine. You may need to help, e.g. *“Here’s how to make a ball for the head, roll a long piece for the legs”* etc. *“Then what do you want to do with these people?”* *“It’s not OK to punch, hit or kick the real people.”* *“Why not?”* Repeat anger rules. *“But you can squash these little figures.”*
5. Puppets
“This is Sarah.”
(name of the child).
“This is Uncle Max.”
or *“This is Jo and this is Mom.*
What are they saying to each other? Show me what they are doing. Show me what they are saying.” Alternative: make cardboard and bamboo stick puppets of the characters.

Note: Stress no punishment at home/school.

TROUBLESHOOTING

If you are having problems with anger in your home or class you may like to use these suggestions, but ask yourself these questions first:

- What outlets do children in your room/home have to express their anger?
- Is it OK for children to get angry in your home/class?
- Are you frightened of anger?
- Do you have different values for boys and girls when they express anger?
- Have you negotiated a process for expressing anger with the children in your care? This process will take into account:
 - the children’s rights to express their feelings
 - your need to get on with your job
 - your right to express your feelings
 - people’s fear of anger
 - respect for others and their property.
- What rights and opportunities do you have to express your anger in your relationships?

Having thought through these issues, the following may be helpful in specific situations.

What to do if:

some useful pages

1. You find graffiti on the walls 26, 27, 40, 42, 76
2. Children swear in your presence 24, 51, 70
3. You feel like hitting someone 27, 32, 45
4. Vandalism is discovered in the school 26, 27
5. A temper tantrum occurs in your presence 12, 24, 43
6. A child sulks and doesn’t want to participate 12, 22
7. A child messes up another’s activity or work 8, 12, 43
8. There is name calling in your presence 8, 10, 54
9. A child appears withdrawn 26, 10, 22
10. You have a very ‘nice’ child who always seeks approval 22, 26, 42
11. A child teases 20, 26, 62
12. A child hurts other children 8, 20, 26
13. You have a child who is a ‘poor sport’ 42, 43, 70, 72
14. A child tells tales 8, 45

ESPECIALLY FOR TEACHERS

This resource can be used by individual teachers or school staffs to teach anger management skills. It will be used most effectively if the school establishes policy about anger—what is an appropriate expression of anger; how teachers will validate anger; how teachers will handle disputes among children, between adult and child and between staff members; how teachers will encourage children to create change. Parents will need to be informed about the school policy and the anger management program planned for students. The staff may then select age appropriate activities for each class.

It is our wish that this resource be used as fully as possible. To this end, we have aimed to make it as teacher-friendly as possible. Each lesson is clearly explained and worksheets are included that may be photocopied for use with your class.

This resource can be used to run a unit on anger management or it can be used a lesson at a time as the need arises—as a ‘first aid’ resource when anger-related problems occur.

We have indicated age levels for the exercises. These age levels are suggestions only. Please use your judgement when deciding if an activity is suitable for particular students.

We suggest that teachers read the book right through and do some of the exercises themselves before using the book with children.

IMPORTANT NOTE

Because this resource deals with anger, violence and abuse, it is possible that a child may disclose personal abuse during a lesson. Children who are frequently angry, or especially quiet, may be experiencing physical or sexual abuse. It is important that we, as caregivers, hear and pay attention to deeper reasons for their behavior. Don't ask leading questions (such as, "Is someone ...?" or "are you being ...?") Instead, provide opportunity for the child to talk. "*I notice you have been very quiet lately. Would you like to tell me about it / draw a picture about it? I'm willing to listen and help you*" or "*Show me what you are angry about.*" If a child discloses abuse be sure to say you are glad s/he told you. A child may not disclose abuse for a while but the memory of your care and concern will help when s/he does seek help. You should be prepared for this possibility and be clear about your legal responsibility should it occur. We suggest you consult your school administrator and school counsellor before you begin the unit, to plan a process that should be followed.

CURRICULUM INTEGRATION

This resource is specifically for the "Healthy Living" or Social Studies school curriculum. The key concepts can be used as the basis for learning objectives in teachers' lesson plans for these subject areas. However, an integrated anger management unit could be planned using the chart on the following page to select activities in different curricular areas. Learning objectives could then be written to satisfy the Language Arts or Fine Arts curricula as well.

CURRICULUM INTEGRATION

LESSON	Speaking/Listening	Reading	Spelling	Writing	Drama	Art
1 A Volcano In My Tummy (6 yrs. +)	√					√
2 Bottling Anger (9 yrs. +)	√			√		
3 Are You A Volcano? (6 yrs. +)	√			√		
4 The Anger Rules (6 yrs. +)	√					√
5 Dirty Anger/Clean Anger (6 yrs. +)	√			√		
6 Craig's Angry Day (7 yrs. +)	√	√				
7 The Inside Story (7 yrs. +)	√	√				√
8 Technoparent (8 yrs. +)	√	√		√		
9 Time Out (7 yrs. +)	√					
10 Safe Ways of Getting Angry (8 yrs. +)	√			√		
11 Creative Anger (6 yrs. +)						√
12 Tension Scale (6 yrs. +)	√			√		
13 Magic (7 yrs. +)				√	√	
14 Role Playing (8 yrs. +)					√	
15 The Four Levels of Muscle (8 yrs. +)	√			√		
16 Shields (6 yrs. +)	√					√
17 Kalmic and the Angry Alien (8 yrs. +)	√	√		√		
18 Cold Water Words (6 yrs. +)	√			√		
19 Grudge Jar (7 yrs. +)				√		
20 Anger Vocabulary (6 yrs. +)			√			
21 Swearing (6 yrs. +)	√	√		√		
22 Problem Solving (6 yrs. +)	√					√
23 Aggroscenario (9 yrs. +)	√			√		√
24 Anger in the World (10 yrs. +)	√	√				√
25 We Can Make a Difference (10 yrs. +)	√			√		√