

HELPING CHILDREN WITH ANGER

A TOOL CHEST FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN AGES 4-10

1. **The first step** is always a set of rules posted on the wall: no assault, no slander, no vandalism or for younger offenders: no hitting, no name calling and no breaking things. These rules do not help a child with anger but they help keep others safe. RULES GET PEOPLE IN JAIL NOT OUT. *Keeping out of jail is a matter of self control* and requires adult help, most often lots of it.
2. **LISTEN to the child.** Repeat back to him what he says so he knows you have heard him. Once the child feels heard he will be much more willing to listen. The cardinal rule for all of us is TALK, DONT HIT. *How will they learn to talk if no one listens?*
3. **Now the child is ready for problem solving.** Share with them what you do when YOU get angry. This will put you both on the same team, and prevent anger from ruining the parent child relationship. A good follow up is to give the child a list of ten names...people you trust. His assignment is to find out what those people do when they get angry and report back to you. How are children to learn wisdom if they do not ask questions of the wise. It is also a great way to *get adults involved!!!!*
4. **Put the problem of anger in the child's hands.** Tape recorders can be super tools especially for ADHD children. Talking to the tape recorder can help a child contain and postpone his anger until a trusted person is available. Many children cannot do this unless they truly believe someone will listen... sometime. A tape recorder can help a child get past the heat of the moment. A notebook is an acceptable alternative IF the child can *trust* that someone will read it.
5. **Almost any library in the country** will have 20 or more age appropriate books on almost any subject. Give your child's age and ask for a search on the word anger. Preparing when he is not angry can be the one thing that keeps him balanced when he is. One of the best rules for anger management is ...be prepared.
6. **If possible REVISIT** the scene of angry outbursts. If inanimate objects have been damaged enforce some sort of repairs or reparations. If people have been hurt use questions to help the child see and understand the pain he has brought the other. "Doesn't he look sad? Did you ever feel like that. Look real close at the tears and try to imagine how he feels. What could you do to make him feel better." The right questions if asked patiently and kindly will lead most children to REGRET AND REPENTANCE, two of the great foundations of self control.

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7. **Children who PRAY**, who take their personal faith seriously are much less likely to act out their anger. The research is very clear. Appealing to a higher power for help with emotions can be a very real help with behavior. Separation of church and state does not mean abandonment of either.
8. **Teach children** to tense every muscle in their body as hard as they can for as long as they can. Your body CAN'T stay tense and when it relaxes it will often take your mind with it. This is a physical solution to an emotional problem, a truly great first step in problem solving so very much better than counting to ten. Try it and see for yourself.
9. **Be alert** for signs that a child is angry for more than a day or two or any time he is angry for no reason. This child may need counseling. He or she also needs you to turn OFF the television. All children are affected by violent programming but it is the angry child who acts out what he sees. Allowing an angry child to look at violent scenes is like pouring fire on gasoline. Much as our three major television are at fault it is the uninvolved parent who must bear the blame. Be involved!! Keep the violence out of your living room.
10. **One form of self control** is LOOKING UP. The fight-flight adrenaline cycle is almost completely severed by looking up. It is the only direction we can look without being stressed, challenged or threatened by SOMETHING. It is the instant solution even a child can use to escape from almost any form of anger: turning his attention to something else. HELP YOUR CHILD LEARN TO REFOCUS. This might mean redirection by tickling or making a face, it might mean looking him in the eyes and saying: "Want to go for a walk?" Without our help children can get stuck on the negative and never learn what it means to turn their eyes and their attention elsewhere.
11. **The one thing** statistics show to be most effective: entertain your children's friends in your home. If we are not involved in the social lives of our children how can we hope to help them keep anger out of relationships. Two nights a month is the minimum. Mark friends nights on your calendar and keep them as long as your children live in your home. A child's only real hope in dealing with anger is adult involvement. Be involved!!!

Try posting this list on the fridge and for more great helps visit our website www.ddiggs.ws. Avoid the punching the pillow type help for anger. Most modern research shows it makes the anger worse not better.