



Helping your child with anger

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What parenting challenges do you experience?



What is anger?

Anger is an emotion that an individual experiences when s/he feels disconnected, hurt, wronged by others. An individual can also experience a sense of injustice/ lack of fairness about a particular situation.

Anger is not good or bad – its a signal to let your child know that something is upsetting them.

Anger is a strong emotion, a secondary emotion that usually conceals other primary emotions such as hurt, sadness, embarrassment and/or shame.

Why do we lose
CONTROL
of our
emotions?



When to address misbehaviour- dan seigal

Misbehavior often happens because a child isn't able to regulate his big feelings. And when his emotions are dysregulated, his upstairs brain has gone off-line. It's temporarily out of order, meaning he's not able to accomplish the tasks his upstairs brain is responsible for: making good decisions, thinking about others, considering consequences, balancing his emotions and body, and being a receptive learner. So yes, we do recommend that you address a behavioral issue fairly soon when possible, but only when your child is in a calm and receptive state of mind—even if you need to wait. Even children as young as three can remember what happened in recent history, including the day before. You can begin that conversation by saying, "I'd like to talk about what happened yesterday at bedtime. That didn't go so well, did it?" Waiting for the right time is essential when it comes to teaching effectively. (p.168)

Remember that it's OK to be angry

We need to help our kids understand and expect that they will experience a variety of feelings as they go through life, including anger. It's normal to feel angry at times. It's what you do with those feelings that matter.

Three questions parenting framework- dan seigal

1. Why did my child act this way? In our anger, our answer might be “Because he’s a spoiled brat” or “Because he’s trying to push my buttons!” But when we approach with curiosity instead of assumptions, looking deeper at what’s going on behind a particular misbehavior, we can often understand that our child was trying to express or attempt something but simply didn’t handle it appropriately. If we understand this, we ourselves can respond more effectively—and compassionately.

2. What lesson do I want to teach in this moment? Again, the goal of discipline isn’t to give a consequence. We want to teach a lesson— whether it’s about self-control, the importance of sharing, acting responsibly, or anything else.



Three questions parenting framework-dan seigal

3. How can I best teach this lesson? Considering a child's age and developmental stage, along with the context of the situation, how can we most effectively communicate what we want to get across? Too often, we respond to misbehavior as if consequences were the goal of discipline. Sometimes natural consequences result from a child's decision, and the lesson is taught without our needing to do much. But there are usually more effective and loving ways to help our kids understand what we're trying to communicate than to immediately hand out one-size-fits-all consequences.

By asking ourselves these three questions—why, what, and how— when our children do something we don't like, we can more easily shift out of autopilot mode. That means we'll be much more likely to respond in a way that's effective in stopping the behavior in the short term while also teaching bigger, long-lasting life lessons and skills that build character and prepare kids for making good decisions in the future. (p.26-27)

Be Preventative

One of the best things you can do is work on teaching coping skills kids can use before things escalate to epic proportions. The trick is practicing when they are in a calm and relaxed mood, not in the moment when they are angry.

IDENTIFY TRIGGERS

Start by talking about what's making them angry. Help them identify those triggers, so you both know for the next time. Is it a particular school subject that makes them frustrated? Perhaps being hungry or thirsty? Are there specific noises or locations that are frustrating?

- EXPLORE WHAT OTHER EMOTIONS THEY MAY BE FEELING
- When kids are angry, there are usually other feelings that they are experiencing too. But anger is easy to see and often hides different feelings that lie below the surface. It's sometimes referred to as the "Anger Iceberg." It takes a bit of time to figure it out, but when your child is in a calm place, talk about what other feelings may be hiding underneath their anger.

Anger Ice

In some families, anger is seen as more acceptable than other emotions. A person might express anger in order to mask emotions that cause them to feel vulnerable, such as hurt or shame.

Anger triggers are people, places, situations, and things that set off anger. Your triggers can provide clues about the emotions behind your anger.

Anger is an emotion that tends to be easy to see. However, anger is often just the tip of the iceberg. Other emotions may be hidden beneath the surface.

Anger may be fueled by different emotions at different times, or by a combination of emotions. Sometimes, however, anger is just anger.

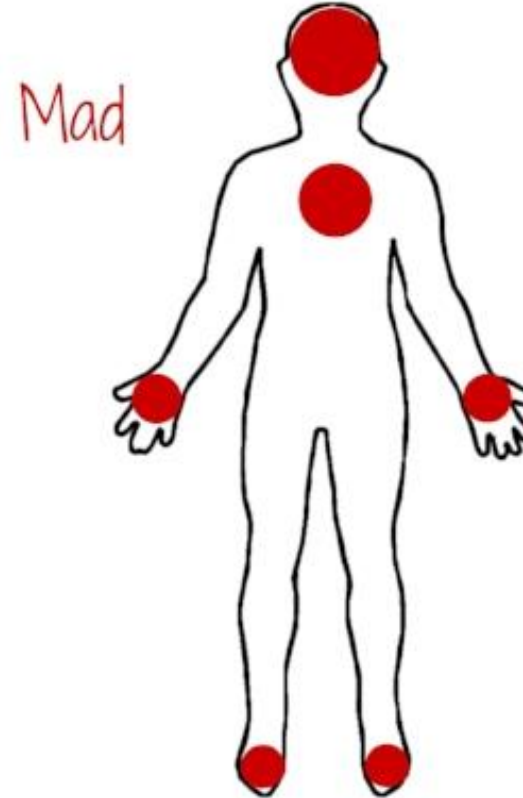
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Anger Iceberg

therapy handout

- HELP KIDS IDENTIFY WHERE THEY FEEL ANGRY IN THEIR BODY
- Sometimes, kids don't know they're angry until after the explosion has happened. Help them identify the signs their body gives them that they are feeling angry. Over time, they'll start to recognize that feeling and ideally use a coping skill before things get too overwhelming.

Where do I feel
things in my body?



Developing coping skills



- Identify one coping skill your child would like to try. Take a few minutes during the week and have them practice a coping skill they may be able to use next time. For example, if they are going to try using shapes for deep breathing, have them practice before, so they know how it feels. The idea is to have them practice, so they know what it feels like to do it when they are calm.
- Using coping skills to deal with big feelings will not go perfectly every time. Learning to manage anger is a work in progress. Little by little, with practice and time, kids will get better at it. Encourage them when they make safe and healthy choices. When they don't, continue to work with them to figure out better steps they can take the next time.

When I feel upset, sad, or unfocused at school I can:

BREATHE. As I zoom my attention to my breathing, I will take extra long out-breaths.



Squeeze a stress ball or use another teacher-approved fidget.



Doodle, draw, or color.



Invent a secret hand signal with my teacher that communicates I need help.



Write down my thoughts or questions if my teacher can't address them right away.



Imagine a peaceful and calming place.



Ask permission to take a short walk down the hallway or up & down the stairs. And then return.



Stretch.



Think of or write a list of 3 positive things in my life.



Read in a quiet spot.



Visualize a person who supports me and cheers me on.



Use a break card to let my teacher know I need a break and then use a timer to remind me when to return.



Drink water.



Push against the wall as hard as I can and then relax my body.



Listen to calming music with headphones.



Move away from the distraction or person who is bothering me.



Ask to deliver books to the library or another class.



Volunteer to help clean or organize the classroom.



Remind myself it's ok to make a mistake.



Take a 3-5 minute break in the designated classroom peace corner.



Ask my teacher for help if I feel upset or overwhelmed.



Write a letter.



Zoom in on my senses: noticing 5 things I see, 4 things I feel, 3 things I hear, 2 things I smell & 1 thing I taste.



Tell myself a positive affirmation or mantra.



COPING TOOLS: What Helps Me

- Read A Book or Magazine 
- Hug or Climb a Tree 
- Journal or Write a Letter 
- Use Kind & Compassionate Self-Talk 
- Make a Collage or Scrapbook 
- Rest, Nap or Take a Break 
- Go on a Hike, Walk or Run 
- Take Good Care of the Earth 
- Drink Water 
- Play a Board Game 
- Do Something Kind 
- Make and Play with Slime 
- Discover Treasures in Nature 
- Take a Shower or Bath 
- Exercise 
- Drink a Warm Cup of Tea 
- Forgive, Let Go, Move On 
- Practice Yoga 
- Garden or Do Yardwork 
- Jump on a Trampoline 
- Cuddle or Play with Your Pet 
- Ride a Bike or Skateboard 
- Create Origami 
- Cook or Bake 
- Ask for Help 
- Talk to Someone You Trust 
- Weave, Knit or Crochet 
- Build Something 
- Get a Hug 
- Visualize a Peaceful Place 
- Stretch 
- Make Art 
- Use Positive Affirmations 
- Take Slow, Mindful Breaths 
- Clean, Declutter or Organize 
- Use Aromatherapy 
- Cry 
- Try or Learn Something New 
- Listen to Music 
- Use a Stress Ball or Other Fidget 
- Get Plenty of Sleep 
- Kick, Bounce or Throw a Ball 

USE A FEELINGS THERMOMETER

- Using a feelings thermometer can help a child make the connection between their feelings and their coping skills.
- Ask what it looks like when they are just a little angry, at the bottom of the thermometer. Do they sigh loudly, growl, etc.?

Then move on to the middle section of the thermometer. If they are medium-sized angry, what does that look like? Does their voice get louder? Do they stomp their feet, etc.?

Finally, talk about what it looks like when they are experiencing big anger at the top of the thermometer. What does that look like? Is it yelling, throwing things, etc.?

My ANGER Thermometer

What I look like

- Yelling
- Throwing things

- Loud voice
- Stomping foot

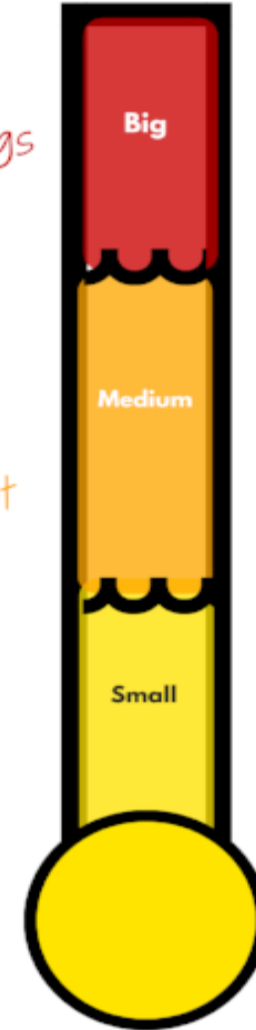
- Sigh loudly
- Growl

What I can do

- Take a break
- Shred paper

- Exercise
- Take deep breaths

- Get a drink of water
- Squeeze play dough




More strategies

Keep talking to a minimum

When a child is in fight, flight or freeze mode, they can't process information as well as when their body is in rest and digest mode. This is not a teachable moment, and they can't take in a lecture at this point. Your goal is to get them through this rough moment. It's best to keep talking to a minimum. When you do speak, make sure you use a neutral, calm, and quiet tone. Keep it short and repeat the same phrase. Repeating it is helpful because they aren't processing information and words as they usually would. Repetition makes it more likely that they'll hear what you are saying.

Phrases that you can say at that moment: "I'm here for you." "I love you." "I want to help you." "Let me know when you're ready." "You are mad; I get it."

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- Get them to a calm, safe spot
 - When some kids get big feelings, they destroy items around them - rip books, throw toys, etc. If that's the case for your child, it may be helpful for you to set up a safe spot where kids can go when they are angry. In that space, take everything out that can be destroyed or thrown that might injure someone or damage property. If you have more than one floor, set up a safe spot on each level of your home.
 - If you aren't in the safe spot when your child is dealing with big feelings, move harmful objects out of the way and try to get them to that safe place.

Too often we forget that discipline really means to teach, not to punish. A disciple is a student, not a recipient of behavioural consequences.

Daniel J. Siegel

CHILDREN ARE NOT A PROBLEM, THEIR BEHAVIOURS ARE SOLUTIONS TO A PROBLEM."

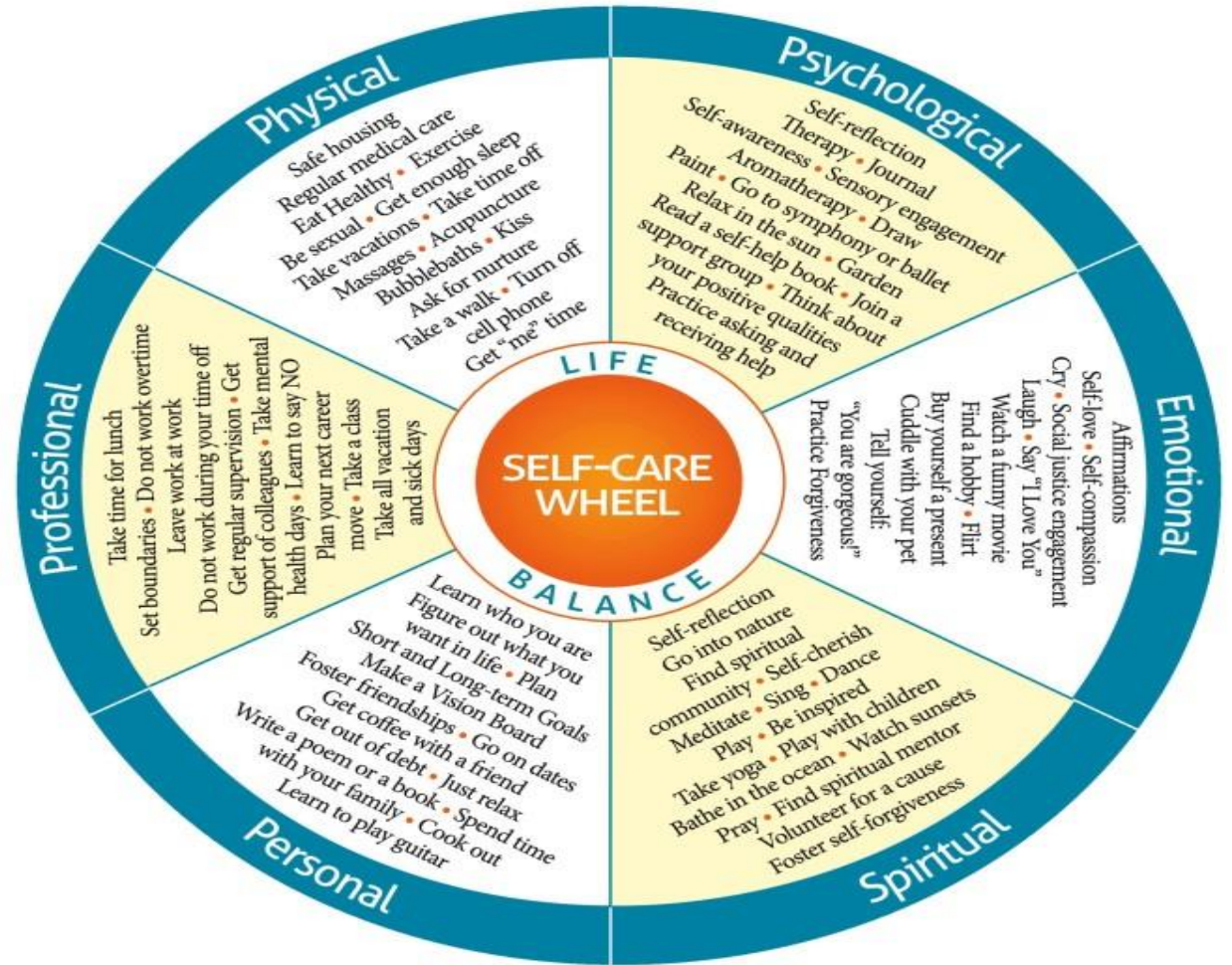
- So - what problems do kids have? Most of the time, kids are "acting out" to get their needs met.
- What needs? Their needs for attention and connection (which fulfils their desire for a sense of belonging) and their need for power over their own life (which fulfils their desire to be treated as a social equal*.)
- According to Adlerian psychology, these desires are not a bad thing, but essential and healthy needs that ALL people have in order to feel loved, secure, and valuable.
- When kids are young, they naturally search for these needs to be met by their most important caregivers - their parents.
- SO - basically the idea is that when your child is "acting out" - you look for the underlying need that is not being met (attention or power most of the time) - and you fulfill that need.
- *the term "social equals" as meaning that kids deserve to be treated respectfully and with dignity - not that the kids should have equal say in the running of the family, or that they should be equally in charge. Rather that their opinions, thoughts and feelings are respected at all times.

Self care is so important. When you take time to replenish your spirit, it allows you to serve others from the overflow. You cannot serve from an empty vessel.

- Eleanor Brown

JILL CONYERS

SELF-CARE WHEEL



This Self-Care Wheel was inspired by and adapted from "Self-Care Assessment Worksheet" from *Transforming the Pain: A Workbook on Vicarious Traumatization* by Saakvitne, Pearlman & Staff of TSI/CAAP (Norton, 1996). Created by Olga Phoenix Project: Healing for Social Change (2013).

Dedicated to all trauma professionals worldwide.

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