

MANAGING ANGER

Everyone feels angry at different times. It's a common reaction to stress, feeling frustrated, tired or anxious, as well as being upset or disappointed. Anger is an emotion that can be helpful or harmful. It is how we react to it and our actions that make the difference.

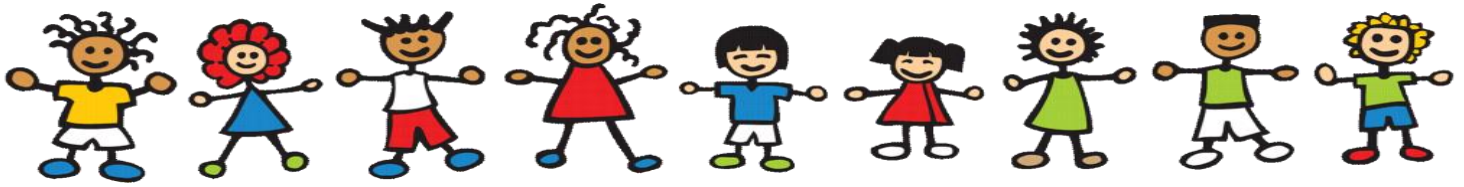
As adults, we can help children understand their anger, and help them use strategies to cope better.

When we watch children/ adolescents in different situations, we can see their strengths and times when they are able to manage. There will be times when they need more support. They may not understand why they are feeling angry, or have the words to talk about their feelings. They may not have ideas of what they can do, so that they can manage their feelings and behaviour.

Some ways that can help calm down angry/ upset feelings-

- Helping the child to calm, by giving comfort or space. This will help them to listen and to think sensibly. Let them know you are there to help, by being there, through touch, or telling them.
- Name feelings for younger children- 'You sound angry' or 'You look upset', and using feeling words so they can learn to identify and say them.
- Give them time to work things out rather than stepping in too quickly.
- Make time talk about ways to ask for help, when to take a break and choices they can make.
- Teach relaxation strategies-
 - deep breathing- practice breathing in and out slowly
 - visualising- seeing in their imagination a happy time, a safe place
 - choosing a calming activity to distract and settle





How to talk through children's angry feelings

The following example shows some possible ways a parent or carer might talk with Dylan, who has come home from school grouchy. He is rough with his younger brother and gets angry when he discovers that a toy is missing. Then he gets angry when his mother asks him to help. Here his mother persists, gently but firmly, with getting Dylan to say what he is really angry about. She talks to him about ways he could manage his feelings and deal with the problem.

- Acknowledge anger and encourage the child to explain what it's about: "Are you sure you're not angry about something? You seemed really angry when you got into the car."
- Empathise with the feeling – but don't excuse aggressive behaviour: "So, you were upset because your friend blamed you for losing his football. You must have been really mad to treat your brother like that."
- Ask about the effects of angry behaviour – on others and on himself: "How do you think your brother felt when you yelled at him?. How did you feel after you behaved like that?"
- Teach or reinforce ways of managing angry feelings: "What could you do to cool down your angry feelings so you can think it all through?"
- Discuss ways of solving the problem that has led to angry feelings: "How can you sort it out with your friend? What could you say that would help him understand how you feel?"
- Support your child's efforts to solve the problem: "How did it go? Would you like me to help with...?"
- Notice and praise efforts to manage anger: "I like the way you kept your cool with your little brother when he took your stuff."

When children get caught up with angry feelings it can be quite difficult for them to calm down. This is because the body gets ready to fight when we are angry and can take some time to return to normal. Teaching children steps to cool down their anger can help.

Source- www.kidsmatter.edu.au

