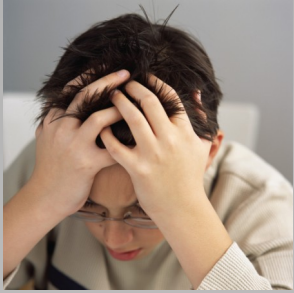




## ANGER BUSTERS FOR KIDS

### Hint: It Starts With You

Some material by Lynne M. Thompson with Focus on the Family, [www.focusonthefamily.com](http://www.focusonthefamily.com) and from Kirk Martin with Celebrate Calm, [www.celebratecalm.com](http://www.celebratecalm.com)



Your child is yelling, slamming doors and having an all-out tantrum ... but can she trust you with her anger?

Punishing the behaviors associated with anger might be a quick fix, but without instruction your child will lose out. National anger management trainer Bob Bowen warns that children who never learn proper ways to express their frustration will eventually find their own, often inappropriate, methods. "At 7 years old she may be yelling or pulling someone's hair, but by age 16 she will have developed 15 other incorrect ways to say 'I'm frustrated.' She has to find her own path because, as parents, we haven't given her the correct one."

The road to teaching proper "anger behavior" can be extremely bumpy when a parent is sucked into the heat of the moment. **As a parent, you need first to handle your own emotions.**

Kirk Martin, president of Celebrate Calm says this about control, "Realize that we cannot control our kids, nor should we want to. Our primary job as parents is to control ourselves and model proper behavior. How many of us throw our adult tantrums when something goes wrong, then expect our children to remain calm? When we are calm, we can solve problems instead of creating more of them."

Teaching discipline instead of punishing the child equips him with anger management tools that can be used the rest of his life. Here are nine things you can do to help your child learn how to express his anger positively.

#### 1. Model anger management.

"Mom is feeling very angry right now, so I'm going to take time to be alone and get some self-control." Take the time to get your anger under control before dealing with the situation. Martin says that no matter what your child does, remain calm. Screaming

or withdrawing emotionally only makes the situation worse.

#### 2. Have respect and show respect.

"We are not responsible for our children's behavior, attitudes and actions," Martin explains. "If your child is in a bad mood, so be it. Choose not to give into or join her pity party. If your child comes into the kitchen barking orders and being rude, you are not obligated to respond. Walk away calmly, go about your business and let your child know that when she's ready to talk and be polite, you'll help her." Don't get pulled into her anger by calling names or getting physical.

**3. Assume a Calm Posture.** When your child comes to you ask yourself, "Do I want to have a conversation or a confrontation?" Instead of lecturing to your child for his anger, SIT DOWN, put your feet up and relax. It is much harder to yell (and be yelled at) when you assume a calm posture.

#### 4. Give him words to express his anger.

Your child may feel so out of control himself that he doesn't know how to verbally express his feelings. Calmly say to him, "I know you are disappointed (sad, frustrated, etc.)." Some experts suggest using drawings of facial emotions to help a young child show you what he is feeling.



#### 5. Identify with his pain.

Sometimes your kid just wants to know that he is not alone in what he's feeling. Say to him, "I remember when I didn't get to go to a party..." Explain how you handled it and whether it was constructive or you could have handled it better. Tell a story of a time that you did handle disappointment (or other emotion) well.

**6. Set positive limits.** Instead of saying, "Don't you throw that doll," say, "After you put the doll on the table, we can go have a snack."

**7. Redirect energy bursts** that often come with anger. Encourage positive outlets like running, jumping, blowing into a horn or painting.

**8. Avoid power struggles** with your child. They're always lose-lose situations. If your goal is to control, you will teach her to control others. When you get pulled into her anger, you become her puppet by giving your child complete power over your emotions and actions. You are setting up a power struggle that you will always lose.

**9. Provide a cooling-off period** by reading a book together, coloring or going on a walk. Once all parties are calm, discuss what happened and make a plan for next time. This is a good time to discuss what caused the emotion, how it could have been prevented and solutions for next time. Be careful not to revive his anger again. Speak calmly, not lecturing and stay in control of your emotions.

A child of any age expects her parent to be the one in control, especially in times when she is not. Martin says that we need to ask ourselves what our goals are, "Do we want to change her current behavior or do we want to teach her to make good decisions? We can change behavior easily if that is the only goal." She becomes angry and misbehaves and we provide a consequence. This will sometimes correct the behavior. "But all it has done is coerced her into making the decision we wanted her to make. In the short term, she does what we want, but we haven't changed her heart, her internal motivation, or provided ways for her to take responsibility for her own emotions and behaviors." This is fine if you want to be responsible for her behavior for the rest of her life. Make her responsible. One way to change her internal motivation is to give her the tools we've suggested to help her first gain control of her emotions. We'll talk more on this in future issues of ParentTalk.