

PARENTING TIPS

Anger Confuses Correction

A good correction routine teaches children that they must change. Their current course of action will not work. It's unacceptable and needs adjusting. Unfortunately the clear message that the child has a problem and needs to work on it is sometimes missed because of parental anger.

A parent's harshness can confuse the learning process. Instead of thinking, "I'm here taking a break because I did something wrong," the child thinks, "I'm here taking a break because I made Mom mad."

The child's focus changes from correcting what he or she did wrong to avoiding parental anger. It's important to remember that your anger is good for identifying problems but not good for solving them. When you're tempted to respond harshly, be careful to take a moment and think about what you need to teach in the situation. It's easy to react with anger when your kids do the wrong thing but it's more helpful to move into a constructive correction routine.

For example, Dad yells, "I've had it! I called you five times and you didn't come, so I'm not taking you to the party!" The child gets a mixed message. Is missing the party the consequence for not coming when called, or is it the consequence for making Dad angry?

Children who grow up with explosive parents learn to focus more on pleasing people than on living with convictions about right and wrong. They may learn to make changes in life, but not because they're determined to do what's right. Rather, they make changes to avoid upsetting people; they become people pleasers or just plain sneaky. Kids then believe that what they did was okay as long as Mom or Dad didn't find out. As long as no one gets angry, then there's no problem.

When you make a mistake and correct in anger, it's important to come back to your child and talk about it afterward. Clarify what was wrong, why the consequence was given, and apologize for your harshness.

This parenting tip is taken from the book, Good and Angry, Exchanging Frustration for Character In You and Your Kids by Dr. Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller, RN, BSN