

PARENTING TIPS

Angry Children Need Other Choices

A good anger management plan teaches children healthy alternatives to explosive behavior. Unhealthy choices include sarcasm, dirty looks, yelling, stomping, and unkind words. But if children or adults are going to respond in healthy ways, they need to have some better ideas in mind.

We encourage parents to teach three simple choices to children: talk about it, get help, or slow down and persevere. These three choices simplify the process greatly. Of course, this is only to get kids started. After they learn these three skills they can graduate to Anger Management 201 that offers choices like forgiveness and responding with kindness or sorrow. Even adults who are struggling with anger need to have it simplified and these three choices will get you going.

Talk About It:

If another child is being irritating or hurtful, frustration can be a signal that your child needs to confront or express displeasure. If Derek doesn't like the way Tyler is playing with his Legos, he needs to say, "I don't like it when you play rough with my Legos," instead of getting all worked up about it. We teach young children exactly what words to use, "I don't like it when you do that." Kids need to learn conflict management skills. They need to be taught how to talk about it.

Get Help:

If your child gets frustrated because the blanket keeps falling off the table when she's trying to set up a tent or because the friend she's playing with won't listen to her, it may be time to get help. Often a child who is struggling with a pair of scissors will need a little help from Mom or Dad and then be able to continue with the project. Parents know that getting help is one of the solutions to frustration and so too often they jump in and relieve the frustration for the child. It's best to teach your child to ask for help. You might say, "If you need help, just ask me," and then get out of the way. Let the child learn how to deal with frustration by asking for help. Frustration can be a good teacher sometimes.

Slow Down and Persevere:

When a person is mowing a lawn and hits a thick, grown up section of grass, the best course of action is to slow down and take it a little piece at a time. In the same way, sometimes children must slow down, reduce their expectation so that they can persevere and finish the task without exploding.

Each of these three choices is a skill that needs to be developed. If your child is getting angry a lot, you may find that teaching these skills will go a long way to bring about peace in your child's heart.

For more practical ideas on anger management in children, see chapter 5 in the book, Home Improvement, The Parenting Book You Can Read to Your Kids by Dr. Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller, RN, BSN