

PARENTING TIPS

Identify the Cues of Anger

Helping children deal with anger is an important task of parenting. Many parents report that there is no time between the trigger and the response in their children. Before we can teach children anger management, we must first help them see anger coming on. James 1:19 says that we should be slow to anger. Here are some ways to help children slow down the process.

Talk about the physical indicators that anger is approaching. These cues are different for each person. You may even use yourself as an example. How can you tell when you're starting to get angry? Maybe it's furrowed eyebrows, tightened facial muscles, rapid breathing, raised shoulders, hollow feeling in the chest, clenched teeth, tightened fists, pursed lips, wide eyes, or a change in tone or pitch of your voice. Identifying these early warning signs of anger can help children feel it coming on before they react.

Point out these early warning signs in others. Virtually all children's animated videos contain exaggerated facial features to depict emotions. Watch a video and point out the times when someone gets angry. How could you tell? This exercise is helpful for identifying one's own cues but also helps children see anger coming on in others. If you teach children how to respond to the anger of others, they can learn to be peacemakers instead of troublemakers.

Take action earlier. Once you see the cues, stop the escalation before it starts. "Bill, it looks like you're getting upset, come over here and settle down before things get out of hand." Earlier intervention will eventually help your children make those same choices for themselves and teach them how to manage anger in healthy ways.

To learn more about helping children manage their anger, consider the book, Home Improvement: The Parenting Book You Can Read to Your Kids by Dr. Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller, RN, BSN