

## **Teaching Children Anger Management and Conflict Resolution Skills**

### **By Marjorie Daniels**

Infants and Toddlers do not have self-control. Therefore, it is unfair to expect them to show self-control. However, as children grow from toddlers to pre-school age it is important for parents and caregivers to teach children how to deal with anger.

One of the main components is to listen actively when children are having an anger conflict. Young children understand anger and other emotions best when adults explain emotions. It is critical to just listen, without judging, evaluating or ordering them to feel differently. This is the first step in a true anger interaction.

Listening carefully and actively has an amazing effect on angry children. Anger arises when somebody has blocked a goal. Listening carefully tells a child that someone is interested in his problem. This opens the door to problem solving and acceptable conflict resolution strategies. Think about anger management and conflict resolution as an opportunity to teach children life time coping skills.

Anger is a useful but stressful emotion. When we are unable to deal with anger appropriately we remain in a stressful state.

Two of the most helpful stress-reduction strategies are relaxation training and deep breathing exercises. Both strategies allow children (and adults) to get their internal nervous system under control. This is the first step in dealing with anger responsibly and in avoiding irrational actions in a highly stressed state.

There are many strategies to assist parents in teaching children to work through anger issues. Some of these include puppets, feelings charts, and books. In our modern day technology we have access to electronic communications and websites to gain information to relay to children.

Teach children to “use their words” to describe their feelings. This is an important and effective too. Help children understand that they are having a “feeling”. Teach them to “use a word” to describe their feeling. As they grow, parents and caregivers should assist children in expanding their “feelings vocabulary”. Many children explain their anger as feeling “mad”. Help to build children’s “feelings vocabulary” by adding synonyms to the list. Some examples of words that may be used are angry, irritated, annoyed, furious, irate and upset. This helps children more accurately describe the level of emotion.

Creating a safe emotional climate or space allows children to acknowledge and express all feelings, pleasant or unpleasant. It is crucial that children feel safe and must be protected when expressing their feelings. If a safe space is not provided, children will learn to hide feelings instead of using healthy expression. Another crucial component to teaching children acceptance of appropriate behaviours is role modeling. Children learn and practice what they see. Parents and their actions are the “greatest of all teachers”.

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