

Angry Bear Workbook

Essential Tips for Kids and Families Dealing with Anger



TREEHOUSE FAMILY COUNSELING SERVICES, PC

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DEDICATION

To the Treehouse team, I appreciate you.
Thank you for all your support, ideas,
and inspiration in creating this book
for children all over the world and their
families. May their anger be transformed
into understanding and peace.

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INTRODUCTION

“I’m so mad I need to hit something!” is not an uncommon thought to have. Anger seems to be a very energizing type of emotion. It almost screams at us to do something with the energy of it. How each person experiences and expresses anger is as unique as each individual.

There have been theories that have recommended hitting pillows or screaming into a blanket to “get the anger out.” But in recent research (Kennedy-Moor & Watson, 2001) it has been found that this method of anger management actually can make things worse, especially in children where venting the anger takes on a rehearsal feeling, and the anger can become more intense.

So, what do we do? How do we help children and teens express their anger effectively without getting themselves into trouble? First, we must understand what creates anger and angry responses.

The current way of talking about this is called *emotional regulation*. Children and teens who are very angry and are acting out this anger in various ways are said to be *emotionally dysregulated*.

Emotional regulation is seen when we are managing our feelings, whatever they are, without acting it out. Acting out behaviors can be screaming, crying, and hitting, to mention a few. In this workbook we will be helping you understand emotional dysregulation, what causes it, and what you can do to help your family be healthy with expressing anger.

CHAPTER ONE

WHAT IS ANGER AND WHY IS IT SUCH A POWERFUL EMOTION?

I'm Mad Not Bad:

Children's behavior tells us about their emotional state. It is important to be able to differentiate between feelings and behavior. Anger, frustration, irritation, annoyance are all normal, healthy emotions.

There are subtle differences to each and for many children and teens it can feel like one big jumble of mad feelings. It is challenging then to figure out and understand the difference between angry feelings and aggressive behaviors.

Aggressive behaviors are the physical expression of the emotional experience so it's important for you to help your child label their feelings. Use this worksheet to help you and your child understand mad feelings versus mad behaviors.

List some of ways that you and your family express angry feelings and what angry behaviors might be present:

Angry Words: I hate you!

Aggressive behavior: Stomping upstairs to the bedroom and slamming the door.

Angry Words

Angry Behaviors

Anger Thermometer



Anger Thermometer Directions

It's important to validate your child's anger because there may be other feelings that are harder for them to express. This anger thermometer is a great tool to use with your children. You can ask your child to show you on the anger thermometer scale how angry they are feeling.

CHAPTER TWO

EXPRESS OR SUPPRESS? YOU DECIDE: MODELING APPROPRIATE RESPONSES AND MANAGEMENT OF ANGER

Children are very observant and will mirror the emotional responses and reactions from their family members. Think for a moment about how your family of origin handled angry feelings.

Some families internalize their feelings and then act in a passive-aggressive way like making snide remarks, saying something negative under their breath, and “stonewalling” which means the person is refusing to talk when they are angry.

Other families have learned to externalize the anger and will shout, clench their fists, hit the wall, slam doors, etc. If you lose your temper when you are angry your children will learn that this is the appropriate way to express anger.

If your child sees you managing your anger in a healthy way, then she/he will do the same. Some healthy ways of expressing anger is to say that you are angry and give the reason why you are angry.

Here is an example: “I’m feeling really angry because that car raced around me and almost caused an accident.” Allowing your children to see your response without losing control will teach them ways of managing anger.

List some behaviors you have learned from your family that have made expressing your anger more difficult:

What are some strategies you would like to pass on to your children about managing their angry feelings better?

Example: It's okay to have feelings, but you can't hit your brother.

CHAPTER THREE

**TYPES OF EXPRESSED ANGER: SHOUTERS,
SULKERS, GROUCHES, AND SCOLDS**

Shouters: Shouters are those people who yell and shout when they are angry. They usually are very loud. It can be intimidating to children to have a parent that shouts. Anger sometimes makes people feel like they need to move around so stomping around while shouting and yelling in anger is not uncommon

Sulkers: Expressing anger through sulking or pouting is often an indicator that there might be some passive-aggressive behaviors present as well. People who give the “silent treatment” are sulking and trying to manipulate others through this passive form of expressing anger.

Grouches: This is the person who expresses anger through general negativity, irritability, and grouchiness. Some people who express anger this way are often called “crabby.” Everything is wrong and nothing is right for the Grouch.

Scolds: Expressing anger through scolding is hurtful. This is the person who must tell you “I told you so!” when things go awry. For children who have a scolding parent, they often feel hurt and angry in response rather than understanding what the real problem is.

CHAPTER FOUR

WHAT TO DO WHEN FEELINGS GET OUT OF CONTROL: 3 STRATEGIES FOR HELPING YOUR FAMILY MANAGE ANGER

Anger can range from mild irritation to out-of-control rage. Most people feel angry from time to time. Many may also find themselves on the receiving end of those who lash out in anger. Here are three strategies that you can use with your children when their feelings and anger get out of control.

Strategy 1: Anger Rules

Establishing family rules around expression of anger will help you manage your child's overall behavior. When children know what the boundaries are and trust that you will hold those boundaries fairly, they will quickly learn to trust that you will be there for them and will help them manage their intense feelings.

The most important part of anger rules is that in expressing your anger you remember to behave in a respectful way toward others. Anger rules should also include consequences for aggressive behaviors like swearing, name-calling, destroying others' property, hitting, kicking, spitting, and throwing things.

List some Anger Rules that you and your family can establish:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Strategy 2: Healthy Coping and Anger Management

Kids often hear "Don't say that!" or "Don't hit your sister!" This doesn't teach them how to manage their anger effectively. Say something that reminds them of the rules and models anger management, like "I know you're angry, but it is not okay to hit your sister. Next time tell me what is upsetting you."

List some key phrases you could use to help teach your child about anger management and healthy coping:

Strategy 3: Calming and Soothing

In order to return to an emotionally regulated state it is important to find ways to calm and soothe after there has been an upset. Some ways of doing this are through deep breathing and mindfulness practices where the senses are engaged. Sucking on a hard piece of candy or through a straw is also soothing. So is drawing in a coloring book or listening to music.

List some key things that would be soothing to you and your kids:

Feelings Chart



not sure



sad



going nuts!



confident



interested



happy



yuck!



crying



surprised



thoughtful



scared



just wanna be alone



daydreamy



confused



angry



need someone



frustrated



funny

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CHAPTER FIVE

9 TIPS FOR CALMING THE CHAOS INSIDE

- Before trying to help your child calm down, you need to do a self-check to make sure you are calm. Are you breathing rapidly? Is your heart racing? Do you feel overwhelmed?
- Once you are in a calm state, use a quiet, soothing tone to communicate that you are there to help. Modeling a calm state of being by talking quietly and slowly, as well as breathing deeply, you can lower the energy level of the outburst.
- Do not attempt to talk with your child using logic or reasoning. They are not in that part of the brain. A great video to watch is “Flip your lid” by Dr. Dan Siegel which is on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gm9CIJ74Oxw>
- Encourage them to use their words “I’m mad” vs. using physical aggression toward others.
- If the anger is intense, redirect to other physical activities (e.g., exercise). Options can include jumping on a trampoline, jogging in place, or push-ups. This will allow for the energy created by anger to be depleted.
- Once child is calm, talk about their emotions and what they can do differently in the future.
- When talking about the situation with your child, try to determine what type of anger they experience. Is it a slow build with an explosion, like a volcano? Or is it immediate and without warning, like a light switch?
- Soothing activities, like kinetic sand or Playdoh, can help decrease the anger energy the child is feeling and promote calming down quicker.
- Help your child to recognize the warning signs of anger: the shift in their body and energy. The earlier you can “catch” the anger, the easier it will be to diffuse the chaos building inside.

Additional tips

- The use of essential oils in a diffuser can be quite calming and therapeutic. It is important to distinguish natural essential oils from synthetic fragrances, such as

candles and air fresheners, which have no therapeutic effect and contain a long list of synthetic chemicals including formaldehyde. Safe essential oils for use with children over 1 year include Lavender, Mandarin, Roman Chamomile, and Palmarosa.

- Take a look at your child's diet as various foods have been linked with emotional disturbances. These foods can include artificial colorings (especially red, yellow, green), sugar, chemical additives, milk, chocolate, eggs, wheat, and any foods your child has an allergy or intolerance to. Consulting a nutritionist or knowledgeable nutrition practitioner can help.
- Excessive or destructive anger can be a sign of energetic and/or chemical imbalances within the child. Consulting a professional Homeopath can help to correct these imbalances for your child, not only on the emotional level, but mentally and physically as well.

CALMING STRATEGIES



fill your sails

take deep breaths and exhale
sloooooowly



I gotcha, kid

an adult you can count
on in tough times



play nice

consider the feelings of
others before you act



find your cozy spot

that safe space where you
can reflect

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BOOKS FOR ANGER

- Anger: Wisdom for Cooling the Flames by Thich Nhat Hanh
- The Chocolate-Covered-Cookie Tantrum by Deborah Blumenthal
- The Dance of Anger by Harriet Lerner, Ph.D.
- Explosive Child, The: A New Approach For Understanding And Parenting Easily Frustrated, Chronically Inflexible Children by Ross W. Greene, Ph.D.

A Safe Place To Play And Heal

We all wish our problems would go away by themselves and sometimes they do! However, when we let them linger too long, they begin to negatively impact our lives and we need to take action. We treat a variety of struggles and issues – anger management, depression, anxiety, compulsive behavior and so much more. Every child is different, and we consult with you, the parents or guardians, to design treatment plans suitable to your situation. Once in place, the plan will be adjusted as needed to produce the interactive environment most beneficial to your child.

Relationships change and not always for the better. We get older, our responsibilities evolve, and our expectations are not always clear. When frustrations mount, communication suffers, and we damage our loving relationships. A little work will benefit all of us in finding the harmony that every family deserves with family or couples counseling.

We are here to help. We understand the concerns parents have for their children and can help through the power of play. Give us a call if you have any questions or need support. Check out our website at www.tcservices.org

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Michelle Culver, MS LMFT has over 15 years' experience in the field of trauma through various roles (researcher, educator, author, and therapist). Michelle's background in developmental psychology has informed her clinical work with clients of all ages. She has worked with clients through each developmental stage, from age 1 to adulthood, and enjoys witnessing how therapy can help clients achieve their developmental and relationship goals.

Harmony Quinn is a classically trained Homeopath with over 14 years' experience working with clients of all ages, from infancy through adulthood. Harmony consults with clients for a wide range of ailments including mental health (depression, anxiety, ADHD), behavioral issues, sleep, physical (headaches, allergies, skin ailments), and acute illnesses. As a classical Homeopath, Harmony seeks to understand how the client functions on all levels (mental, emotional, and physical) in order to recommend a Homeopathic remedy that best matches the whole client. Harmony has a BA in Psychology from UC Davis, a CHom from Pacific Academy of Homeopathy, and has further studied nutrition, health and fitness.

About Play Therapy

Play therapy is a powerful way of helping children to explore and resolve psychological challenges.

Through symbolic play, children naturally externalize their problems creating a safe psychological distance from which to express their feelings, thoughts and experiences in an organic process that unfolds at their pace and developmental level. "In play therapy, toys are like the child's words and play is the child's language" (Landreth, 2002).