

Parenting – Anger Management

What is anger?

Anger is an emotion. As humans, we all feel anger at certain points in life. However, sometimes, when the emotion gets better of us – when we cannot control it – the emotion becomes destructive. When it happens often and would occur during any settings and for a period of time, it leads to anger management issue. However, most of the time we are in control of our emotion, though it may feel that we are not.

Often at times, anger is due to underlying feelings. For instance, we get angry when we see injustice, when a situation does not go our way or when we are not able to obtain something we had expected to. These examples all show a common theme – being rendered helpless and not in control of situations. Anger comes from underlying feelings such as helplessness, frustration and the inability to be in control of situations.

This is something important to note. Anger is not bad; it comes from the underlying feelings. The more underlying feelings there are, the stronger the anger would be, leading to stronger and more aggressive behaviours.

At The Therapy Room, a group of psychologists, led by Geraldine Tan, the principal psychologist, is experienced in working with adults, youths and children on their emotions by using therapeutic interventions. Should you have any concerns or inquiries, please feel free to click [here](#) to contact us and find out more.

What should I do when I am angry with my child?

As parents, we need to be acutely aware of our emotions and our abilities. It is acceptable to be angry and show our anger because we are all humans and humans show emotions. Furthermore, showing emotions allow us to be more honest with our children. However, it is important to note that as anger has underlying feelings, explosive outbursts does not quell and instead helplessness and fear passes onto the child. This may cause your child to take on a defensive approach.

It is encouraged for us to take ourselves out of the situations when we are really angry and calm ourselves down. When you are angry, it could be because you feel helpless dealing with your child. As a result, this helplessness will stop you from communicating effectively with your child. It could exacerbate the situation even more. In addition, your child may feel your frustration and anger and learn to feel these emotions before learning how to manage a certain situations in the future.

At The Therapy Room, Geraldine Tan, the principal psychologist, who has a wealth of experience working with parents, conducts parenting workshops and programmes. For more information, please click [here](#) to contact us and find out more.

What if I suspect my child has anger management issue?

As aforementioned in the two above questions, anger could be due to underlying feelings. Instead of instantly determining that a child may have an anger management issue because he or she has been throwing a tantrum, it is encouraged for parents to communicate with their child to understand and find out the underlying feelings.

For 3-5 year old children, they are somewhat verbal but may not know exactly how to express their needs. They could act out because their needs may be misinterpreted. They could also act out because they are learning to exert their opinions and may choose a less than appropriate time and place to do so. Parents handling situations like that must realize that they are not in competition with their child; rather, these parents should take a step back and observe their children to see what they need and want. If the child is misunderstood, the parent can quickly calm the child down and even apologise for misreading the child. If the child wants something that he or she is not able to get and is acting out, parents can highlight to the child that he is embarrassing himself. This is important as most parents feel embarrassed that their child is acting out and would try all ways and means to try to keep the child quiet. Once the child learns this, he would use it to his full advantage. However, if the parent teaches the child to own their behaviour, there would be less likely a chance for the child to use this against the parent.

For children of about 6-8 years old, they have started to be aware of many things including reacting in social situations. However, they are still extremely egocentric and concrete in their thoughts and behaviour. These children may push the limits and not do the chores that they are told to do as they want to focus on something else at that point. Parents are encouraged to stand firm and have them complete their tasks before allowing them to do what they want. Even if it takes an hour for them to “argue” their way, parents are encouraged to ensure that the children are not allowed to get away from doing what they are supposed to do.

For older children of about 9-12 years old, they are more aware of their emotions and parents can use it to their advantage. For these children, their struggle would be that they usually feel that their thoughts and opinions are not heard when their parents direct them to do something. Unable to get their point across, they may sulk or throw a temper as they do not know how to accurately express themselves. Sometimes, parents may feel helpless and think that they are rude and misunderstand them. Instead of reacting negatively to the tantrum, parents can say, “I’m not sure what you are sulking about but if you are unhappy about something let mummy/daddy know.”

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Q4) What are some tips we can use when are angry?

Knowing the underlying emotion

If you are feeling anger, ask yourself what you are actually feeling. Are you feeling helpless, shamed, embarrassed, frustrated? Addressing the right emotion is important.

Not acting out yourself

If the parents act out by screaming, punching and hitting, the child would also learn to hit, scream and punch when he or she is angry. If the parents attempt to tell the child not to do so, they may not listen as they have only learnt these methods and do not know of any other methods to cope with their own frustrations.

Breathe

Sometimes when we face a difficult and challenging situation, we may feel very tense. It may clouds our minds and we are not able to think of anything else. Take a deep breath and slow your breathing down. It would help to stop you from reacting at that point and help you to see things from a different angle.

Do not own your child's actions

When a child does something or creates a scene, many parents feel responsible for their actions. This makes the parent feel helpless because the more they try and stop the child's actions, the more the child may react. Instead, in situations like that, the parent are encouraged to acknowledge that it is the child's actions and not theirs and as such, they would not be able to control the situation even if they wanted to. In such cases, have the child own their action. However, this also depends on the child's age. A two year old cannot be told. They will remain where they are and continue screaming and have everyone look at them. Parents are encouraged to remove the child from that environment and bring him or her to a quieter place. A 12 year old would know what shame is and their parents can point out that others are looking at him and walk away from the child that is throwing temper.

Be consistent

Being consistent with the child will teach him or her that he will not be able to manipulate his or her parents to do things. It is also important for parents to be consistent with their punishment. If a behaviour warrants a timeout, do not let the child's actions put you off. If he manages to get away once, he will definitely try it again and again, causing the parents to feel angry and frustrated.