



Penn State Better Kid Care Distance Education Lesson

Dealing with Anger – The Children's and Yours

Professional Development Code K2C1
Child Development Associate CDA 3

Dealing with Anger – the Children's and Yours

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Assignments & Required Forms



Lesson Instructions

1. Watch the educational video.
2. Read the workbook.
 - Plan time each day to work on the lesson.
 - Set a goal to complete the lesson in about two weeks.
3. Complete all assignment pages and forms in ink. Save a copy of all completed work for your files in case there is a need to refer to your saved copy. We will not return incomplete lessons. You will be notified if lessons are incomplete.
4. We encourage the use of distance education lessons in staff meetings; however, all assignments need to be completed independently. Copied answers, “does not apply” answers, or incomplete assignments are considered not complete.
5. **To avoid delays in processing your registration for this professional development, be sure to go over the check list on the Registration Form, include all items, and mail to :**

Penn State Better Kid Care
Distance Education Program
341 North Science Park Road, Suite 208
State College, PA 16803

Please note:

- Two professional development hours will be given for successful completion of this lesson.
- Completed assignments will be checked and returned to you with a certificate of completion.
- Penn State University Better Kid Care Distance Education provides:
 - Continuing Education Units (CEUs)
 - Keystone STARS professional development
 - PA Dept. of Public Welfare required hours
 - Act 48 hours for certified educators
 - Child Development Associate (CDA) credential hours
- Completed assignments must arrive at the Penn State Better Kid Care office for processing at least **6 weeks** before your certification or registration renewal due date.
- The video portion of this lesson was a previous satellite broadcast. Please be aware that some contact information may have changed.
- Discussion questions are included in most lessons. They can be used by a group of staff members in a child care center or group home. They can also be used in planning a family night to help spark discussion among families.
- If you are completing this as a Web-based lesson, please refer to the online instructions at <http://www.betterkidcare.psu.edu/AngelUnits/GeneralDirections.html>



HANDLING ANGER POSITIVELY

Anger can and does erupt at any time during the child care day. One angry child can disrupt the entire group. Learning how to handle anger in child care can help everyone's day run more smoothly.

Anger is normal and natural, both in children and adults. It is what children and adults do with these feelings that can cause problems.

Children learn how to handle their anger by example. They look to the adults in their lives, but most of us find it difficult to accept our own anger. Our children are quick to pick up our attitudes towards anger.

Our goal should be to:

- Learn more about anger in children and adults
- Cut down on the causes of anger in our child care programs so that our days are not one angry outburst after another
- Teach children productive ways to handle their feelings of anger

This is especially important in today's world, where violence seems to be everywhere. Many children are directly exposed to violence in their families and community. Almost all children regularly see violence on TV, both in cartoons and in programs not intended for children (such as adventure movies and news).

This exposure to violence has two bad effects on children:

- They see others use violence as a way to solve problems, so they imitate them.
- They see the terrible consequences of badly managed anger, and may learn to fear anger and confrontation. This makes it hard to learn productive problem solving.

In today's world, learning to handle strong emotions may be the most important lesson that we can give the children in our care.

UNDERSTANDING ANGER IN YOUNG CHILDREN

As they grow, children change in what makes them angry and how they express anger. Child care professionals need to know what to expect from children at different stages.

Babies

Some people think that babies never get angry, but this is not true. Babies get angry too. Babies can get angry as a result of hunger, sickness, or being startled. Most babies show their feelings with angry crying, hitting, and kicking.

Toddlers

Most toddlers are easily frustrated. They want to do many things by themselves. Since toddlers don't understand what is safe and appropriate, many become frustrated when adults stop them from doing what they want. Also, their limited understanding of time means that waiting for anything is very hard.

Most toddlers are learning language quickly, but they still have ideas they have trouble communicating. This too can lead to frustration.

All of these are reasons why temper tantrums, hitting, and biting are common ways toddlers show their anger.



Preschoolers

Preschoolers are better able to express their anger with words than toddlers are, but when they are angry, many preschoolers will still hit or push another child. Temper tantrums are rare. This is the stage when verbal aggression begins, and while shouting and nasty words are not pleasant, they are still a big step forward for a child who used to handle anger by hitting.

Early school-age children

At this age most children learn how to control their anger and find new ways to handle the problem. Because children can understand others' feelings, they can often reach solutions that are acceptable to all involved.



REDUCING ANGER TRIGGERS IN CHILD CARE

It is worthwhile to take some time to discover and reduce things that trigger anger in our child care programs. While it is never possible or desirable to get rid of all anger, you can cut down on some of the common causes of anger for children of different ages.

All ages

For all children, reliability and predictability go a long way towards creating more positive behavior. Keeping a regular routine for toddlers and preschoolers can help avoid confusion and frustration that can lead to angry outbursts. Encourage parents to tell you about changes (both positive and negative) at home because sometimes children respond to even positive changes with angry outbursts. This way you will be prepared with extra support for a child who may need it.

Babies

Try to get to know each child and how he expresses anger. If you know when a child is likely to be hungry or tired, you won't expect too much from him. Ask the parent what the child is like at home. Keep asking as the child grows, since children change quickly during the first year of life. When you can't immediately meet a child's needs because you are busy with something else, you can reduce the anger by letting that child know you would like to help: "My hands are busy, but I'll come as soon as they're free."

Toddlers

Keeping toddlers well fed and rested can help ward off anger. Offer food every two hours to toddlers. Provide duplicates of popular toys. This doesn't need to be expensive. Ask parents with older children to donate toys, or shop at garage sales and thrift stores. Teach them words like "No" and "Stop" so they don't need to push, hit, or bite. Avoid overcrowding, if possible. Toddlers are more likely to become angry when in a small space. Rearrange the room to enlarge the popular spaces, if possible.

Preschoolers

These are the most common problems that lead to anger in preschool children:

- Conflicts over toys and materials
- A child feels that his space is invaded
- Physical aggression such as pushing or hitting
- A child is ignored or rejected by other children
- A child doesn't want to do what she's asked to do

Sharing problems continue on a regular basis. Fights about invaded space are also common at this age, and it can be valuable to teach children to defend their space and their play with words rather than with aggression. Teach preschoolers how to say, "I'm using that" and "I'm playing here." As children learn that their words are powerful, they begin to use physical aggression less and less.

You can reduce angry outbursts in preschoolers by helping them learn good play skills. The more children learn that they can use their imagination, the less dependent they are on having the "right" toy.

Show how they can use blocks for cars, and other ways they can rely on their imagination.

Over time, you will see fewer fights about toys because instead of fighting over the one milk carton in the housekeeping area, one child will grab a block and say, "I've got orange juice, want some?" You can help this happen by playing with the children and showing them how they can use almost anything as the thing they need for the play.

Preschoolers are very interested in superhero play. Help children find ways to keep this play positive: Suggest rescue themes like rescuing animals in danger, and encourage children to play other parts of a superhero's lives, like eating and sleeping. This way, children can pretend to be superheroes without having to fight all the time.

Many programs for preschool children have adopted a "You can't say: You can't play" rule. This rule minimizes anger by forbidding children from excluding other children from their play. The group of children who is excluding has to find a way to include the child into their play. If the group keeps on excluding children, they must stop their play and do another activity.

TEACHING ABOUT ANGER

We can't spend our energy on trying to prevent anger. Instead, children need to learn productive ways to handle their anger.

Name emotions when they happen

Throughout the child care day children experience many strong emotions. Label the feelings as they are happening throughout the day. Just stating the obvious can help children put their feelings and words together. "It's all right, Dylan, Tyler is angry now. I'll keep him and everyone else safe."

Learn about emotions

Talk about anger at times when children are not angry. Take a cloth bag with a drawstring and put different colored jacks in the bag. Pass the bag around, and ask each child to pull out a jack. The color of the jack will signify an emotion: angry, afraid, happy, and sad. Ask each child to tell you a story about the feeling she selects. This helps children learn the names for emotions. Also, as they share common experiences that raise strong feelings, the group feels more connected.

Cut out magazine pictures of people showing different emotions. Paste them on a piece of construction paper. Ask children to tell you a story about an angry person, a sad person, a happy person, and a fearful person. This helps children learn to read the facial expressions. They can also explore what triggers anger in themselves and others. Often children discover that what makes them angry is something that also can upset other people as well.

Talk about the changes that happen to your body when you are angry. Some people get red in the face; others clench their muscles in their jaws and hands. All of us get racing hearts. We want children to recognize angry feelings in themselves and others. Teach children to notice the changes in their bodies when they become angry. We might say to a toddler, "Look at his face, he is angry." Talk about how the body changes when the angry feelings are easing up.

Share books about anger

Read children stories about people becoming angry, and talk about those stories afterward. A great question to ask the children is: "What can you do when you are angry?" Here are a few books specifically about anger (you can also use other storybooks that include an angry character):

- I'm Mad, Cray, E.
- A Volcano in my Tummy, Whitehouse, Elaine
- I am So Angry I Could Scream, Fox, Laura
- I Was So Mad, Simon, Norma

Children need to know that it is all right to be angry, that it is part of a healthy life. There are okay ways and not-okay ways to show your anger. It is not okay to hurt anyone, to break things, or to hurt pets when you are feeling angry.

Teach children to talk about anger

We want to teach children that when you are angry it's best to talk to someone about how you feel. As children develop language skills, talking can become a more and more important way for children to learn to accept their anger and to find new solutions to problems.

To be able to talk about your feelings you have to learn the names for those feelings. That is why it is so important for caregivers to use daily opportunities to talk about feelings when they come up. This is the fastest way for children to develop their vocabulary of feeling words. Encourage children to talk directly about their anger to the person involved.

You might say, "I see two children becoming very angry. What's the problem?" Give each child a chance to tell her side of the story, and then ask them for their ideas.

Tell children that they can talk with you about being angry. Don't expect children to tell you why they are mad, or even why they have done something; instead just give them the opportunity to talk if they want to. Their ability to reason about their feelings and behavior is still developing.

Teach children that there are ways that you can calm yourself when you are angry. For many children, doing something physical can help them calm down. Large muscle movements like stomping and running are great ways for children to express their anger. Give children safe things

to punch, like pillows and play dough. This can reduce the temptation to take angry feelings out on another person.

Sensory activities like sand and water play can also soothe the angry child. Try listening to music, finger painting, and squeezing or pounding play dough. Sensory time relaxes most children and can help them regain control.

Cooling off

Sometimes a cooling-off period can really help children (and adults) regain their control. Some caregivers suggest that an angry child use the book corner. Spending some time away from other children in a quiet place can help children feel calmer.

Time away can be a great way to cool down. Often young children don't respond well to being put in time out, so make time away different.

Rather than making this like time out, give the child some control about location and timing. No one place is right for all children. You might say: "Sometimes when you get angry, it can help to slow down and do something quiet. What would you like to do?"

If the other children are engaged, then you can spend a calm few minutes together with the child who is angry. Some children like to be held; others just like to have you nearby. You can say, "I want to help you when you are feeling this angry. Can I hold you, or would you like me to stay nearby?"

Help children look for humor

Humor can completely turn a situation around. Show that you can laugh or joke about your own anger. Finding laughter in an angry situation can help children understand that anger passes, and that what is most important is to not allow it to control you and hurt yourself and others.

Help children learn thinking skills

How we talk to ourselves about our anger will either increase it or decrease it. If a child thinks, "He did that on purpose, I'm going to make him pay for that," this only makes the child angrier. Instead, teach children that they can help cool their own anger by thinking this little rhyme: "It's okay to walk away."

When You Are Angry

You Cannot

- Hit, bite, or hurt someone
- Break or destroy something
- Hurt an animal
- Hurt your own body
- Use rude or insulting words

You Can

- Play with play dough, sand, or water
- Tell the people involved how you feel
- Draw or paint a picture, write a story
- Talk things over
- Ask for help
- Listen to music
- Go someplace quiet to cool down
- Rip up paper

GROWNUPS GET ANGRY TOO



There are many things that can make child care professionals mad, but at the top of the list is parents. Many child care professionals say, "I can handle my anger at the children because they are just learning. It's the parents that make me crazy." Whether it is the parent who forgets the diapers again, or comes late to pick up their child, we sometimes swallow our anger because the parents are our clients and we don't want to lose the family.

But we swallow that anger at a great cost to ourselves. We can lose our joy in working with the children and become burned out. The best way to avoid this problem is to have well-established rules that you follow through with. If the parent forgets the diapers again, enforce the extra diaper fee, a fee you charge if they have to use diapers that you provide. Some programs have a late fee that increases with each fifteen-minute interval. These kinds of rules can protect you from being taken advantage of, and can reduce your own anger. Make sure you share these rules with parents before any problem occurs so that it is an expected consequence rather than a surprise.

Sometimes, instead of rules, understanding is what we need when dealing with parents. Most parents have strong mixed feelings about leaving their children in child care, and sometimes they take their confused feelings out on caregivers in the form of anger. Being the brunt of this type of anger can be very difficult. Many parents feel threatened by the skills that child care professionals have at calming upset children and handling difficult situations.

As their children grow into toddlers, parents worry about the kind of authority that is best for the child: what kind of limits and expectations for behavior adults should have. Parents may become angry at themselves for not knowing what to do, and may vent their anger at child care professionals. They may disagree with you about the rules in your child care, telling you that you are too soft or too hard on children of this age. While understandable, this anger is also usually not justified. As they grow more confident, parents are less likely to turn their anger on you.

To improve your relations with parents, invite them to meet as a group and discuss discipline. You don't need an expert to lead the group, just someone to get the discussion started and stopped. You'll find that once serious discussion gets going, you are going to have trouble getting them to leave. This can give parents a chance to learn from other parents.

If you get angry in front of the kids

Children learn to handle anger by watching what adults do when they are angry. If you are angry with a parent it is best to not speak about it in front of the children. Children are quick to notice anger and may repeat words they have heard you speak. This could create a difficult situation for you, and could be genuinely distressing for the child whose parents are upsetting you. If you are angry about something unrelated to the children, it is best to tell the children if you can: "I'm angry that my car broke down today." But if it is too personal, you might say: "I'm having an angry day." This is a great time to talk about what makes the children feel angry. Remember what the children say is confidential too, since they may talk about private details of their family life.

If you are angry at a child

Sometimes you have a child who seems to be good at pushing your anger button. Since you can't change the child, you have only two options: You can change yourself or the situation. It can be hard to change what irks us, so your best bet is to change the situation if at all possible.

If your hot button is when children throw food, change the situation: Serve smaller portions and remove the food consistently when a child throws it, giving it back once a child has calmed down and is ready to eat again. Often

children play with their food when they are not hungry so it could be a sign that the child is finished eating. You can say, "When you play with your food, it tells me you are not hungry. Do you want to eat?" Make sure you have a quiet activity ready for the children after lunch so that they can leave the table if they are finished before the others. Also, it helps to offer some fun and appropriate things to throw. Try tossing bean bags into a laundry basket. This way kids get a chance to build their throwing skills without using food to do it.



Manage your own anger using the same skills that you teach the children. Name the emotions honestly; talk about your anger. Use your body, your imagination, and most of all, your humor. Don't let the anger wear you down and cause you to become burned out. Too many wonderful caregivers leave the field as their anger and frustration overwhelms their pleasure in working with the children.



PARENTS COUNT

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR PARENTS



When You Get Angry

Everyone gets angry now and again. Even the most easygoing people will sometimes see red, and children are great at driving their parents crazy. Many parents wish they wouldn't ever get angry with their children. We can't stop ourselves from getting angry, but we can learn what to do when we are angry. Whether you're angry at your children, or at something else, your kids are watching how you manage your anger. You are a role model for handling anger in a good way.

The first step to showing good anger management to your kids is to name the feeling when it is happening. "I'm getting really mad." Children are quick to pick up your anger, and might already know that you are feeling this way, but put it into words. This not only teaches that it is okay to talk about anger, but also gives you a chance to explain why you are angry.

Tell the children why you are angry. Young children are often confused about anger. Many children will assume that they did something wrong to make you mad. If you say, "I'm mad because the washing machine won't work," children will learn that they are not always the cause of the anger.



Be a good role model by using an anger management skill:

Take a break, call a friend, find the funny side, listen to music, take a walk, or anything else that works for you.

Will it hurt the kids if we fight in front of them?

All families have arguments at one time or another. Watching parents argue can be scary for children. Children should not witness physical violence, damaging of property, or verbal abuse. But watching family members find a workable solution can help children learn how to fight in a way that builds a positive and respectful family.

Sometimes anger is destructive or frequent enough to get in the way of everyday life. When anger is very explosive, or happens often, it may be time to get help. Stressful situations like the loss of a job, an injury, divorce, or death in the family may find voice through anger. A family therapist can help the family member or the entire family through the stressful period.

When your children get angry

Anger is like the flu. It is easily contagious — parents often find themselves feeling angry when their children become angry. We can more easily handle our children's anger without becoming angry ourselves if we have already agreed on rules beforehand. Let your children know what you expect of them, and what the consequence will be for the misbehavior.

This doesn't mean you need to have lots of rules. Having too many rules is confusing, but a system of a few carefully chosen rules can help. You might expect that when you go shopping together, children use walking feet, stay where you can see them, and look with their eyes and not with their hands. Let them know what you are there to buy, and remind them that you plan to buy only what is on the list. Then explain to your children before you go into the store that you need store behavior. Tell them the consequence. If you don't show store behavior then you will lose one TV show.

When you enter the store your five-year-old goes running off and starts a game of hide and seek. Instead of blowing your fuse, you know what to do. You say, "I'm sorry, you have lost one TV show.

I need to see store behavior so that you do not lose any more." Now instead of you feeling angry at your child, and out of control, you are feeling in control of the situation.

Every time you become angry at your children, use it as an opportunity to think, "What can I do to prevent this from happening again?"

One mom discovered that if she took a healthy snack for her son to eat on the way home from

child care, then everyone wasn't so crabby at the end of the day. You might discover the need for a new rule or a new way of doing things to prevent a blow-up. You might institute a regular rest time when everyone must go in different rooms to play or rest for a time so that you have a break from the children every day. One family set up fifteen minutes a day when the children had their rest time and the mom and dad had time to themselves.

Feeling stories

Take those old magazines and ask your children to cut out pictures of people showing

different feelings: anger, happiness, fear, and sadness. Use the pictures as story starters. What made these people feel this way? What makes you feel these feelings? This helps children understand feelings, and it's fun, too.

When You Are Angry

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- Hit, bite, or hurt someone
- Break or destroy something
- Hurt an animal
- Hurt your own body
- Use rude or insulting words

You Can

- Play with play dough, sand, or water
- Tell the people involved how you feel
- Draw or paint a picture, write a story
- Talk things over
- Ask for help
- Listen to music
- Go someplace quiet to cool down
- Rip up paper

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Discussion Questions

1. What makes...
 - a. a baby angry and what do you do to handle it?
 - b. a toddler angry and what do you do to handle it?
 - c. a preschooler angry and what do you do to handle it?
2. What do you want the children to learn about anger? What can toddlers learn, and what can preschoolers learn?
3. Should an angry child be removed from the group or should the problem be handled in front of the other children?
4. What tends to make children's anger worse and what makes it better?
5. What makes you feel angry with a child?
6. What makes you feel angry with an adult?
7. Since you are responsible for the children and you can't walk away when you are angry, what can you do to handle your own anger?
8. What do you say to the children when you are feeling angry?
9. What can you do to reduce anger in the children and yourself in your child care program?
10. What will you do differently since you have watched this video and read the workbook?



Assignments

Name
Address
City/State/ZIP
County
Phone Number

BKC OFFICE USE ONLY

1. Anger is normal and natural, both in children and adults. Handling strong emotions positively is one of the most important skills caregivers can help children learn. Watch a child in your care closely when he or she becomes angry and write about the episode of anger in the space provided below.

First name of child _____

Age _____

What did the child do? Describe the child's behavior without guessing what the child was thinking.

What do you think triggered this child's episode of anger?

2. What new skills could this child learn to better handle the anger situation? What can you do to help the child learn these skills and get "back on track"?



Assignments (continued)

Name

3. What activities can you plan to help children channel their anger in a positive way? (For instance, giving children markers can give them a chance to express anger creatively.)

4. Children are quick to notice if you are angry, and they observe the skills you use to cope with anger. What makes you angry in your work in child care, and what helps you when you're angry?

5. What two new things will you try since you have reviewed this lesson (video and workbook)?

a.

b.



Tell Us More About You...

Since we can't meet face to face, we are interested in knowing more about you. This information is very helpful to the early education specialists who review your assignments. Please return this sheet with your assignment pages.

1. Which of the following best describes you?

- I provide child care in my own home
- I provide child care in someone else's home
- I work in a child care center
- I'm thinking about becoming a child care professional
- Other, please describe

2. How long have you been a child care professional? _____

3. What are the ages of the children in your care? Check all that apply.

- Birth to 12 months
- 13-24 months
- 25-36 months
- 3 years
- 4-5 years
- 6-8 years
- 9 years and over
- Special needs

4. Please feel free to tell us a little about yourself and/or the work you do with children.

5. Other comments (please use the back of this page if necessary).

**Thank you for taking the time to help us make a connection to you
and for being part of our program!**



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