



Better  
Kid Care  
Program

# PARENTS COUNT

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## 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

## Anger Cans and Can't

### 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

### WHEN YOU ARE ANGRY 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

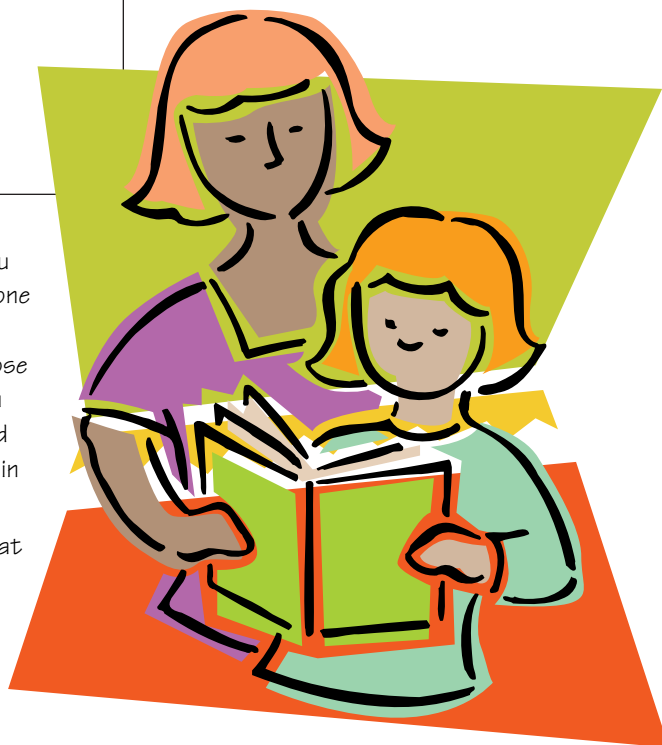
fuse, you know what to do. You say, "I'm sorry, you have lost one TV show. I need to see store behavior so that you do not lose any more." Now instead of you feeling angry at your child, and out of control, you are feeling in control of the situation.

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.



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