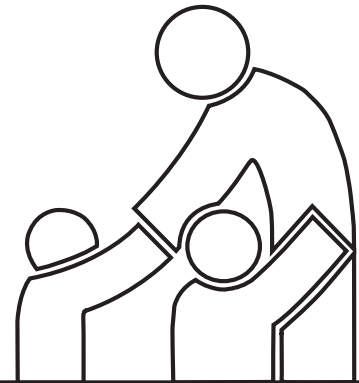


Family Times

NEWSLETTER



A NEWSLETTER FOR ADULTS WITH CHILDREN AGES 5-8

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Dealing with Anger

One of the best opportunities for parents to learn effective parenting strategies is when children get angry or have temper tantrums. If parents can manage their reactions to temper tantrums well, they can manage many other parenting situations.

What Are Temper Tantrums?

Temper tantrums are a common behavior problem. Preschool children may express their anger by lying on the floor, kicking, screaming, and occasionally holding their breath. Older children may slam doors or yell. Tantrums typically occur between ages 2 and 3, when children are forming a sense of self. Older children may find that tantrums work and thus continue to use them. Sometimes a pattern develops.

1. the child is criticized or yelled at by a frustrated parent, brother, or sister;
2. the child responds aggressively;
3. the child's aggression is rewarded when the parent withdraws; and
4. the child learns to use such tactics as whining, yelling, and temper tantrums.

When other family members also use these same methods, the problems increase.

Guidelines for Parents

Learn to deal with your own and others' anger. When parents discipline out of anger or with expectations not suited to the age of their child, parents often make mistakes in the way they react.

The place to begin is with ourselves. When we feel calm, we can model effective anger and conflict management. Example: "I'm so angry at you right now for dumping your cereal all over the clean floor, I feel like hitting you. But I don't hit, so I'm going to leave and come back when I've calmed down."

Distract or redirect the child. When a child is misbehaving, a calm parent can sometimes redirect the child's behavior. Example: "I'm sorry your

brother won't let you play with his model. Let's get your blocks and build something awesome."

Notice, compliment, and reward appropriate behavior. Teaching your child to do the right things is better (and easier) than constantly punishing bad behavior. Children who

To Make a Difference

- Learn to calm yourself.
- State clear rules.
- Notice and compliment appropriate behavior.
- Expect some spills and messes.
- Teach understanding and respect for others.





The Book Nook

Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day

by Judith Viorst is a good book to read with your child.

get only a steady diet of attention for bad behavior tend to repeat those behaviors because they learn that is the best way to get attention. Example: "Thanks, Ebony, for calling me beforehand and asking if you could go over to your friend's house after school."

Be prompt and brief with discipline. "I know you are very angry, but breaking someone else's belongings is not acceptable. You will need to buy your sister a new game to replace the one you just broke."

Be consistent in enforcing rules, especially with older, school-age children. Example: "I'm sending you to your room for 'time out' until you calm down."

Try to discover the reason for your child's anger. What does he or she want? Reasons for temper tantrums vary: to get attention, to protest not getting their way, to get out of doing something they do not want to do, to get power, to get revenge, etc.

Let the child know the behavior is unacceptable. Talk calmly. Example: "Now that we're out of the store and we've both calmed down, let's talk. I think you were mad at me because I said 'no' to buying the game you wanted. Is that right?" ... "It is OK for you to be angry at me, but yelling at me will not get me to buy you anything."

Avoid shaming your child about being angry. Children in healthy families are allowed to express all their feelings, whether they are pleasant or unpleasant. They are not criticized or punished for expressing feelings appropriately, including anger. Example: "You look and sound angry right now. I'd feel angry, too, if someone messed up my things."

Teach children about intensity levels of anger. By using different words to describe the intensity of angry feelings – annoyed, aggravated, frustrated, furious. Example: "I was annoyed when I had a hot meal ready and everyone was late for dinner." "That man was so angry – I think he was furious when someone spray-painted his car."

Set clear limits and high expectations for anger management, appropriate for your child's age, abilities, and temperament. Example: "While I want you to know it's OK to feel angry, it's not OK to hit others!" "I expect you to control your anger without hitting and swearing."

Maintain open communication with your child. Consistently and firmly enforce rules and explain the reasons for the rules in words that your child can understand. Listen to your children's protests and help them talk about why they are angry.

Teach understanding by calling your child's attention to the effects of his or her actions on others. Invite the child to see the situation from the other person's point of view. Consider using a puppet to act out the anger and propose a solution.

References

Adapted from "Children's Anger and Tantrums" by R.J. Fetsch and B. Jacobson, Colorado State University, Cooperative Extension, 1996. www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/consumer/10248.html

When More Help Is Needed

Occasionally, fits of temper and violence persist into elementary school and may signal serious problems. If someone is getting hurt or if you use the suggestions listed in this newsletter and nothing seems to work, it is time to get professional help. Ask your physician, school guidance counselor, or psychologist for names of those skilled in working with children on anger issues.

This issue was written by Martha Garton, Grant County WVU Extension Agent. Reviewed in 2007.

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