



Managing Your Anger

It's inevitable. Kids will do things that make us angry. Any toddler can occasionally bring out the worst in a parent. When you feel like exploding, how can you deal with the situation so you don't make things worse?

Four Steps for Yourself - *Before You Act*

- **Get control of yourself.** You cannot understand your child unless you first understand yourself. STOP! Take a deep breath, feel the air going into your lungs and out again. Let this feeling center you and relax your body. You may need to step out of the room to reduce the tension.
- **Allow yourself to have feelings.** Having negative feelings doesn't mean you will act upon them. You need to accept your own feelings before you try to understand your child.
- **Look inside.** What's going through your head? "I would never have done that as a child." "I don't know how to handle this." "Nobody ever taught me what I should do in a situation like this." "She hates me; why else would she do that?" Your feelings may be influenced by past experiences, frustration or fatigue. They may include fears about your child and maybe even guilt about her behavior.
- **Act only after you are calm.** Respond when you are in control of yourself. You may need to act to prevent her from hurting herself or siblings. If discipline is needed, discipline her for what she has done, not for how she is feeling.

Responding to Your Child

- Allow the child's tantrum to subside. She will be able to listen better.
- Ask yourself, "What is my child feeling right now?" What might the world look like through her eyes?
- Connect with your child. "You're very angry right now. I'm sorry about that. Let's talk; sit by me a minute." Encourage your child to gesture or talk about his feelings; give them words.
- Listen carefully. Look closely at your child and make eye contact. Nod your head to indicate you are trying to understand.
- Start to name emotions with your child even before she can talk. Be a good example by naming your own emotions and talking about them.
- Help your child identify solutions to her problems. "Let's think about some ways to feel better. What are your ideas?" Help your child pick a good solution.
- Model appropriate responses. Your child is learning about emotions by watching how you handle your feelings.

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