

Learning to Control Parental Anger

from the American Counseling Association

No one enjoys getting angry, yet, as parents, we may find it happens too often and too easily in dealing with our children. Whether it's a teenager talking back, or a young child making a fuss at bedtime, our kids can sometimes elicit out of control anger responses.

Parental anger in response to such behaviors usually surfaces suddenly, leading to a feeling that you have to yell, threaten or even lash out. But such anger is not healthy, for you or your child. It's important that we understand our anger and take actions to manage it.

First is accepting that you're someone who angers, and also understanding you can plan for and can take steps to control that anger. Rather than simply letting anger overtake you, have a plan to counter that rising emotion. Simple actions like walking away, counting to ten and taking deep breaths can be enough to distract you, to let you control your emotions and limit your response.

Another important step is to try and understand what has happened that has made you so angry. Yes, your teenager will sometimes say things with the intention of provoking you. Realizing that can give you the knowledge that it is almost a game and reacting angrily may be the sought-for reaction and accomplishes nothing.

A large reason for parental anger is that, as parents, we feel we need to be in control. When that toddler refuses to eat dinner or go to bed on time, or when our teen continues to talk back, it challenges our parental abilities. The big step in controlling the anger that can follow is in understanding why we are getting angry and in accepting that such anger is most likely changing nothing.

It's more helpful to develop empathy for and understanding of our child and why he or she is acting in ways that provoke our anger. Rather than anger, our response perhaps should be to reduce our need to control our children. While you need to guide, teach and set limits, you sometimes have to let your child cry, have minor accidents and make some mistakes in order to learn.

Angry reactions need to be noted, understood and resolved. Yelling, swearing, insulting and hitting do not solve problems - they create problems. If you find you're often angry, a professional counselor can help you find solutions to the issue.

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