



Encourage children to see their strengths as well as their weaknesses. Help them to see that they can reach their goals. Praise them for small moments of control, like something hard, taking turns, or waiting.

Say “NO!” Limits should be clearly explained and enforced. Children should be free to function within those limits.

Tell the child that you accept his or her angry feelings, but offer other suggestions for expressing them. Teach children to put their angry feelings into words rather than fists. *“I know that you’re angry because you can’t play with the ball. Why don’t you tell your friend that you would like to have a turn.”*

Build a positive self-image. Encourage children to see themselves as valued and valuable people. *“Look how bright and clean the kitchen looks because you helped me clean up!”*

Model appropriate behavior. Parents should be aware of the powerful influence of their actions on their children’s behavior. Experts say that children may not always do what you say, but they will almost surely do what you do.

Teach children to “use words”. Talking helps a child gain control and can reduce acting out behavior. Set aside time to have conversations with your children and encourage them to tell you what they are

feeling. Encourage children to say things like, *“I don’t like it when you take my pencil. I’m using it right now.”* When the child begins to show anger, calmly remind him or her to *“Use your words”*.

Help develop controls. Some households have rules to deal with conflict, like, *“If you hit, you sit,”* or *“It’s okay to be angry, but it’s not okay to hurt someone.”* It’s scary for children to be out of control, but sometimes it’s difficult for children to learn to stop what they are doing. Younger children who are out of control may need parents to hold them or remove them, but older children can be helped to learn to stop. Playing games like “Red Light, Green Light” can help children practice stopping and starting. They can practice self-control by doing activities that require careful concentration, like stringing beads or moving toy cars along a “road” of masking tape.

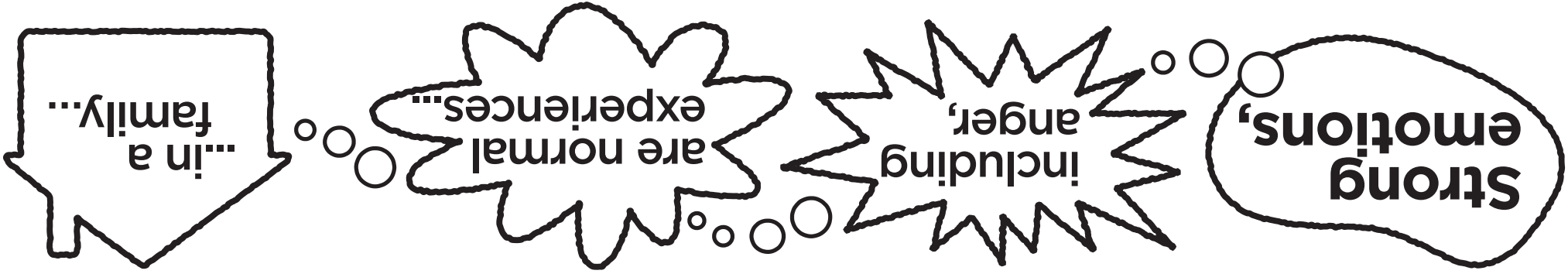


It’s hard for children to learn not to hit or hurt when they’re angry or frustrated. It’s only little by little that they develop controls – and they do that best through the caring, loving help of parents and other caregivers.



Virginia Coalition for Child Abuse Prevention
c/o Prevent Child Abuse Virginia (PCAV)
2211 Dickens Rd., Suite 204
Richmond, Virginia 23230
www.PreventChildAbuse.org

Virginia Coalition for
Child Abuse Prevention



Dealing with the Angry Child

Human beings are not born with self-control. Adults must allow children to feel all their feelings, but must teach them to express their feelings in acceptable ways. *The following ideas for responding to children's anger may help:*

Catch the child being good.

Tell the child what behavior pleases you. Respond to positive efforts and reinforce good behavior with statements like, "You were really patient while I was on the phone," and "Thank you for telling the truth about what really happened."

Provide physical outlets and other alternatives.

It is important for children to have opportunities for physical exercise and movement.

Use closeness and touching.

Move physically closer to the child to curb the angry impulse. Young children are often calmed by having an adult come close and express interest in the child's activities. A child about to use a toy or tool in a destructive way may be stopped by an adult who expresses interest in having it shown to him. An outburst from an older child struggling with a difficult reading selection can be prevented by a caring adult who moves near the child to say, "Show me which words are giving you trouble."

Be ready to show affection.

Sometimes all that is needed for an angry child to regain control is a sudden hug or other impulsive show of affection.

One of the major problems in dealing with anger in children is the angry feelings that are often stirred up in us. When we were children, many of us learned that to be angry was to be "bad," and we may have been made to feel guilty for expressing our anger.

In order to learn to cope with anger, we must realize that anger is just a feeling. It signals us that something is going wrong or needs attention.

Learn what triggers your anger... In dealing with our own anger, we need to learn to recognize the "triggers" that cause those feelings and prepare strategies for those situations. *Anger may be a secondary emotion. First we feel scared (or helpless, frustrated, exhausted, disappointed, threatened or insulted), then angry.* The parent who feels like spanking a child who just ran into the street first felt fear before being angry. Identifying the emotions accompanying anger can help us choose how to respond.

Recognize the physical signs of anger...

When you feel anger rising, you can take steps to calm down. Breathe deeply, count to ten, and leave the room. When you are calm, you can refocus on the problem that's causing your child to be emotional.

Ease tension through humor. Kidding the child out of a temper tantrum or outburst offers the child an opportunity to "save face." However, it is important to distinguish between face-saving humor and sarcasm, teasing or ridicule.

Appeal directly to the child. Tell him or her how you feel and ask for consideration. "I know that noise you're making doesn't usually bother me, but today I have a headache so please find something quiet you'd like to do."

Explain situations. Help the child realize how easily young children can begin to react properly once they understand the cause of their frustration.

Remove the child from the situation. The child may lose control so completely that he or she must be removed from the area. This should be viewed by the child as a way of teaching, "You can't do that." A "time out" from the stressful situation will give the child a chance to regain control.

