

Anger in children is often triggered by frustration. They cannot understand their situation and they do not know how to change it. Helpless and unable to verbalize their feelings, they respond with anger.

## Teach Children to Use Words Instead of Aggression or Explosive Angry Outbursts and Tantrums

Young children need help learning to use words to express their emotions instead of hitting, yelling, biting or kicking. When a child is experiencing an emotion, provide the words to describe it. If you see one child hurt another child, intervene by talking with both children. Steps to Problem Solving With Words:

1) Get both children who were involved - not just the one who "misbehaved." Ask "How come?" ("Why did you do that?" can be threatening.) With genuine care and concern, ask, "Harry, how come you hit Joshua?" What you hear may surprise you. "He knocked down my blocks." "He called me stupid." "He said I'm not invited to his birthday." "He said he's not my friend." "He said my mama is ugly." "He took the purple marker." "He has more play-doh than me." Etc. *Note: If there seems to be "no reason" for the behavior, some children do not know how to ask other children to let them play with them, so they hit or aggravate to get the other child's attention. In those instances, give him the words he needs in order to make friends.*

Step 2) Once you've heard both "sides" ask questions that will lead them to resolve the issue. Give children the words to use to say to each other when they need help resolving issues. Examples: "Do you think it was nice or mean to tell Jasmine she could not come to your birthday?" "Do you think Presli was happy or mad when you had all the baby dolls and would not let her have one?" "What could you have done instead?" "What is the rule about \_\_\_?" "What can you say to help Kim feel better?" "Rob, ask Khloe what can I do to fix this?" "Ask her, 'Do you want me to get you another piece of paper?'" "Ask Kim, 'Can I help you rebuild it?'" "Kim, tell Khloe 'Don't hit me again!'" "Khloe, tell Kim, 'I won't hit you again.'" "Khloe, ask her if she needs an ice pack." "Wally, ask Kevin, 'When can I have a turn with the purple marker?'" "Alec, tell Mark, don't call me stupid!" Have them mimic you so they will have experience using their words to solve their problems. Very young children may be too intimidated to repeat the words after you. Go through all the steps anyway. Even if they say only a word or two, you are planting a seed and it WILL sprout one day!

**Provide Physical Activities** - Children with anger issues or aggressive tendencies need outlets for their energy. Provide group games and activities that require lots of physical activity. If you notice children sitting too much on the playground, challenge them to race with you, blow bubbles for them to chase, dance or exercise with them. The more energy they expend in appropriate physical activities, the less they will express in negative behavior.

**Replacement Behaviors** - Teach children specific replacement behaviors. Role-play situations so children can learn to walk away, stomp their feet, say they are mad, or come ask you for help. Teach children to count to ten or count backwards or pretend to blow bubbles when they start to get mad. Help the children practice these replacement behaviors when they are calm and unstressed, not right after displaying aggressive behavior. *And remember that while you are teaching these things to all the children, the child who represses her anger is learning a healthier way of dealing with it, too.*

**Read Children's Storybooks About Emotions Aloud to the Children** - Listening to stories and looking at storybooks about emotions will help children learn the vocabulary of emotions and creative and appropriate ways to express them. [When Sophie Gets Angry...really, Really Angry](#) by Molly Bang, [How Are You Peeling?](#) by Saxton Freymann, [Sometimes I'm Bombaloo](#) by Rachel Vail, [Pinduli](#) by Janell Cannon, etc.

For a great list of books about emotions, along with a synopsis of each, visit <http://www.thetwincoach.com/2011/06/8-books-that-teach-your-kids-emotional.html> and read the article "8 Books That Teach Kids Emotional Intelligence."

## Red Flags That Indicate a Child May Need Professional Help

- frequent tantrum episodes ( 5 or more almost every day)
- tantrums that last more than 30 minutes most of the time
- tantrums that involve violence or aggression towards caregiver and others
- tantrums that involve self-injuries
- children who hurt animals
- children who rarely make eye contact
- children who seem "detached"

Repeated episodes of sustained and explosive anger can signal the need for professional intervention. These severe episodes of anger in children can be a sign of the following serious anger issues: anger disorder, oppositional defiance disorder, bipolar disorder, attention deficit disorder, depression, anger addiction