

# Managing Your Own Anger

A Guide for Parents

PARENT  
SERIES





## **A Guide for Parents**

Countless educators and human service professionals have benefited from CPI's highly effective approach to limit setting. This guide explains how parents can use these same skills and techniques when dealing with their own children.

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**For 40 years, the Crisis Prevention Institute has helped millions of** individuals begin a journey of positive, supportive, and empathetic caring for people of all ages. With a focus on healthcare, education, human services and dementia care, CPI sets the standard for best practices in evidence-based workplace violence prevention. Our training is designed to support the safety and well-being of both staff and those in their care. We teach the skills that help professionals de-escalate verbal and physical crises in the workplace, with an array of solutions that address the full spectrum of risk levels.

# You will learn:

- ✓ How dealing with **your anger affects** the way your **children deal** with **their own anger**.
- ✓ **Healthy ways to manage** your anger.
- ✓ How **the body responds** to anger—**psychologically** and **physically**.
- ✓ **Four steps** to express anger in **positive** and **productive** ways . . . and much more!



# The Emotion of Anger

One of the challenges of parenthood is dealing with the inevitable angry feelings that we sometimes have when our children misbehave. Anger is a normal human emotion. How you deal with your anger is the more important concern.

Most of us connect the emotion of anger with behaviour that we don't like—even though we may be guilty of it ourselves. Some of the ways that people deal with their anger include:

- **They pretend that nothing is wrong.**
- **They lose their tempers and say (or do) things they later regret.**
- **They withdraw and sulk.**
- **They express their anger indirectly by taunting others or using sarcasm.**

When we are angry with our children and do the things that are listed above, we teach our children that this is the way to deal with angry feelings. We shouldn't be surprised when our children yell, hit, pout or ridicule if that is what we are doing ourselves.

Pretending that we're not angry when we are is not the answer. This seldom works anyway, and it does not solve the problem that led to our anger in the first place. Instead, it is important to separate the emotion of anger from the behaviour that is so often displayed by angry people.

Anger expressed in a healthy way can provide a positive example for your children: that it is possible to be angry without being aggressive.

# But how do you manage your own anger?

Anger management is a skill, and like any skill, it requires practice. Here are some guidelines for getting started:

## **1. Be aware of your body's response to anger.**

When you feel yourself getting angry, notice how your body is responding physiologically. Anger isn't just a psychological response that exists only in your mind.

Anger has physical aspects, as well. You may notice that your heart is beating faster, your breathing is shallow, and there may be a knot in the pit of your stomach.

## **2. Breathe deeply.**

Deep breaths will help to calm your body and increase the supply of oxygen to your brain—oxygen that will help you to think clearly and calmly. Don't discount that old advice to take a deep breath and count to ten. It really does have a purpose.

## **3. Ask yourself, "Why am I angry?"**

Take a brief break to calm down and ask yourself these questions. Why am I allowing my children to trigger my anger? Have they hit a sore spot? Made me feel insecure or inadequate in some way? Could I be overreacting because of other stresses in my life—trouble at work or financial concerns?

## **4. Decide if you want to speak up.**

Do you want your child to know that you are angry? At times, it may be an opportunity to teach your child that it is possible to express anger without yelling, hitting, or other undesirable behaviour. At other times, you might decide not to discuss your anger with your child but simply carry on in a calm, patient manner.

# Expressing Your Anger

If you do want to express your anger to your child, here are some steps to follow:

## 1. **Be direct, specific and brief.**

Stick to one issue at a time, and don't bring up the past. If you're talking to your teenager about their messy room, don't bring up the fact that they missed their curfew last Saturday night.

It is difficult enough to resolve one problem at a time; don't get out your laundry list. Bringing up past issues is likely to cause confusion and resentment.

## 2. **Focus on feelings, not blame.**

At some point you have probably told your children not to blame others for their actions or feelings. In the same way, don't blame your child for yours. ("You made me so mad that I couldn't help losing my temper with you!")

Try to avoid using phrases such as "you always" or "you never." Words like this will only put your child on the defensive.

## 3. **Listen to your child's response.**

We owe it to our children to hear their side of the story. Try to put yourself in your child's position and listen for their real message. What are they trying to tell you?

## 4. **Be realistic about your expectations.**

Parents often think they can force their children to think or behave in a certain way. This is seldom true, and even if it were, it is contrary to one of the goals of parenthood—to help our children become independent adults who can think for themselves and make their own decisions.

**Anger is a difficult emotion** for many of us to deal with, and it is one that can easily be triggered by the challenging moments of parenthood. What better incentive to **improve the way we deal** with this emotion than to **think about the positive legacy** we can leave our children **if we teach them** that anger can be **expressed in positive, productive** ways.



**Whatever steps you've decided to take, remember that it takes time and effort to change old behaviour patterns. Try to be patient with yourself—and your children.**

Thank you for reading! We hope you found this resource helpful.  
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