



Anger Summary

Why Anger?

Research confirms that when teens learn to manage their feelings, it simultaneously strengthens their self-control, ability to problem solve, and the ability to focus their attention. There are intentional ways to grow a healthy parent-teen relationship, and growing your teen's skills to manage anger provides a perfect opportunity.

Tip These steps are done best when you and your teen are not angry, tired, or in a rush.

Tip Intentional communication and a healthy parenting relationship support these steps.

Step 1. Get Your Teen Thinking by Getting Their **Input**

- *"How do you know when you are angry?"*
- *"What are some common things that make you angry?"*
- *"How can you tell when someone is angry with you? And, what happens for you when someone is angry with you?"*
- Use your best listening skills! Listen closely to what is most concerning to your teen without projecting your own thoughts, concerns, and feelings.
- Reflect or paraphrase back what you hear. For example, if your teen says, "Julie made fun of my clothes and called me fat." You could say, *"So, I hear that Julie was really hurtful to you."*
- Help your teen make the mind-body connection. Ask: *"What clues did your body give you that you were angry?"* You can also say, *"What are you feeling in your body now as you talk about it?"*

Trap What makes a parent angry can differ greatly from what angers a teen. Listen closely to what is most concerning to them without projecting your own thoughts, concerns, and feelings.

Trap Be sure you talk about anger at a calm time when you are not stressed or upset!

Step 2. **Teach** New Skills by Interactive Modeling

- Learn together! Anger and hurt are important messages to pay attention. They mean your emotional, social, or physical needs are not getting met or necessary boundaries (our rules or values) are being violated.

- Anger is not bad or negative. You should not avoid or shut down the experience of it.
- Venting, such as complaining, ranting, or even mumbling, does not get out the upset thoughts and feelings. That's because it does not offer an alternative view of the situation nor does it pose any solutions. Because venting doesn't change thinking, the feeling persists.
- Avoiding or pretending you are not angry will not make it go away in time. Because the anger - like any other feeling - is emerging to send a vital message to its owner, it cannot be avoided or denied.
- Model behaviors, and your teens will notice and learn.¹
- Create a calm-down plan.
- Recognize your anger from physical signs.
- Practice deep breathing to calm down.
- Brainstorm coping strategies for yourself such as walking outside, moving in slow motion, distracting yourself, writing, or drawing.
- Make a list of coping strategies with your teen like counting to 50, drawing, listening to music, etc. Keep it handy!
- Work on your family feelings vocabulary. Use specific feeling words to describe your state of mind and help your teen describe theirs.
- Teach assertive communication through "I-messages" such as, "*I feel* _____ (insert feeling word) *when you* _____ (name the words or actions that upset you) *because* _____."
- Teach your teen to repair harm. A critical step in teaching your teen about managing anger is learning how to repair harm (physical or emotional) when they've caused it.
- Create a family gratitude ritual.

Tip Deep breathing is not just a nice thing to do. It actually removes the chemical that has flowed over your brain so that you regain access to your creativity, language, and logic instead of staying stuck in your primal brain. Practicing deep breathing with your teen can offer them a powerful tool to use anytime and anywhere they feel overcome with heated feelings.

Trap If you tell or even command your teen to make an apology, how will they ever learn to genuinely apologize with feeling? In fact, apologizing or making things right should never be assigned as a punishment since then the control lies with the adult and robs the teen of the opportunity to learn the skill and internalize the value of repairing harm. Instead, ask your teen how they feel they should make up for the hurt they've caused and help them implement their idea.

Trap Though at times it can feel like it, there are no "bad" feelings. All feelings have a positive intention. In fact, every feeling a person has is a vital message quickly interpreting what's happening around them. Because feelings are merely that - an instant interpretation - you always have the opportunity to reinterpret your circumstances and particularly your response to your feelings.

Step 3. **Practice** to Grow Skills and Develop Habits

- Use "I'd love to see..." statements like, "*I'd love to see how you use your chill zone to find your feet again.*"
- Accept feelings (even ones you don't like!). "*I hear you're upset. What can you do to help yourself feel better?*"
- Recognize effort. "*I noticed how you took some deep breaths when you got frustrated. That's really going to help you!*"

- Practice deep breathing.
- Follow through on repairing harm.
- Include reflection on the day in your bedtime routine. Give teens the chance to reflect on what's good and abundant in their lives.

Step 4. **Support** Your Teen's Development and Success

- Learn about your teen's development. Each new age will present different challenges.
- Reflect on outcomes. *"Seems like you couldn't get to sleep last night because you were feeling bad about what Julie said to you. Did you have a hard time paying attention in class? What could we do tonight to help?"*
- Stay engaged. Try out new and different coping strategies to see what works best.
- Engage in further practice. Create more opportunities to practice when all is calm.
- Follow through on logical consequences to repair harm when needed.
- If there are strong feelings in your household most days, most of the time, then it may be time to consider outside intervention.

Step 5. **Recognize** Effort and Quality to Foster Motivation

- Notice even small successes. *"I noticed when you got frustrated with your homework, you moved away and took some deep breaths. Yes! Excellent."*
- Recognize small steps along the way.
- Build celebrations into your routine (game night, watching movies or shows together, a favorite dinner). Include hugs, high fives, and fist bumps as ways to appreciate one another.

References

1. Miller, J.S. (2017). [Teaching young children about anger](#). Thrive Global.

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