

Anger management in young children

Volume 7 Issue 5 - 2017

Steven Richfield

Clinical Psychologist, Philadelphia, USA

Correspondence: Steven Richfield, Clinical Psychologist, Philadelphia, USA, Tel 610-238-4450, Email director@parentcoachcards.com

Received: February 08, 2017 | **Published:** May 17, 2017

Opinion

Parents write: Our five year old gets so angry and aggressive that he may get kicked out of preschool. Help!

Early childhood is generally marked by behaviors that leave parents brimming with pride and wonder, not shuddering with worry and confusion. But sometimes immature impulse control and fierce anger combine with such intensity that young children aggressively attack and react to people and events. The results are disastrous for peer relations, school placement, and family relationships. Parents are hard pressed to assess causation and find answers to helping their child. Consider the following coaching points to help your young child learn to manage his anger.

Don't ignore the obvious contributions

Young children's lives are filled with many activities and interests that have pivotal effects upon their repertoire of behaviors. Cartoons, video games, fantasy games with peers, and even wrestling with a parent, can raise the probability of the acting out of anger in the form of aggression. Carefully consider which of these modeling influences may be responsible for the behavior in question. Remove or significantly reduce exposure to these factors, while explaining to your child the link between their misbehavior and the contribution.

Start a dialogue emphasizing safety and education, not punishment and lecture

Parents often feel compelled to punitively respond to the child who has lost control of his anger. This approach strains the trust your child places in you, and often closes down discussion of angry feelings and thoughts. The goal of discussion is for your child to feel safe to reveal their angry thoughts and identify the early warning signs of impending aggression. Suggest that they may feel a heaviness in their head or heat in their body. Share your observations of the triggers that have stimulated their acting out in the past.

Practice self-control strategies that are simple and appealing

Young children are often willing to practice ways to calm themselves down when warning signs are present. Model deep breathing techniques, counting to ten, and walking away from trouble. As you do so, pretend you are your child, and speak aloud how a gradual reduction of anger is taking place. Encourage your child to practice the same techniques and praise them for doing so. Prompt them to do so when you are spending time with them in environments that have triggered problems in the past.

Consider family influences that may be modeling inappropriate impulse breakthrough behaviors

Family members, such as older siblings and parents, may demonstrate similar problematic behaviors that are regularly witnessed by young children. Slamming doors, screams of protest, loud verbal and/or physical reactions of anger, or other aggressive behaviors may cultivate similar behavior patterns in young children. If this is the case, ensure that other family members address their contribution and work toward using "words of meaning to get what their feelings across, not words of anger." Dr. Steven Richfield is an author and child psychologist in Plymouth Meeting. He has developed a child-friendly, self-control/social skills building program called Parent Coaching Cards now in use in thousands of homes and schools throughout the world. His book, "The Parent Coach: A New Approach To Parenting In Today's Society," is available through Sopris West (sopriswest.com or 1-800-547-6747) He can be contacted at director@parentcoachcards.com or 610-238-4450. To learn more, visit www.parentcoachcards.com

Acknowledgments

None.

Conflicts of interest

Author declares there are no conflicts of interest.

Funding

None.