

# MANAGING ANGER IN CHILDREN...



Tantrums and angry outbursts are a normal part of early childhood. However, they can be stressful for both parents and children alike. Learning to recognise your child's triggers and manage early emotions can help to reduce the occurrence and severity of these outbursts.

## IN THIS RESOURCE:

- Some of the common signs of anger in children
- The different stages of anger
- Top tips for managing your child's angry behaviour

## WHAT IS ANGER AND WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

Anger is a normal human emotion. Everyone gets angry sometimes. However, not everyone manages their anger effectively. This is also true for children. Teaching our tamariki effective ways of managing their anger early on can affect their overall social and emotional development.

Just like adults, every child is different, and will display their emotions in different ways. In under fives, some classic displays of anger include:

- Tantrums
- Hitting/Fighting
- Disobedience
- Yelling
- Throwing things



## WHAT CAN I DO TO MANAGE MY CHILD'S ANGER?

When children are angry, they are unable to reason or understand logic. They need help and guidance from adults to be able to calm themselves down. Talking to your children about their feelings when they are calm is a great way of helping them understand their feelings and will help to manage those angry outbursts when they do happen.

Being able to recognise your child's anger triggers is another great way of preventing and managing angry behaviour. Some children are more sensitive to certain stimuli and situations than others so understanding your own child's needs will help you to better help them.

## STAGES OF ANGER

Tantrums and angry outbursts don't usually come out of nowhere, although it may seem like it sometimes! Use these stage cards as a guide to identify your child's emotional state and manage associated behaviours. Note: this is a guide only and may differ for each child depending on circumstances and individual temperament.

### CALM

This is your child's normal state. In this state children may:

- Be co-operative
- Be friendly
- Display understanding and ability to reason (depending on age and stage)
- Play independently
- Show affection to others

### FRUSTRATED

In this stage children may begin to show warning signs that an angry outburst is coming. In this stage children may:

- Be fidgety or unable to sit still
- Express a lack of self confidence
- Display muscle tension i.e. clenched fists
- Throw things
- Give up on tasks
- Be generally irritable

### MAD

This is the stage where anger becomes more evident. Children in this stage may:

- Fight with peers
- Throw things
- Yell or snap at others
- Refuse to share or co-operate
- Verbally express feelings (depending on age and understanding)
- Cry

### EXPLOSIVE

In this stage the anger has escalated to a point where it will be impossible to reason with the child and immediate intervention will be necessary. Children in this stage may:

- Cry
- Tantrum
- Throw things or destroy property
- Hurt themselves or others

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## MANAGING THE STAGES OF ANGER

Once you are able to recognise which stage your child is at, there are several things you can do to help your child manage their emotions and return to a calm state.

Please note: this is a guide only and may differ for each child depending on circumstances and individual temperament.

It is important to remember that anger is a normal emotion and children have less experience dealing with their emotions than adults do. Always take time to calm yourself before trying to help a child work through their anger.

## CALM

- Use this time to talk to your child about their feelings. Explain to them what anger is and how everyone gets angry sometimes
- Talk to your child about how we can calm ourselves down using techniques such as deep breathing
- Designate a 'cool down' space with your child. Explain that we use this space when we are angry to take some time out from what's angering us and help our bodies to become calm again. Note: this is NOT a punishment space
- Provide your child with lots of praise and encouragement when they are displaying positive behaviours.

## FRUSTRATED

- Talk to your child and help them recognise their emotions and triggers, i.e. "I can see that puzzle is making you feel very frustrated...puzzles can be very tricky..."
- Encourage your child to problem solve... "I wonder if there is another way we could do that, that would help that piece to fit? What do you think?"
- Praise your child for demonstrating positive reactions and behaviour "I could see how frustrating that was, I really liked how you persisted and kept trying even though it was hard. Well done!"
- For under twos, distraction can be an excellent way of preventing tantrums when frustration is visible.

## MAD

- Consider your child's triggers; are they hungry? Tired? Over or under stimulated?
- Encourage problem solving and social coaching, but be prepared to intervene
- Suggest to the child that they may like to take themselves to their 'cool down' space to calm their body down
- Remove child or trigger from situation if things continue to escalate

## EXPLOSIVE

- Children in this stage are not able to reason with you or understand logic
- Remove the child from the situation, particularly if there is a risk to property or other children
- Use your designated 'cool down' space. Explain to the child that they need to go to their space until their body has calmed down. A good rule is one minute per year of age, with a minimum period of two minutes calm time before leaving the space.
- Once the child has calmed down, allow them to return to the activity and praise them for their next positive behaviour
- Once the incident has passed and the child is calm, avoid discussing the incident with the child again



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