

## How can I control my temper around my children?

It is common for parents to become frustrated with their children sometimes. Anger is a completely normal human emotion, but it can easily get out of control. Learning to handle your anger, especially around impressionable children, will help not only you as a parent, but your child who will learn from example.

Consider the following tips for effectively handling anger:

- **Be aware:** Be aware of your anger and your emotional level. Then do whatever necessary to calm yourself before yelling or acting out physically with your child.
- **Start counting:** The old method of counting to ten before you respond to your child really works. It gives you a few seconds to take some deep breaths, collect your thoughts and allow your frustration to decrease.
- **Take a break:** Give yourself a “time out.” Go to another room, walk around the backyard for a few minutes or run up and down the stairs a few times. Getting away from the situation and physically exerting yourself allows some of the stress to dissipate. You can then return to address the situation more appropriately.
- **Take a break mentally:** You do not necessarily have to move away from the situation to get away from it all. Create a special place in your mind where you can go whenever these angry moments arise. Repeat a phrase to yourself that helps you feel relaxed.
- **Do not spin on it:** Often when we think back to a negative or frustrating situation, old anger can resurface. Remind yourself that getting angry again is not going to fix anything and it will not help you feel better. Try to recall how badly you felt the last time you allowed your anger to control your words and actions.
- **Tighten up to loosen up:** Take a couple minutes and start to tighten your muscles and then relax them. Start with your feet and toes, and then tighten your leg muscles and release. Tighten your arm muscles and then relax them. This series of actions will help you relax by sending endorphins to your brain to help you calm down.
- **Share your stress:** It is healthy to share your feelings with other parents. Set up a buddy system and call them whenever necessary to help talk you out of your anger. If necessary, this parent (whether your partner, neighbor or friend) may be able to step in for a few minutes to tend to your child while you take a walk and calm down. In return, you can be supportive during times in which they are experiencing frustration and anger as well.
- **Change the situation:** Often, children will act out because they are bored, tired or hungry. Try to assess the situation from their perspective and consider how you may be able to adjust their routine to get them into a better state.

### Resources

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH): [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)