



Managing the angry child

What can an adult do when a child is really angry?

- Don't retaliate (joining in the child's anger will wind her up even more. It will also teach her poor ways of resolving conflict.)
- Model the behaviour you want a child to learn. If you hit, she learns to hit. If you get out of control, she may learn to fear her own anger. Subsequently she will also learn to fear other people who hold power in her life-teachers, employers, partners.
- Let her know you understand how she's feeling. "I can see how angry you are" or "It seems like you're really mad about that".
- Leave explaining another point of view until the anger has been expressed and acknowledged.
- Ask what she would like to do to improve things.
- Acknowledge what she says. Reaffirm the feelings and then help look at the options. eg. "What might happen if you did X or Y?"
- Don't force children into apologising when they don't feel sorry. You may be forcing them to bury their anger and teaching them to be hypocritical.
- You can give a child a sheet of paper and say, "It seems that you're furious. Draw me a picture and show me how angry you are." Acknowledge the picture. "I can see you're really mad. What do you want to do with this picture? How are you feeling right now? What might you do the next time you feel as angry as that?"

What can an adult do when children are angry with each other?

- Reflect what you see happening. "I see two children fighting over a ball."
- Separate the children if need be for safety's sake. Say "Someone might get hurt."
- Give them both a way of venting their anger or calming down. "When you've got your anger out, we'll talk about it. You run to the front fence, you run to the back fence and come back to me."
- Find out what they each need. You may need to decide if they need to calm down or vent their anger. "It looks like you need something to play with."
- Find out what they are afraid of. "Are you worried you won't get a turn if you give him the ball?"
- Ask for some solutions.

What can an adult do when one child has hurt another?

- Look the offender in the eye and say firmly, "We don't hit. It hurts." Then apply consequence.

- Attend to the victim and reflect their feelings. “You were kicked on the leg. I bet that hurts. I will try and make sure it doesn’t happen again.”

Key points:

Children learn how to behave from adult models.

Children learn more from what adults do than what they say.

Good listening helps to dissipate anger and increase a child’s self esteem.

Listening to anger helps more than anything.

Behind anger is hurt, loss and disempowerment.

Change gives hope and personal power.