

## Managing Anger as a Parent



### Highlights

It's normal to get angry sometimes, but it's a problem if it happens often or if you express your anger in an unhealthy way.

Parents might get angry if they are stressed, don't get enough sleep, or if their child misbehaves.

If parents get angry a lot, their children are more likely to develop social and emotional difficulties and have a higher risk of mental health problems in the future.

If you notice yourself getting angry, it can help to take some deep breaths, leave the room, listen to soft music, or go for a walk to calm down.

If you have trouble controlling your anger, it's a good idea to see a psychologist for help.

### In This Article

What causes anger?

Why might I experience anger?

How does my anger affect my child?

How do I deal with my feelings?

How can I learn to control my anger?

When should I seek help?

## **What Causes Anger?**

Anger is a common human emotion. You might get angry if you believe something unfair has happened or you feel under threat. When you get angry, your muscles tighten, your heart rate and blood pressure increase, and you may get flushed skin.

Common triggers for anger include:

- Getting frustrated
- Feeling like you're not being appreciated
- Things not going your way
- Being treated unfairly
- Feeling embarrassed, jealous, sad, or scared
- People not listening to you

It's normal to get angry from time to time. Anger becomes a problem if it happens often, or if you express it in a way that harms yourself or others.

You're more likely to have anger problems if you:

- Grew up in a home where people got angry a lot
- Experienced trauma
- Tend to expect things to happen in a certain way
- Have a mental health problem, such as oppositional defiant disorder or a personality disorder

## **Why Might I Experience Anger?**

It is normal for parents of young children to get angry from time to time. You're probably dealing with a lot of demands, such as family, work, household responsibilities, and social activities. It can be difficult when children don't behave or things don't go to plan.

Common anger triggers in parents are:

Feeling like your partner isn't helping  
Stress about finances or relationships  
Lack of sleep

Sometimes, having a baby can trigger negative emotions and memories of trauma from your own childhood. If you experienced trauma or abuse as a child, seeking support from a mental health professional can be helpful.

### **How Does My Anger Affect My Child?**

Everyone gets angry - it's how you deal with it that matters. You are setting a good example for your child if you take a few deep breaths and walk away when you're angry. But if you lose your temper a lot, it can have serious negative effects on your child.

Living in a household where there is a lot of anger puts your child at risk of mental health problems later in life.

Children may react to angry parents with a wide range of different responses, for example:

- Not being able to concentrate
- Finding it hard to play with other children
- Becoming quiet and fearful
- Becoming rude and aggressive
- Developing sleeping problems

You should never physically hurt or punish your child, no matter what they have done or how angry you are. Physically punishing children puts them at risk of:

- Injuries
- Antisocial behavior
- Aggressive behavior
- Low self-esteem
- Mental health problems
- Learning problems
- Abusive relationships

Never shake a baby. Shaking, hitting, kicking, or throwing a baby can result in death, disability, or serious injury.

## **How Do I Deal with My Feelings?**

Anger is often accompanied by other emotions, such as disappointment, worry, embarrassment, frustration, hurt, or fear. Recognizing and dealing with these emotions can help you control your anger.

Bottling up your anger is not helpful. It's important to learn to express it in a controlled way that doesn't cause harm to others.

If you can understand the negative thoughts or feelings that trigger your anger, you might be able to avoid these situations or react differently when they happen. Think about what is really making you feel angry.

Talking with someone you trust, like a friend, a relative, or a professional counselor, can help you work through your feelings.

## **How Can I Learn to Control My Anger?**

### **Controlling Your Anger in the Moment**

It's important to recognise the signs that you're becoming angry, so you can take action before it gets out of control.

Signs might include:

- A fast heartbeat or breathing faster
- Tense shoulders
- Clenching your jaw or hands
- Sweating
- Feeling agitated

If you notice these signs, try one of these techniques to calm yourself down:

Count to 10 before you react

Leave the room and go somewhere quiet. Make sure your child is safe before you

leave the room

Take some slow, deep breaths

Go for a walk, take a warm shower, or listen to calming music to distract yourself from what's making you angry

Think about what happened from someone else's point of view

Repeat a calming mantra in your mind, such as 'I can deal with this'

## **Avoiding Getting Angry**

If you find yourself getting angry a lot, you can learn to change your thought patterns and react to difficult situations in a healthier way. A psychologist can help you with this.

Strategies that can help include:

Reducing stress with relaxation techniques, getting some exercise, or taking regular breaks

Learning how to communicate better and really listen to other people

Making changes in your routine to avoid situations that make you angry

Setting aside time for hobbies or fun activities

Getting help using cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)

## **When Should I Seek Help?**

It's important to seek help with managing anger if:

You get angry a lot

You have trouble controlling your anger

You have physically hurt yourself or someone else out of anger

Anger is affecting your work or relationships

You turn to alcohol or other substances when you're angry

You drive dangerously when you're angry

## **Tools and Assistance**

If you feel you might hurt yourself, your partner, or your child, seek immediate support from a mental health professional, a trusted friend, or a support organization.

If you're having trouble with anger, talk to a doctor or counselor. They can refer you to a psychologist, if needed, and help you work out a plan to manage your anger.

For additional support, consider reaching out to helplines, counseling services, or online resources on anger management and parenting strategies.