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Love and Logic®

# Angry Kids

"Why does my child always have an attitude? She's often disruptive, disrespectful or picking on other children. She's always the one with a chip on her shoulder." This frustrated parent expresses the feelings of many—Why is my child angry and how do I deal with it?

A child who acts out may be expressing other emotions through anger. A youngster may be experiencing a loss, a divorce or a move. A child may be trying to let the world know that his/her life is not what it ought to be. Regardless of the reason, it looks the same. But how can we deal with this angry attitude without being a psychologist?

## A Parent's Job is to Understand, Not to Fix Things

Listening for understanding is impossible when a child is "drunk" on anger. Never reason with an angry child. Instead say, "It sounds like you're really mad. I want to listen and understand. I will listen when you're voice is as calm as mine. Come back then." If you can't make the child leave, you leave.

Be prepared to repeat your calm statement if the child is determined to yell out the anger without leaving. "Don't worry about it now. We'll talk when you're calm." You may need to say this several times. Be prepared to play "broken record" with, what did I say? Use these phrases instead of reasoning. Reasoning will only fuel the anger.

## "Thanks for Sharing That"

Once the child is able to discuss the anger, listen without reasoning. Try to avoid telling the child why he/she should not be angry. Avoid telling them that things will be okay and how to make it better. Your job is to prove that you understand—"It sounds like you get mad when I tell you it's time to do your chores. Thanks for sharing that with me. I'll give it some thought. If you think of a better way for me to remind you, let me know."

## Parents Can Make It Worse

Parents who do not treat their children with respect send a message that says, "You're not worthy." These parents often communicate with a lot of yelling. This encourages the child to yell and scream back while the parents retaliate by getting madder. It's a vicious cycle that breeds chronic anger in the child.

In place of anger, parents should work on listening to their children in a non-threatening, honest and open manner. Most children will talk openly only after they truly believe their parents are interested in what they have to say and recognize their feelings.

## When Anger Continues

If, despite your best attempts to understand your child's anger, there is no change in behavior after three months, parents should seek professional counseling for their child. In some instances, chronic anger is best helped by a professional.

Never reason with an angry child. Use empathy and understanding instead

"It sounds like you're really mad. I want to listen and understand. And I will listen when your voice is as calm as mine. Come back then."

*People who are really successful implementing this skill*
*Purchased Simple Parenting Strategies*

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