

Tips for Parents with Adolescents Struggling with Anger

Anger is healthy when (pg. 2):

- It stays anger and does not turn into aggression
- The person takes responsibility for their own feelings for example, “I’m angry” not “you make me mad”
- It focuses on an issue and not the person for example, “I am mad because I wanted to go a friend’s house” not “you’re the worst parents in the universe”
- It lasts a short time and does grow into long-term resentments or grudges.
- The person can talk to those they are angry with without losing control (swearing, yelling, or saying things they later regret)

Common reasons for difficulty managing anger include (pg. 6):

- Growing up an angry family or an abusive family
- Witnessing domestic violence in your family
- Believing that nothing seems fair
- Having adult responsibilities but no freedom
- The desire to make your own decisions
- Sexual development
- Angry friends
- Angry enemies
- Alcohol and other drugs
- Pride and power
- Not liking yourself



Ways parents can help their adolescent better manage their anger (pg. 19-25):

- *Talk with your adolescent about whether they are ready to make a change-* Does the adolescent want to continue to be angry all the time or do they want to make changes. Every person can choose to be angry or not to be angry. Adolescents can make a list of the benefits to keeping their angry behavior and then the costs or losses of their angry behavior. They can compare their lists and focus on the reasons they want to change their angry behavior. If the adolescent does indeed want to makes changes, parents can assist adolescents with the following ideas.
- *Encourage your adolescent to take charge of their anger and notice when they are being successful-* each of us are responsible for what we think, feel, say and do at all times. No one can make us happy and certainly, then, no one can make us angry. Anger starts in our minds, and takes over our feelings, our bodies, and comes out of our mouth. If your adolescent refuses to take control of their own anger, then the alternative is that anyone, at any times can make them mad, which means others have control over their thoughts, feelings and behaviors; the adolescent is not in control of themselves. Parents can encourage adolescents every day that

they are in control of their anger, and notice when the adolescent starts taking responsibility for their own anger and is not blaming others when they are angry.

- *Work with your adolescent to create a safety plan so anger does not turn into aggression towards others*-Talk with your adolescent about taking a voluntary time-out or a safe place such as on the front porch, or in their room etc. The directions include “When you can tell you area about to explode or hit somebody, you NEED TO LEAVE AND FOLLOW THE SAFETY PLAN. NOW. Before you explode, not after.” The parent will also agree to not argue, try to discuss the situation or talk it out at the point. Sometimes doing something physical can be helpful if the adolescent chooses, such as shooting baskets, going for a short walk, or talking to a friend. Then once they let off some steam they can choose a relaxing activity. This safety plan will help your adolescent manage their anger.
- *Stop the worst behavior first*- Anger problems are like ladders that get taller over time. Each rung of the ladder is something the adolescent does when they get angry, for example not listening, making faces, interrupting, making fists and threatening to hit, shoving their sister, hitting their foster mother. The goal for the adolescent is to get off the ladder. The way to begin is to climb down from the top. Hitting and assaulting another person would be the top rung of the ladder of anger problems. Parent can encourage their adolescent to set a goal to decrease the angry behavior that is the most unsafe. Help the adolescent create a statement such as “Today, I promise myself that I will not _____, no matter what.” The parent can help the youth write out the statement and post the statement around the home, to encourage positive thinking.
- *The adolescent may need individual therapy services to help them challenge their thoughts.*

Finally here is a list of Do’s and Don’ts you can talk with your adolescent about and ALWAYS notice when they are making an effort to DO the right thing (pg. 32):

DON’T: Hit, push, shove, hold, or threaten
Stand up and yell
Make faces or make fun of others
Swear or call people names
Get stuck in the past
Say “forget it,” “tough,” “who cares,” “so what”
Say “always” or “never”
Interrupt
Always have to get the last word
Have to win every battle



DO:

Sit down and talk
Stick to one issue at a time
Take timeouts before you lose control
Listen-really listen-to what the other person is saying
Slow yourself down-breathe calmly, relax
Attack the problem, not the person
Be open to discussion, bargaining, compromise
Be flexible-able to change your mind if you want
Be responsible for what you think, feel, say, and do
Be honest about facts and feeling

Reference

Potter-Efron , R., How to Control Your Anger (Before it Controls You) : A Guide for Teens. Johnson
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