**CHILDRENS GUIDE TO HELP WITH ANGER**

**Have you ever lost your temper?**

**Did you yell and scream or want to** hit someone? Maybe your little brother got into your room and played with your toys without permission. Or maybe your teacher gave you too much homework. Or maybe a friend borrowed your favourite video game and then broke it. That made you angry!

Everyone gets angry. Maybe you "lose your cool" or "hit the roof." Anger can even be a good thing. When kids are treated unfairly, anger can help them stand up for themselves. The hard part is learning what to do with these strong feelings.

**What Is Anger?**

You have lots of emotions. At different times, you may be happy, sad, or jealous. Anger is just another way we feel. It's perfectly OK to be angry at times — in fact, it's important to get angry sometimes.

But anger must be released in the right way. Otherwise you'll be like a pot of boiling water with the lid left on. If the steam doesn't escape, the water will finally boil over and blow its top! When that happens to you, it's no fun for anyone.

**What Makes You Angry?**

Many things may make kids angry. You may get angry when something doesn't go your way. Maybe you get mad at yourself when you don't understand your homework or when your team loses an important game. When you have a hard time reaching a goal you might become frustrated. That frustration can lead to anger.

Kids who tease you or call you names can make you angry. Or you might get angry with your parents if you think one of their rules is unfair. Worst of all is when you are blamed for something you didn't do. But it's also possible to get angry and not even know why.

**Anger Busters**

Here are some other things you can do when you start to feel angry:

•talk to a friend you can trust

•count to 10

•get or give a hug

•do jumping jacks or another exercise

•draw a picture of your anger

•play a video game

•run around the outside of the house five times as fast as you can

•sing along with the stereo

•pull weeds in the garden

•think good thoughts (maybe about a fun vacation or your favorite sport)

•take a bike ride, go skateboarding, play basketball — do something active!

Never getting angry is impossible. Instead, remember that how you act when you're angry can make the situation better or worse. Don't let anger be the boss of you. Take charge of it!

**How Can I Tell When I'm Angry?**

There are different ways people feel anger. Usually your body will tell you when you are angry. Are you breathing faster? Is your face bright red? Are your muscles tense and your fists clenched tight? Do you want to break something or hit someone? Anger can make you yell or scream at those around you, even people you like or love.

Some people keep their anger buried deep inside. If you do this, you might get a headache or your stomach might start to hurt. You may just feel crummy about yourself or start to cry. It's not good to hide your anger, so you should find a way to let it out without hurting yourself or others.

**How Can I Tell When Someone Else Is Angry?**

When someone you know is angry, he or she may stomp away or stop talking to you, or become quiet and withdrawn. Some people scream and try to hit or harm anyone close by. If a person is this angry, you should get away as soon as possible.

Once you are away from the angry person, stop and think. Try to figure out what made that person so angry. Can you make the situation better? How does the other person feel? When the other person has cooled down, try to talk about the problem. Listen to what he or she has to say.

**What Should I Do If I Get Angry?**

Don't lose control if you get angry. Taking it out on others never solves anything. Instead, admit to yourself that you are angry and try to figure out why. What can you do to keep the situation from happening again? If your little sister gets a toy and you don't, it's not OK to break that toy. Maybe you can ask her to share it with you. Or if your science homework is too hard, don't rip up your notebook. Ask your teacher or a parent for help instead.

It helps to talk about your anger with an adult, such as a parent, teacher, or relative. Once you talk about anger, those bad feelings usually start to go away.

Everybody gets angry sometimes. Being angry doesn't really solve much — but what people do when they feel angry is important. The goal is to calm yourself down and try to solve whatever problem is bothering you. This is hard for some kids (and adults, too). Instead of calming down, some kids might keep getting more and more upset until they explode like a volcano!

Some kids get angry more often or more easily than some other kids. Their anger might be so strong that the feeling gets out of control and causes them to act in ways that are unacceptable and hurtful. People might say kids like this have a temper, which is a term for acting all angry and out of control. When people say that someone has trouble controlling their temper, they usually mean that a kid misbehaves when feeling angry or frustrated.

Some kids might get so angry that they scream at their mom or dad, punch the wall, slam doors, break something, or — worse yet — hit a brother or sister. Kids are allowed to express their feelings, even angry ones, but it's not OK for a kid to do any of those things.

Kids don't want to (or mean to) act this way — but sometimes angry feelings can be hard to manage. So what do you do if you're a volcano kind of a kid and your temper is getting you into trouble?

**Arf! Try This!**

Well, the good news is that kids don't just have to keep making the same mistakes over and over again. You can train your temper the same way you might train a puppy. Huh? That's right, we said a puppy.

If you've ever played with puppies, you know they are sweet but a little out of control. Their tails wag furiously and they might tear apart your sneakers or nip at the mailman's behind. Oh dear, what can you do with your puppy? Training is the answer.

In the same way, you can train your temper. Imagine your temper as a puppy inside you that needs some training. The puppy is not bad — it will probably turn out to be a great dog. It just needs to learn some rules because, right now, that puppy is causing some problems for you.

You don't want to keep getting in trouble for the way you act when you're angry. You probably even feel bad afterward if you've hurt someone's feelings or broken a toy you liked. So let's get that puppy trained.

**Here are steps to take anytime, even when you're not angry:**

**•Get lots of physical activity.** Play outside. Do sports you like. Karate or wrestling can be good for kids who are trying to get their tempers under control. But any activity that gets your heart pumping can be good because it's a way of burning off energy and stress. It feels good to boot that soccer ball or smack that baseball!

**•Talk to your mom or dad.** If you're having trouble with your temper, the time to talk about it is before you have another angry outburst. Tell your parents that you're trying to do a better job of controlling yourself. Ask for their help and ideas for how you could do this better. Maybe if you go a whole week without a meltdown, they can take you out for a treat. Let them know that if you do get really angry, you're going to ask for their help.

**•Put feelings into words.** Get in the habit of saying what you're feeling and why. Tell your parents, "I feel angry when you tell me it's time to stop playing and take out the trash. I don't like taking out the trash." And your parent will probably say (kindly), "I know — no one likes doing it. But it's your job and you need to do it anyway." So using words won't get you out of taking out the trash (sorry!), but it might stop you from slamming the garage door, having a fit about the trash, or doing something else that could get you in trouble. Using words helps people manage their strong feelings and behaviors.

**•Take control.** Who's in charge here — you or that wild little puppy? Decide that you're going to be in charge. Don't let those angry feelings make you do stuff you don't want to do.

The real test comes the next time you get so mad you could just explode. But don't explode. Put a leash on that puppy with these four steps:

**1.Take a break from the situation**. If you're in an argument with someone, go to another part of your house. Your room or the backyard are good choices. Just say, "I want to be alone for a while so I can calm down."

**2.Put yourself in a timeout.** If you're feeling angry and think you need a timeout to calm down, don't wait for a parent to tell you — go ahead and take a timeout for yourself. Let your family know that when you're taking a timeout, they need to respect your space and leave you alone to calm yourself down. For kids old enough to do it for themselves, a timeout isn't a punishment: It's a cool-down. While you're sitting in your timeout chair, try this cool-down exercise: Put your hands under the seat of the chair and pull up while you count to 5. Then stretch your arms over your head. Take a nice deep breath and let it out. One kid who tried these steps said he used this time to think about the consequences — like getting in trouble if he let his temper go wild.

**3.Get the anger out**. We don't want you punching walls (or even punching pillows), but why not do a bunch of jumping jacks or dance around your room to your favorite music? Turn it up a little. If you go outside, run around or do cartwheels across the lawn. You also could pick up your pen and write it all down. What made you so upset? Keep writing until you've covered everything. If you don't like writing, just draw a picture that helps you express your feelings. Use strong colors and strong lines to show your strong feelings. You also can try the "Be a Volcano" exercise.

**4.Learn to shift.** You'll have to work hard to do this. This is where you get that puppy under control. The idea is to shift from a really angry mood to a more in-control mood. After you get some of the angry feelings out, you have to start thinking about other things. Sometimes, when people are angry, they're not really thinking clearly. They're just mad, mad, mad. Only angry thoughts are flying around their brains. A person might even say mean things to himself or herself, like "I'm such an idiot. I lost my temper again!" But you can replace those thoughts with better ones. For instance, you can say, "I lost my temper, but I'm going to get myself under control now." Instead of thinking of the person or situation you're angry with, think of something else. Think of something that will put you in a better mood.

**A Tough Question**

What if it's a problem that can't be solved? Like being angry about your parents' divorce, or having to go to summer school, or wanting a later bedtime? Or when you just can't get your way about something? Some stuff kids get angry about can't be changed. For instance, if your mom says it's time to stop playing your video game and go to bed, what can you do? She's not changing her mind and you have to get some sleep. Man, that really stinks! You were almost to level 4!

But even if you get really angry, she won't budge. And even if you knock over a chair, you'll still have to stop playing your game. But now you might have an extra penalty for knocking over the chair. Maybe she'll say you aren't allowed to play your game tomorrow! That would be very bad news — you'd have to wait even longer to get to level 4.

Though it's one of the toughest things to learn, it might be best just to tell yourself, "OK, stop the game and get to bed." Some arguments you'll be able to win, but this probably isn't one of them.

That doesn't mean you'll never get your way. You will be able to get your way sometimes. Bigger kids, like you, can learn to make their points calmly without losing it. This approach usually works better with everyone, especially parents. When you do this, you're controlling that wild little puppy inside you. You're in charge instead of that little rascal with the wagging tail.

Have you been wondering why we asked you to think of your temper as a puppy? A puppy is young and loveable — just like you — and wonderful to be around, especially when it keeps its temper under control!