



Coping With Anger: Tips for Teens & Tweens

Anger is a complex emotion. It may not feel that way when you feel it building inside of you, but doesn't it seem that way afterwards? What was the thing that really got to you? How did you react? How did your body feel? How angry were you? And most importantly, *what did you do about it?*

Do you know that most anger comes from fear? Fear that you are not safe or the world is not a safe place for you. Anger is the stuff that helps us protect ourselves and can motivate us to make a situation right.

In today's world, it's not usually as simple as fighting or running away. Our fears are more complicated. Your anger may be mixed up with sadness, fear, and injustice, especially if you've been in the foster care system. You have a right to those feelings. But what should you do with them?

Know your triggers. What are your "triggers"—the comments, situations, or people who get to you almost right away. Maybe it's a certain tone that reminds you of someone from your past. Maybe it's yelling and swearing, which can be triggers for a lot of people. Maybe the smell of cigarettes or alcohol automatically triggers some bad memories which, in turn, cause you to feel tense or anxious. Knowing

your triggers will help you figure out when you might need to be extra patient, walk away, talk to a friend, listen to music, or any other number of coping skills.

Blow off steam. Run it out. Exercise. Swim. Run in place and do a crazy number of jumping jacks or sit ups. Physical options like there are much better than allowing someone else to take control of your emotions and reactions.



Write it out. Writing in a journal is a great way to talk about the things that make you feel angry.

Draw it out. Sometimes finding a quiet place to draw a picture or sketch will help your body work through some of your stress.

Do something that you love or enjoy, like listening to music, scrapbooking, skateboarding, etc. That can give you some time for your

body to relax and give you the ability to rethink what made you so angry.

Talk it out. There are often two steps to talking things out. First, you might just need to talk to someone who will listen, more or less neutrally. Sometimes it even helps to let that person know that you're just "venting" and they don't need to try to solve your

Continued on page 2



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problem for you. Or, maybe the two of you together will be able to do some problem solving.

In some cases, you may want to take a second step—talking with the person who triggered your feelings of anger. This may be the best way to handle a situation, but it's often the hardest. Try to use "I feel" statements as much as possible so the other person doesn't feel defensive.

For example, you might say, "I feel embarrassed when we're late for movies because I don't like crawling over people to get a good seat," rather than, "You're never on time and I hate being late."

Sometimes it's just too hard to figure out what to say. Try to find someone to talk to who you can trust. This might be a foster parent, a teacher, social worker, counselor, a coach, mentor, or another trusted relative.

Get help. If you scream, hit, kick, or punch in a situation that does not require self defense or protecting someone else, you may have anger issues that can hurt you as well as others.

If you're not already seeing a therapist, you could consider seeing someone to help you with your anger issues. Anger often masks deeper feelings of being afraid to be hurt.

Many youth in care—as well as many kids who have *not* faced the challenges you have faced—find benefits in talking with a counselor about anger issues.



Life has been rough for you, and you may

A Few Basic Communication Tips

Anger is intricately connected with communicating. Here are some tips that may help you in angry situations.

- Take responsibility (control) by using "I feel" or "I" statements versus "you" statements.
- Try not to use words like "always," "never," or "hate."
- Try to be specific about how you feel.
- Be aware of your body language. Are you saying, "Nothing's wrong" while you're looking away, not smiling, and sulking?
- Say what you mean; mean what you say. For example, "I'd rather not go to the party, but I'll go if you want to go," instead of going to the party and being resentful. (Note: if you *do* go to the party, that's your choice and it's not fair to later say, "Well, I didn't want to go in the first place.")

not have had adults around you who showed you how to deal with anger appropriately or they may have encouraged irrational anger by the way they acted.

There might also be a group you can join to work out issues. But ask for help—either individually or in group. You have the right to participate in therapy that provides you with helpful techniques to manage your behavior when you are feeling angry.

Anger is tough. It's a natural reaction, and it's one of the normal emotions all people experience. Embrace your anger as a healthy emotion, but learn to react in a way that works for you.

Martin Luther King, Jr. would not have been

Continued on page 3



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who he was without a deep sense of anger about the injustice of racism, but he directed his anger in productive ways.

As he said, “We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools.”



Resources

Check out this recorded webinar: [Anger Management for Parents & Children](#)

From [our Lending Library](#)

- *Hot Stones & Funny Bones: Teens Helping Teens Cope with Stress and Anger*, by Brian Luke Seaward and Linda K. Bartlett
- *The Dance of Anger*, by Harriet Learner

Other Website Resources

- [Youth Communication](#)
- [12 Anger Management Tips for Teens](#)
- [FosterClub](#)



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