

Discipline And The Angry Child

Many situations will arise concerning disruptive behavior and the child who is angry. We should try to distinguish between anger and aggression.

Anger is a temporary emotional state caused by frustration while aggression is often an attempt to hurt a person or to destroy property.

Handling children's anger can be distressing, draining and puzzling to the teachers and administrators. Many times we must learn to accept the child's feelings and try to channel and direct them to constructive ends.

Strong feelings cannot be denied. An angry outburst should not always be viewed as a sign of a serious problem. It should be recognized and treated with respect.

Anger may be caused by the following:

1. May be associated with failure.
2. Low self-esteem.
3. Anxiety about situations over which the child has no control.
4. Feeling of isolation.
5. A defense to avoid pained feelings.

There are ways that we can respond to the angry child. Here are some suggestions for dealing with the child who is angry. Remember, these are helpful hints, not cure-alls to the problem.

1. Catch the child being good. Respond to positive efforts and reinforce good behavior.
2. Deliberately ignore inappropriate behavior that can be tolerated. Remember to ignore the behavior, not the child.
3. Provide physical outlets and other alternatives.
4. Manipulate the surroundings. Do not put the child in a situation where the only way to save face is to exhibit inappropriate behavior.
5. Use closeness and touching. Move physically closer to the child to curb his/her angry impulse.
6. Express interest in the child's activities.
7. Be ready to show affection. Sometimes a hug or a kind word is all that is needed for the child to regain control.
8. Ease tension through humor. However, do not be humorous at the expense of the child.
9. Explain situations and appeal directly to the child.
10. Build a positive self-image in the child.
11. Use punishment cautiously.
12. Model appropriate behavior.

Good discipline includes creating an atmosphere of quiet firmness, clarity, and conscientiousness while using reasoning. Bad discipline involves punishment which is unduly harsh and inappropriate, and is often associated with verbal ridicule and attacks on the child's integrity.