Dealing with anger in 5 - 11 years olds

How to teach children to express anger?

Be a role model with how you express your anger. This can include modelling how you respond to frustrations. For example, if something has sold out in the supermarket, voice your frustration, talk about how you're going to manage, show how you problem solve a negative situation. You might also try something like telling a child what you are going to do to feel better after getting stuck in a traffic jam. This is showing children, through observation, that it is okay to feel angry, and to start thinking about how to move through it.

If you do lose control and express anger in a less healthy way in front of your child, you can apologise and reflect on it in an age-appropriate way when you've calmed down. You can also point out when characters in books and TV shows handle anger particularly well or badly or use it as a jumping off point for conversations later.

Consider what helps you express your anger. It might be screaming into a pillow or doing deep breathing exercises. Both of these are healthy ways to release anger as they don't hurt anybody. You can tell you child about how you cope with feelings of anger.

When your child is calm and receptive, drawing an anger firework together can help:

1. On a sheet of paper, support your child to draw a firework.
2. Include a fuse.
3. Describe how anger can build up and burn up the fuse.
4. Explain that if the anger is not dealt with it can cause an explosion.
5. Encourage them to draw or write down the triggers that light their fuse and frustrate them.
6. They can also think about what things calm them down. What's the water that can cool their lit fuse?
7. You could create a time out word and action plan together for when they're feeling overwhelmed.
8. That way, when a child feels like their fuse is being lit, they know there's something to say and steps they can take.

How to de-escalate an angry child?

It's important to listen rather than try to fix things. Try not to overstimulate them by asking too many questions. Help them regulate their emotions and thoughts. That might mean giving them space or redirecting them to hit a cushion rather than something that will hurt them or be damaged. De-escalating is about setting up tools to use before a situation arises. That might be:

- agreeing a time out word.
- teaching a breathing technique.
- spotting your child becoming angry and distracting them.
- having a weighted blanket they can lie under to feel relaxed and secure.

Do not threaten your child that you will tell their teacher, Social Worker or anyone else as this can result in not trusting adults when they need help. It's important children can speak out when they need help.