

**Step Back**

**and**

**Breathe!**

**Lesson Plans for  
Teaching Anger  
Management to  
Children.**

**Lynne Namka**

Also by Lynne Namka

The Doormat Syndrome  
The Mad Family Gets Their Mads Out  
How to Let Go of Your Mad Baggage  
Avoiding Relapse: Catching Your Inner Con  
A Gathering of Grandmothers: Words of  
Wisdom from Women of Spirit and Power  
Good Bye Ouchies and Grouchies, Hello Happy Feelings: EFT for Kids of All Ages  
Teaching Emotional Intelligence to Children: Fifty Fun Activities  
Parents Fight Parents Make Up: Take Good Care of Yourself  
The Case of the Prickly Feelings  
Lesson Plans for Teaching Resilience to Children (Free pdf at [angriesout.com](http://angriesout.com))

Fiction

The Starseed Child  
Love as a Fine Species of Madness  
Castalia Every After  
The Loathsome Lady

The catalog for other books and curriculums is at [www.AngriesOut.com](http://www.AngriesOut.com)  
Some of my lesson plan books are available as a free pdf copy at [www.AngriesOut.com](http://www.AngriesOut.com)  
My downloadable pdf books are for sale at [www.timetoloveyourself.com](http://www.timetoloveyourself.com)

Copyright 2014 by Lynne Namka  
All rights reserved

This book may be shared freely for personal use and for the education of children  
but the posters and text may not be used for commercial purposes.

Artwork by Eric Black, Jack Tone, PYRRTH, Tofu Panda and marvelhead.  
Clip Art by Poppydreamz.zip.jtoy6qw, Articwolfdesigns and Giftseasonstore.

Published by  
Talk, Trust & Feel Therapeutics,  
5398 Golder Ranch Road  
Tucson, Arizona 85739

[www.AngriesOut.com](http://www.AngriesOut.com)  
[www.HappyHealthyLoving.com](http://www.HappyHealthyLoving.com)  
[www.Nardar.com](http://www.Nardar.com)  
[www.timetoloveyourself.com](http://www.timetoloveyourself.com)

*"The systematic training of the mind, the cultivation of happiness, the genuine inner transformation by deliberately selecting and focusing on positive mental states and challenging negative mental states, is possible because of the structure and function of the brain.*

*But the wiring of our brains is not static, not irrevocably fixed.*

*Our brains are also adaptable."*

*Howard Cutler and Richard Davidson    The Art of Happiness*



## The Dynamics of Anger in Children

Childhood should be a time for free, spontaneous expression and for learning new skills to navigate the world. Good mental health is important for our children to succeed. They deserve to learn all the skills that will allow them to develop friendships and loving alliances with others. They deserve fit and willing teachers and parents who can help them learn the skills to deal with our complex world. And children want to learn new and exciting ways to work with their strong emotions and conflictual situations.

It is very complex and challenging to be a child trying to understand feelings and how to negotiate today's world. Emotional Intelligence, according to psychologist Daniel Goleman, is the ability to understand and work with our emotions and those of others. It is found to be more important than intelligence or technical ability in creating success in the business world. Children can be taught emotional intelligence and prosocial skills so that they can gain power over their emotions and make better behavior choices. Children who have multiple alternative skills to draw from have more self confidence in handling stressful situations.

A recent survey showed that many people feel inadequate in dealing with social situations which involve conflict. The ability to get along in the world has been analyzed showing many skills that are built over a lifetime. The early skills are mostly nonverbal such as eye contact, facial expression, body language and engaging others in social interaction. Social skills are reciprocal. The basic building blocks for development of more complex behavior begin with the mother. The tiny baby learns to develop eye contact, smile responsively and look away to terminate contact with the other person. These early skills draw adults to the infant so that his needs can be met. He learns to imitate adult actions and initiate play with toys. Later the verbal skills of communication are learned along with other prerequisite skills for playing with peers. And then the whole complex skill set of learning to understand and work with the emotions becomes a major task of life.

A large number of our young people suffer from emotional and behavioral problems. Studies indicate that between seventeen to twenty-two percent of youth under age eighteen suffer from emotional and behavioral problems. This means that between eleven million to fourteen million children are at risk for emotional impairment. A majority of these children have difficulty in handling anger and act out in violence and intolerance.

Children who are habitually angry typically suffer from skill deficits. They have missed learning some of the basic skills in handling conflict and getting along with others. They misinterpret social situations that are ambiguous and respond with aggressive behavior. They have a set of beliefs that emphasize retaliation. They may erroneously believe that self-righteous expression of anger is healthy. Without the abilities to deal with frustration after losing a game or not getting something they want, they act out in anger. Habitually angry children have not learned to put themselves in others' shoes and see things from other people's perspectives. They have not learned the skill of consequential thinking. They do not know how to break into their rigid thinking and cannot stop making judgments about others. They have strong

“shoulds” for others and get upset when others do not follow their wishes. They blame others for their problems and do not take responsibility for their own actions. They cannot allow themselves to see that they are at fault for some of their problems.

The angry child who acts out often ends up with peer rejection. Habitual, hostile expression of anger perpetuates an environment that is unhealthy for all involved. Venting anger only turns up the heat and keeps it flaming through justification of the right to be angry. Anger can be directed inwardly or outwardly. In either case the person is caught in behavior that alienates him from others. The angry child who vents may feel better for a short time but underneath he often feels worse for losing his cool. Or he may hold on to his anger rationalizing it to himself and others in an attempt to maintain his right to behave in violent ways.

Some angry children are internalizers--they take negative things inside and are secretly angry. They are not comfortable in letting others know how they feel. They rarely talk about or express their anger directly to others. Their belief is “I must be the nice guy and can’t let you know how angry I really am.” They develop physical symptoms due to the stuffing of the anger.

### **Parental Styles and Children’s Anger**

Children from dysfunctional families do not have positive skills modeled for them. They grow up learning to use manipulation, addictive behavior and violence as a way to cope with stress. Other children do not learn skills of social interaction naturally due to some neurological impairment. The rigidity of thinking associated with neurological impairment causes the child to become locked into negative coping patterns of dealing with stressful situations that bring him more stress.

Parenting styles that often correspond with children’s excessive anger are “giving too much” or “giving too little.” The “giving too much” parent tries to meet the child’s every need. This results in the child believing that the world revolves around them. Children who are spoiled by their parents often grow up believing that they should get everything they want and they have the right to be angry if they do not get it. This parenting style results in a high-demand child who has a sense of entitlement from others. He does not learn to deal with inner frustration and delay gratification. At a deeper level, what a spoiled child really wants is a parent who consistently sets limits, says no in a loving manner and gives him attention when he acts appropriately. Not being given limits and structure, he is angry.

The “giving too little” parent is self-involved and does not nurture the child, or may never be at home or to busy for the child. The parent may be cold and rejecting, due to being involved with addictions or be an angry person himself. The parent may be busy and self involved and literally is never at home for the child. The uncared for child grows up feeling neglected, rejected and abandoned. Every day he must contend with feelings of desperation, being misunderstood, frustration, fear, loss, grief and betrayal. The child cannot express his anger because of fears that his parent might reject him further.

The child who has been heavily criticized and abused by a parent often grows up believing “damned if I do and damned if I don’t.” This type of child feels that he is not worthy of getting his needs met and feels shame for not measuring up to what his parent expects of him even though it may be irrational. The child who suffers from verbal and physical abuse is angry about this injustice. His hostility towards others is displaced anger. Acting out can be an unconscious attempt to make his parents give him what he wants. If aggression and violence are modeled in the home, the child learns that coercion is associated with power and getting one’s own way.

### **Life’s Injustices Set the Stage for Perception of Threat and Aggressive Behavior**

Psychologist Gerald Patterson’s Coercion Model of Aggression suggests that parents who lack parenting skills unwittingly train their children to be noncompliant and act in antisocial ways. Poor parental discipline skills and coercive management practices cause escalation of child-parent conflict and increase children’s aggression. The child and parents elicit negative behavior from each other. There is lack of choice in the coercive family--there is one message: “Do what the most powerful member of the family dictates.” Children feel helpless and sense the lack of justice and live under conditions of threat.

The continual angry child perceives threat and hostility in situations that are unclear. He distorts what he sees and perceives injustice in small things which others would overlook. Peers’ hostile comments only convince him that his beliefs of threat are valid. He ends up being rejected and isolated from his peers. Cut off from friends who can provide positive models of behavior, he feels lonely and discouraged. He feels the world is against him. Again his choices become limited. His cycle of perceptual distortions and aggressive behavior continues.

Children from conflictual homes do not have effective role models of how to express negative emotions appropriately. Who among us is comfortable about expressing dismay, disgust and anger in appropriate ways? Most people cannot deal with strong expression of anger, frustration, sadness, fear or guilt because of their own internal rules about how wrong it is to feel these feelings let alone express them. At this point in our society, most people have not learned the skills of expressing negative feelings in a safe and comfortable manner.

The most common patterns of coping with threat and stress in unhealthy families are anger, blaming the other person, submissiveness, hyperactive behavior or withdrawing and ignoring the problem. These coping patterns are passed down from parent to child resulting in generations of dysfunctional behavior. Coping styles that were learned as children to keep the family isolated and safe do not work in adult life. To continue to live these rules as an adult is to continue to live in considerable pain.

## The Unwillingness to Feel Vulnerable and Abuse in Families

Authorities believe that violence and abuse within a family takes place because the dominant person in the family abuses his or her power. Typically this abuse of power is by a male who tries to prove himself by acting in macho ways and rationalizing this behavior as his “right.” The use of alcohol greatly aggravates this pattern.

Children observe the parental interactions and identify with both the victim and the aggressor. They internalize these actions of their parents and carry them out in other settings. By identifying with the victim in the family, they learn fear and weakness. That is why aggressive children are often a pushover for someone tougher than themselves. They go to any length to hide these feelings of weakness from others and from themselves.

**Type T Individuals:** Another kind of child attracted to aggression is the Type T child. Type T stands for thrill as shown by Frank Farley’s research. Individuals who have a central nervous system that enjoys being revved up and feeds on dangerous activities are Type Ts. Type T children have under-aroused heart rates, sweat glands, and skin temperatures. Their physiological systems are slower to respond to external stimulation and they require high excitement and risk to feel stimulated. They look for novelty, uncertainty, high risk, variety, complexity, high intensity and conflict. Type T children seek activities that increase their adrenalin such as going fast on bicycles over ramps, jumping off of high places and engaging in dangerous sports. They seem to have no fear of physical harm and are unaware of the danger in which they place themselves. They become bored easily at home and spend more time on the street and tend to get in trouble.

When Type T individuals lack an internal moral compass and carry a large amount of anger, they are more likely to engage in activities that are harmful to others but are exciting and reinforcing to themselves. Bonnie and Clyde are examples of antisocial Type T individuals who lacked the skill of respecting others and their property. Gang members are often angry individuals who seek novel, dangerous activities through law breaking and intimidation of others. Children who start early in life to hurt others and then are rejected by their peers are most likely to seek out gangs. Properly channeled with adventure sports and leaderships challenges, Type T individuals have a lot to contribute to society because they are risk takers who try new things. Indiana Jones is a prime example of a good guy, Type T action-seeking individual.

**Macho Behavior:** Children who adopt a macho style to foster a false self-identity are usually highly judgmental. They judge others according to standards of toughness and macho behavior. They cannot tolerate differences in other people according to narrow views of life. They act tough to avoid the feelings of shame inside for being weak. They avoid being seen as helpless and keep an illusion that they are in control by acting tough. They fear being called a wimp and try to measure up in the manly category so they will not be rejected by tough people they seek to emulate. Their identity becomes caught up in the kid’s game of King of the Mountain. They keep the illusion of being in charge by the self message of “Be big and tough and ready to take anyone on to show how tough you are.” They often have a chip-on-

the-shoulder attitude and dare others to push them into aggression. They learn that intimidation of others can be reinforcing because it gives them a feeling of power.

Rigidity of thinking, judgmental beliefs, the need to feel superior and low self-esteem are the basis for prejudice and bigotry. Cruelty to others and the need to act hard and tough can be defense mechanisms against feeling vulnerable. Children who harm others fear being hurt and exposed for their weakness. They go to any lengths to avoid letting others see how frightened they are and feel unsafe if they let their guard down so that others can see their vulnerability. The child who acts tough begins to feel superior as a defense against feeling the bad feelings. He rationalizes hurting others in his need to feel superior. At times the angry child may elicit a violent response from a punishing adult as a way of keeping the punishment under his control. His ability to evoke a negative reaction from an authority figure may make him feel in control.

Children who have little support and a sense of loss of personal control may become loners or turn to peer groups that foster hate and lashing out at those individuals who are perceived to be different. Children who are adept at positive social interactions feel more in control of their lives decreasing their need to join radical fringe groups that promote crime and racial intolerance. Children who are disliked by others do not form bonds with others. Not having satisfying friendships, they often turn to antisocial behavior seeking activities that are stimulating to them such as alcohol and drug use and gang behavior. Children who don't have positive social skills to draw from to deal with stress become disconnected from positive values, high standards for behavior and responsibility. They feel alienated from the concepts of respect for others. They may turn off to school activities and turn to the more exciting life of the dangers of the street.

Gangs are groups of people who collectively engage in power and violence to feel powerful. Children who have poor self-esteem seek to find an identity in being a gang member. Members of gangs are taught new ways of intimidation and extortion by the older leaders in the gang. The aggressive behavior is highly reinforced by peers' submissiveness. The sense of exaggerated pride, injustice, and feeling entitled to use and hurt others becomes set. Violent behavior is rationalized as a "right. Pride in being tougher than others is a self-reinforcing emotion that can keep the child caught in a cycle of shame, egotism and misbehavior. Acting out becomes an unconscious way to escape the terrible feelings of shame inside. Other shame-based defenses of angry children include denial, silence, intellectualization and distancing from the problem by placing the blame on someone else. Here are the words of Pablo, a gang member from El Paso, discussing ways to reduce drug use and gang violence as reported in the *El Paso Times*:

“There is too much orgullo (pride) among gang members. That orgullo gets in the way of young people trying to go straight. Orgullo makes you want to be tougher than the next guy. Orgullo can be a very positive thing, but it can also help destroy young people. Negative orgullo creates problems....The best way to improve the situation is for those who care to get completely involved in a gang member's life. That means hanging out with them and getting into the heart of them. A gang member may be abused by his dad or he may have a single-parent mother. He may be hurting, but he'll never tell what's hurting him.

He'll never say what truly is in his heart. Instead, he'll pretend that everything's cool and all he wants to do is party with his homies.”

Aggression is a human trait; it has been necessary for our survival as a species. We live in a country where violence is becoming a way of life. Our media glorifies violence and children are presented with countless acts of simulated and actual aggression each day. If our society condones violent behavior it will be present. The effects of speaking out and standing up to abuse can help change the social conditions that support it. By teaching children skills to deal with aggression early on, we will have a society that has less tolerance for bullying and aggressive behavior. We need to develop ways of honoring the innate quality of aggression and finding safe outlets for it.

### **Common Emotional Reactions and Errors in Thinking in Angry Children**

Cognitive distortions are those errors of thinking which make children trigger easily with anger. They add up to a way of seeing the world due to experiencing severe hurt and deciding the world is not safe. Some or all of these errors in thinking may be present in the angry child creating victim mentality or rationalizations of aggression.

**Poor Impulse Control and Frustration Tolerance:** Some children have a brain structure that is highly reactive to outside stimuli that seem to threaten their sense of self and they cannot delay gratification. The impulsive child who is easily frustrated is bound by the lure of outside stimuli.

**Poor Ego Boundaries and Need for Control:** The child cannot view things from any other perspective other than his own. He is so caught in his own neediness that he cannot feel empathy for others. He does not have the ability to put himself in someone else's shoes. At times, he views others as objects to be used for his personal gratification. He tries to be in charge and tell others what to do so he feels empowered.

**Mood Switching:** The child's fractured self is caught in mood swings. She may go back and forth between "I'll be good" and pouting or outrage because she isn't getting what she wants. She becomes angry when threatened with not getting her own way. There is a paramount fear of being hurt and rejected coupled with denial of need and clinging to the adult. Anger becomes a way of trying to avoid abandonment and depression.

**Problems with Emotion Differentiation:** Children with learning and behavioral problems often have trouble reading the social cues of anger, disgust, confusion and fear in others. They are less able to describe how they feel and use broader terms rather than specific ones. They have the concept of anger but do not understand the differing emotions of frustration, annoyance, irritation, resistance and anxiety which are underneath some types of anger.

**Frequent Anger and Rage:** The child substitutes anger and tantrums as a way of experiencing uncomfortable feelings. She becomes a master of rationalization and justification of her explosive actions: "If I don't get my way, then I have the right to get angry."

**Externalization of Blame:** The child who has had a critical parent often feels shame and cannot allow bad feelings of being at fault for anything. He/she/they/YOU are the problem! He avoids feeling vulnerable by blaming others. The fragile self esteem cannot be punctured by taking responsibility for behavior. His script is, "Do not expose me to those intolerable feelings inside. I can't handle it."

**Entitled Thinking:** "I want \_\_\_\_, Give it to me \_\_\_\_, Buy me \_\_\_\_" seem to be a constant demand of some children. Some children feel owed or entitled to get their way. While it is normal for a child to ask for what he wants, some children are overly demanding and needy. They have not learned to balance taking from others with giving; they view other people as existing merely to give to them.

For some children, feeling entitled may be a stage that they go through and grow out of. Demanding that their needs be met is one of the ways that two-year olds develop independence. Another phase of high expectation comes up during adolescence. Teenagers are notoriously known for requiring the best of everything. Rampant materialism appears to be the middle name for some young people during the teen years--it is a stage that some young people go through.

The unhappy child who feels cheated often focuses on issues of "It's not fair." On an unconscious level, he feels that what happened to him was not fair. And, in a sense, he is "owed" because he missed out on basic nurturing, love, limits and structure. When early dependency needs were not provided, the child feels a sense of loss and shame that manifests itself in being angry. If not given the tools to work with his distorted thinking that he needs, this type of child may go through life angrily trying to get others to make up for what his parents did not provide. The child with this sense of internal neediness often has limited skills and tools to interact with people and sets up demands that cause others to distance themselves from him. His angry defenses prevent him from gaining acceptance and friendships in acceptable ways. He is ripe for learning social skills that will help him release the defensive patterns that do not work for him and learn ways to better navigate his world.

## **Children Do Not Learn from Punishment when They are Angry**

Children are always learning and sometimes they learn to be frustrated and angry from the adults around them. How you react and what you say when confronted with a child's anger has a big impact on his learning to deal with conflict. A major skill is for the child to learn to regulate his strong feelings. You are on the front line of fire daily dealing angry and aggressive behavior by providing a teaching paradigm. Children with chronic antisocial behavior are often slow to learn through punishment and aversive conditioning. How you correct a child after he misbehaves will affect whether he will increase or decrease the undesired behavior in the future.

The old way of treating aggressive children with reprimands and punishment does not work as it increase shame in the child. The research literature gives clear guidelines about the ineffectiveness of punishment as the only correction procedure for children's misbehavior. There are many negative side effects associated with being punished:

- Punishment for aggression may stop the behavior temporarily, but further stimulate aggressive behavior.
- The child may stop the punished behavior but may increase another aggressive behavior.
- Punishment serves as a model for aggression. Children imitate what they see adults do.
- The punished behavior may stop only in the presence of the adult and increase in other settings.
- The child may strike back at the punishing adult or displace his anger at someone else.
- Frequent punishment may cause some children to withdraw and regress.
- Angry children who do not fear authority may become angrier and often focus on revenge.
- The child may feel shame which increases low self-esteem (I'm a bad person. I'm mean) and act out more.
- Punishment merely suppresses the response but does not teach the child what to do.

Learning tools on how to deal with conflict and frustration, not being punished is what the acting-out child requires. In the short term, punishment may suppress a negative behavior when the punisher is present, but it does not teach the child positive ways to act. Punishing techniques that make the child feel bad about himself may make him act out more. The child who misbehaves constantly needs to hear correction statements phrased in positive language to implant alternative ways of thinking and acting in his developing value system. Instead tell him what to do and help him to feel good just thinking about acting in positive ways. This type of child also profits from being given a choice between two positive alternatives that you supply to him.

## **“It’s Not My Fault!”--The Dynamics of Denial and Fear of Vulnerability**

Often the angry child keeps the focus on sensation seeking activities that fuels his dopamine system and the feel-good chemicals. He cannot deal with vulnerable feelings. His constant demanding keeps him from feeling the pain inside. Denial of feelings is a major defense against keeping the hurt and shame away. He turns the tables around by trying to make others wrong for not giving him what he feels entitled to. You may hear him say, "I don't have to talk about feelings. I don't have bad feelings. I don't want to talk about my feelings. I have to feel good at all costs!" Children who get in trouble continuously receive so much negativity and punishment that they become hardened to it. They become indifferent to authority and shrug correction off with an “I don’t care” attitude. This pose of indifference and toughness is a defense mechanism against feeling shame. It feeds into rationalizing of not being at fault.

With the psychological defense against feeling shame and guilt, blame is externalized to someone else: “I don’t dare allow myself to feel bad inside, so I’ll send those bad feelings towards someone else.” This pattern is generally learned from parents and the cycle of aggression is often repeated down through generations of families. Externalization of blame and rationalization of misbehavior is a tricky defense to break. Show the child that you are on his side. Challenge him to learn different ways to think and act. Showing aggressive children a better way to deal with conflict and encouraging them to take responsibility for their own feelings and behavior is a loving and humane response to break into their cycle of aggression, rejection by others, and the resulting poor self-esteem.

Expect denial from the child if you ask him to own up to his behavior when he is upset and angry. Children, like the rest of us, are not rational creatures when angry. Anger throws reason out of the window. The research shows that cognitive distortions such as minimizing, justifying or rationalizing their destructive behavior has been associated with individuals with antisocial behavior. Their pain is so great and their defenses so practiced that they cannot see their own part in the conflict.

Do not set up a situation of threat where the child will lie or become defensive by asking him to admit something he did wrong before he is ready. Give him a cool down period before talking to him. Imperatives given in a loud voice will cause him to shut down and be unavailable to your correction. If a child laughs and rolls his eyes when being corrected, say with firmness, “I feel angry when you roll your eyes like that. Listen to the message of taking care of yourself by making better choices. I feel upset when you laugh when you are corrected. This is about your learning. This is not about laughter. Now let’s practice my giving information and you being big enough to hear it.” Your modeling your honest feelings is one of the most powerful tools you have.

Angry children most likely have been hurt by others. They feel shame about being weak inside and turn around and victimize others. Your modeling firmness and fairness to the child will increase the likelihood that he will choose better ways of acting in the future. Scolding and shaming the child will only cause him to dislike himself even more resulting in a cycle of aggressive behavior. Helping the child save face and reduce the shame that he feels at being caught is part of getting him to understand and change his behavior.

Discuss the things that he does that causes other people to refuse to be his friend (when true) or the things that he does that are not respectful to others. Tell the child that he may feel bad, but that he is not a bad kid. He just hasn't learned the rules to take care of himself in healthy ways. This takes the focus away from internal character attributes that can't be changed and puts the emphasis on learning. Emphasize that he just has some learning to do to take care of himself. Tell him that you are here to help him learn the skills of getting along with others.

Have the child review rules for getting along with each other and treating people with respect. Children can be taught good values and morality. Ask the child to make a value judgment on a specific behavior, asking him "Was that a good thing to do?" If he responds with a rationalization regarding what the other person did to him, tell him that he is always responsible for his actions no matter what was done to him. Remind the child that choosing to use his words and talk about what upsets him is always the best choice. This type of processing after misbehavior helps the child make better decisions for next time.

### **Error Correction: "I Can Feel Good About Making the "Wrong" Right"**

The research shows that feelings of shame after a transgression of behavior encourage the negative behavior to continue. As one author said, "Shame is at the heart of repeated pain." The shamed child's self-esteem drops and he believes he is bad, setting up a self-fulfilling prophesy. The research also shows that people are most ripe for change after a situation of high emotional arousal. The emotional centers in the brain are activated giving a window of opportunity to add new information about the correct way to act. Being corrected is a high arousal situation so the child should be ripe for new learning if you provide information in ways that motivate him to change rather than drop into shame. What you say to an aggressive child will determine the likelihood of his decreasing the inappropriate behavior the next time. To break into the child's negative thinking patterns, process what happened and what could be different next time in a nonthreatening way. This is the concept of error correction or learning from mistakes.

Keep the emphasis on what the child has to learn. Stress that there need be no blame if each person takes responsibility for his own actions and takes steps to correct the situation so it does not happen again. Error correction teaches self responsibility. Review the rationale about mistakes being okay if you learn from them. This is the concept of error correction--if you make an error, correct it. That is why pencils have erasers. That is why we have word processing programs for computers with delete buttons. That is why we have U turns. The neat thing about making a mistake is the learning that you can gain from it. Mistakes are for learning. If we are smart, we don't have to keep making the same errors over and over.

Model making several dumb mistakes (like calling the principal by the wrong name or giving the wrong day of the week) will help give children permission to accept themselves when they make an error. Recognize your errors with the cheery message that mistakes are allowed in your class as long as people learn from them. This gives a positive model to the children the message that errors are for learning!

Some children cannot see their part in situations of misconduct. Gently try to get the child to make a value judgment on his behavior and see his part in the consequences. Ask him if he could make a better choice in a similar situation next time.

Empathize with the child's hurt feelings but point out that he may have had some responsibility in the consequences that happened to him. Help the child to see that blaming someone else is an unnecessary defense. Tell him, "You don't have to defend yourself by blaming someone else. That doesn't help solve the problem. We are problem solvers here. I'm here to help you. You need to learn how to take care of yourself next time. That is the most wonderful thing you can do for yourself. Now tell me your part in this so we can work it out so it won't have to happen again." This approach takes the child out of the defensive mode and into solving his own problems.

Ask the child to describe the poor choice of behavior that he made. Ask him how he will act differently next time. Ask him what he will say to help himself. Ask the child what he can do to correct his error to make amends for his behavior. Give choices for the penalty of the infraction of the rules and send the child off to make his amends. Teaching social skills shows the child what to do rather suppressing it through punishment. Skill training offers a more humane way of giving children tools to deal with conflict so that they can take care of themselves. Appeal to the child's sense of fair play after a situation of conflict to help him make changes. Show the child the consequences of his actions on others. Whenever possible, give him a choice. Ask him to make a value judgment on what he did. Give him solid information on how he could react in positive ways. Always leave him feeling good about himself with hope for the future.

### **When Talking to Two Angry Children at the Same Time**

Ask each child what his part was in the conflict. Stress responsibility for problem solving and using words to handle the threat. Go over the rules about treating people with respect and ask each child to describe how he forgot a rule of being fair and friendly. Say to each child, "Can you own your part of this problem? What did you do? You can feel good about owning your own part in this fight. Tell me about your behavior." Show enthusiastic appreciation for the child who can stick to describing what he did wrong without going into blaming the other person. Stress the importance of being part of the solution, not part of the problem by asking "What will you do better next time so that you can feel proud?"

After each child has had a turn talking, ask the children to see the conflict from the other person's eyes. Role play the situation switching roles. Humor added here will break into the tension around the situation. Ask the children "What could you have done differently? What is our rule about that? What will you do next time that someone \_\_\_\_? What can you do when you feel threatened?"

PRAISE, PRAISE, PRAISE any remarks that shows a child is catching on to the idea of learning about himself instead of blaming the other child. Ask them for a self-talk statement they will use next time to handle their own feelings of threat that come up. Practice saying the self-talk statements several times.

## The One Minute Reprimand

Labels. Hyperactive, bad, lazy, troublemaker, delinquent. Many children grow up in systems that label them in negative ways. Labeling a child is a way of subtly blaming the victim. Labeling is definitive; once we say it, then it holds meaning. The danger of labels is that children tend to believe what is said about them and live up to that negative expectation. Negative labels keep children caught in negative behavior. Labeling what we do not know how to deal with is victimization. At one time, resorting to labels was what was accepted for discipline. Now we are seeing different ways of working with children--teaching children positive ways to act. As the poster says, "Label jelly jars, not kids!"

Negative labels (bully, impossible, bad, mean, etc.) make the child feel ashamed and cause defensiveness to shut out what you say. The child who is labeled often internalizes what is being said about him in a negative way. Talk about poor choices of behavior that can be changed with understanding and practice. Talk about the child's actions that are hurtful to others. The child can take responsibility for behavior; he cannot change a label which more than likely will turn into a self-fulfilling prophecy. Instead of labeling the acting-out child, cue him. Tell him what you want him to do. Give him "I believe in you" type cues often. Positive cues give children tools for taking care of themselves and enhance a positive self-esteem.

A new behavior must come under the natural consequences of the environment for it to continue, yet some environments support negative behavior. The goal is to ultimately have the child choose a desired anger management strategy rather than act out. Your praising the child's effort at first and then reminding the child to praise himself will help bring the desired behavior change under the internal control of the child. If a child feels good about his change and reinforces himself, he will be more likely to keep practicing the new skills. Praise and recognition for creative problem solving will increase this behavior. Your energy should go to helping children feel good about solving their own problems. Cues from caring adults are a primary means of instruction for teaching social skills. Repetition is the best way for you and the children to learn new skills.

Business management expert, Spencer Johnson in *The One Minute Mother* and *The One Minute Father* describes a great parenting technique which is a takeoff from his business model for managers. This reprimand process helps YOU break into your own frustration and lengthy tirades. This one-minute approach puts a time limit on your own anger outburst and encourages your child to do better next time. It bypasses blame and punishment, which do not work to change behavior, and leaves your child thinking. Getting him to think about what he or she did wrong and how to correct it will provide options for the next time he becomes angry. The One Minute Reprimand builds self-esteem in your child while you are correcting him. It leaves him feeling good and hopeful about himself. What a novel idea!

Limiting your own anger by using this technique will help you break into most breakdowns in parent and child relationships--parent deafness. Kids learn to shut out long lecturing parents. Shutting out what we do not want to hear is normal human behavior. The One Minute Reprimand holds you to a one-minute correction procedure and gives the child a compliment so that he does not tune you out or drop into the shame response where learning is shut down. Here's my slightly modified version.

### **The One Minute Reprimand**

1. Tell your child beforehand that you are going to let him know what he has done wrong in no uncertain terms.
2. Reprimand your child immediately. Tell him specifically what he did wrong in one sentence.
3. Tell him you are disappointed, upset, sad or frustrated (choose one). Say this in a quiet, firm voice.
4. Stop and let it sink in. Allow a half moment of uncomfortable silence where he gets how you feel. If he starts to get defensive or angry, say, "Hold on, take a deep breath. I'm not finished yet."
5. Reach out to your child physically in a friendly manner. Shake hands, pat him on the back, or touch him in a way that lets him know that you are on his side despite your upset feelings at his behavior.
6. Remind him how much you value him, what a cool person he is, etc.
7. Reaffirm that you think well of him, but not his behavior. (You are a great kid who messed up!)
8. Remind him that you know he will make a better choice next time by remembering what he can do better when he becomes angry.
9. Let it go. No lectures. No more. Just stop. Realize when the reprimand is over, it's over. End the correction with a positive! Change the subject. Give a smile, a hug or an acknowledgement. Leave the room with him scratching his head wondering where his formerly acting out parent had gone. End the talk with you believing in your child and his ability to make good choices. (Smiling, not moralizing.)

## **Catharsis: Releasing Anger Symbolically with Large Muscle Activities**

Catharsis (yelling and beating on an object such as a pillow or ball) is one method to help a hurt and angry child release some of the pent-up feelings he or she has inside. Children who are depressed profit from large muscle movement activities which stirs up their emotions and go into a higher state of arousal around their issue. The intensity of this activity appears to break into frozen feelings and locked memories. The negative energy of anger and rage is dissipated by large muscle movement. Children like activities of banging, kicking, throwing and hitting an object. The psychological research shows that exercise and movement help activate positive brain chemicals which break into depression. However, the feelings of betrayal that lie underneath anger still will need to be addressed. They still need to learn to express their feelings of hurt and anger. They absolutely need to learn positive anger management skills.

During cathartic experiences, children who have been traumatized often rage and work up a sweat while their expressing pent-up feelings. Some carry on a dialogue between the aggressor and the victim of a past situation that has bothered them. They cannot continue intense emotions for a long period and will begin to wind down after fifteen or twenty minutes.

As the anger is expressed and released, the child starts to look relieved and relaxed. As the child's anger dissipates, he will become spontaneous in his play and switch to another game. Several intense sessions like this may be necessary for the child to work through some of the anger. After the physical expression of anger, encourage the child to talk. Some children can air their grievances while others cannot verbalize what they have just expressed at a nonverbal level.

Intense anger work revs kids up. It helps retrieve the suppressed affect associated with past trauma. The child regains his sense of power and control working through the helplessness he may have experienced during trauma. Children who are encouraged and express feelings which have been suppressed for a long time can become highly excitable. They may have difficulty settling back into the home or class routine. A cool-down period is necessary to go over the rules of reentry into real life.

The use of catharsis is only one part of anger release. By itself, it is not sufficient to work through deep anger issues through. Symbolic anger release helps to bring the suppressed feelings back to the surface where they can be dealt with. Verbally processing the original trauma and the strong emotions that were too painful to deal with at the time of the painful event will help lessen the child's anxiety. Accepting, confirming and validating these feelings will help the child regain trust in adults and in himself. A child who has been physically or sexually abused probably will need individual therapy session to deal with the deep underlying feelings of betrayal.

## Teaching Children to Make Better Anger Responses

Children need skills of expressing their negative feelings in safe ways. Young people are hungry for tools to deal with conflict. Children who are adept at positive social interactions feel more in control of their lives. Social-skill training increases self-esteem and the ability to solve problems. Social skills are easy to present in groups. They are fun to teach. Children can learn to reconnect with positive values of treating each other with respect and taking responsibility for their own behavior.

There are strong family and societal laws about not feeling or expressing anger or other uncomfortable feelings. Yet we live in a world that has considerable stress and great anger. Most children come from families where “Don’t talk, don’t trust, don’t feel” is the rule. Many families are caught in emotional pain around events of which they have little or no control. Many parents show the effects of stress resulting in dysfunctional behavior, and ineffective methods of discipline that depend upon pain and threat. Children get caught up in the emotional pain of those around them but do not have the understanding or skills to deal with it. They grow up coping with threat and stress in the same unsuccessful ways that have not worked for their parents. Psychological research shows that human beings generally try to avoid uncomfortable feelings. Failure to pay attention to the inner feelings often results in heart failure, cancer and psychological symptoms. The ways that people ineffectively deal with stress and threat fall into these coping styles:

1. Numb out or dissociate in fear.
2. Hide the feelings from others but secretly feel them inside.
3. Deny the feelings, and suppress and hide them from themselves.
4. React in anger and blame or threaten someone else.
5. Engage in addictive behavior.

The child who has been hurt in situations where he is not safe suppresses his feelings of insecurity and anger out of fear of retaliation or being exposed as seeming weak. Some cannot express their deep anger over traumatic events such as physical or sexual abuse because of deep-seated shame. Instead they focus on little events over and over which appear superficial to the listener or displace their anger on someone or something else. They often feel both frustrated and sorry for themselves and have a repeated theme of “It’s not fair.”

Anger is a common response to threat. Yet some children become angry over small things keeping themselves upset. Containing anger and moving to a higher level response is a skill that children as young as three years old can learn and highly verbal children can learn this earlier when taught. Switching the anger response from aggression to one that is more socially acceptable helps them make friends and increase self-esteem. Children can learn to understand their anger and from this understanding make better choices. Their hurt and feelings of shame need to be brought to a conscious level where they can be recognized and given a name. Getting the child to step back and breathe slows the impulsive response down so that choices other than exploding can be made.

## Steps for Teaching Social Skills

Social-skill training offers tools and techniques for individuals to use to become happier human beings. Family members can learn to use feeling words when upset. They can learn to approach conflict with problem solving. Learning to communicate well and use I Messages such as "I feel angry, when you \_\_\_\_" becomes a priority for those families who want to live a healthy, happy life. Social skills are positive abilities that help the child to interact with others in different situations in ways that are valued. Social skills are those actions which are accepted by society and are beneficial both to the person and to others.

Social skills are easy to teach. Children learn to reconnect with the positive values of treating each other with respect and taking responsibility for their own behavior. The focus of skill training is on developing reciprocal affective behavior between children. A skill training program changes the entire climate to a positive way of thinking--"Let's help each other and include everyone in our play groups." Activities that emphasize flexibility of thinking and seeing things from another person's perspective help children break into rigid ways of seeing people thus decreasing prejudicial thinking.

Families, classrooms and groups provide a natural setting for children to learn the pro-social skills necessary for success through direct teaching in group discussion, modeling and practicing the skill with conditions of reinforcement. During skill training, the child is assessed through observation of his behavior to determine which skills he has mastered.

Some children do not have a certain skill in their repertoire (the "Can't Do" child). Others children have the skill but are not motivated to use it (the "Won't Do" child) or have not given themselves permission to use it in a certain setting (the "I'm Scared to Try" child). Children have to feel good about their ability regarding a specific skill within an environmental setting before they choose to use it.

The hope for the self-involved child is to provide him with training to remediate the faulty ways of perceiving the world. The child with deficits in behavior will benefit from social skill training:

- Learning to follow directions and take in information instead of going to instant debate
- Delaying gratification and learning to inhibit impulsive actions
- Learning to stop reacting over the small injustices of life
- Learning to state boundaries and allow others their boundaries
- Dealing with disappointment and frustrations in socially acceptable ways
- Reinforcing his own self and becoming his own coach and cheerleader for making good choices
- Viewing others with empathy and seeing things from their point of view
- Understanding fair play and the balance between giving and receiving

Teaching social skills to children is very much like teaching academic subjects: assess, teach, practice and provide opportunities for the skill to come under the natural contingencies of the environment. The steps are similar except that group activities and discussion play a stronger role.

### **Steps for Teaching Positive Social Skills**

Identify the skill that needs to be learned.

Introduce the skill through discussion and modeling of the desired response.

Give the rule and alternatives to the rule.

Cue the child what to say and do regarding the new skill.

Have the child cue himself through self talk.

Provide practice of the skill through modeling, games, puppet and doll play, and role playing.

Reinforce the new skill during practice.

Teach the child to reinforce himself using self talk for using the skill.

Provide opportunities for generalization and reinforcement of the skill in daily play.

Children as young as two years of age can be taught to “Use your words” when they are unhappy about something. They can learn to express anger in healthy ways instead of acting it out or bottling it up. Some children do not have a vocabulary for emotions. Label the emotions for the young child who is not yet talking or the child who has repressed his feelings. For example say, “Frustrated, you look like you are feeling upset right now. Say it: “Frustrated, I feel frustrated.” Children need labels for what is going on internally so that they can learn to express their feelings verbally instead of through acting out and temper tantrums.

A curriculum based on social skills gives us the information about skills we may not have learned ourselves. These activities will give you a framework for looking at your own skill levels and practicing the skills in your life. How do you deal with conflict? How comfortable are you with expressing anger and handling confrontation? If you feel good about learning new skills, this will spill over to the children. Remember to practice the skills in your own life so that you will be comfortable presenting them.

### **Adult Cues to Increase Healthy Behavior**

Positive cues give an immediate alternative to the upset child. These key phrases do not belittle or shame the child. They give information to help him save face by instructing him what he can do to take care of himself. They remind him to make a responsible choice to feel good about himself. They work. The constant repetition of these cues helps the child internalize these positive messages as his own.

“Get your control. What is a better way to handle this? Stop and think. Make a good choice.” are generic cues that remind children that there are different alternatives to how they react in uncomfortable situations. With practice and much reinforcement, children can learn to feel pride in coping effectively with their anger and letting small incidents of threat go. Children can learn to speak feelings in the moment of heat and choose from a number of alternative responses. Internalized self-statements, such as “I can breathe. I have choices. I can deal with this.” and “I’ll chill out,” give the child opportunities to take control of his own behavior and feel good about himself.

As you learn and use the adult cues that emphasize good problem solving given in these lesson plans, your discipline problems will decrease drastically. Time spent in making these cues part of your automatic response to children disruption will dramatically change your life as a parent or teacher. Regular use of these cues will decrease tattling and increase-mind-your-own business behavior. Children who view themselves as good problems solvers who can choose from alternative ways of responding to threat will be less likely to become hostile and resort to gang behavior. Add these instructional cues to your repertoire gradually by practicing one statement for several days until you hear yourself saying it automatically in response to a specific inappropriate action. Post several visual cues around your room to assist your learning.

### **Cues to Post for Working with Feelings and Teaching Responsibility**

It’s okay to be mad. Anger is a normal feeling when someone has hurt you.

Angry feelings are a part of being a human being.

Be firm, fair and friendly when you speak your angry feelings.

People are not to be hurt.

Use your words instead of your fists. Say “I feel \_\_\_\_\_ when you \_\_\_\_\_.”

It’s important that we be gentle with people. Be a people friendly person.

Make a good choice here. Stop and think before you act.

You can make good choices when you are mad. Use your feelings words.

Know what sets you off. Know your hot spots and triggers points.

Own your feelings. All feelings are okay. It’s what you do with them that counts.

You are responsible for your actions when you are angry.

Separate Little Deals from Big Deals. Problem solve the Big Deals. Let go of the Little Deals.

You can’t have your own way all of the time. Don’t sweat the small stuff. Let it go.

Chill out. You don’t have to get mad over every little thing. Be a cool dude!

You can let go of your anger by talking about it and having a plan on how to handle it next time.

Tell someone when you feel hurt. Find someone safe to talk to when you are upset.

Let your anger go in safe ways. Use your words. You can work out your anger.

Breathe when your anger comes up. Take a step back and blow it out.

Don’t store anger in your body. Talk it out. Let it go. Tell someone about your anger.

You are a good kid learning something new. You can feel good about taking care of your anger.

## Self-Talk: Helper Words for Children

Fun, short, snappy interventions are needed to stress respecting each other and living peacefully. Angry children want to learn to deal with their strong feelings but do not have the tools to do so. Current psychological theory says that aggression is not an innate quality in humans but is an optional strategy that is learned and used because it is highly powerful in intimidating others.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) offers a well-researched psychological approach to dealing with anger by working through any hostile appraisals, illogical beliefs and self-inflammatory ways of talking that give rise to feelings of anger. Cognitive Behavioral theorist Aaron Beck says that distortion of beliefs about a situation can result from misinterpreting events, magnifying negative possibilities, minimizing any positive aspects of the situation and then generalizing the fear beliefs to other situations. CBT offers a take-it-down-by-talking-it-down approach and helps defuse the negative meanings a child gives to a situation.

Helper Words, as presented in this book, are a form of CBT which gives the child internalized statements such as “I can breathe. I can deal with this. I’ll chill out.” Helper words are positive self-talk phrases that give the angry child the opportunity to take control of his behavior and feel better about himself. Teaching children to do self-talk gives them your positive message to carry around with themselves when you are not present. The small amount of time that you spend in rehearsing the children on Helper Words will save you from time spent on teacher reprimands. Group rehearsals via chanting (a popular group practice done in Chinese schools), is a very effective teaching these positive messages. Model the Helper Words often by using them yourself.

Chant the Helper Words over and over with the children to help them internalize them. Ask the children which Helper Words of the day they want to write down to take home as a reminder. Repetition of an idea in different ways helps cement it in young children’s minds. Use different rhythms and drum beat patterns while you chant. Emphasize self responsibility and feeling good about taking care of yourself with your words.

The way that a child interrupts a stressful situation comes from being hurt or from modeling from a parent who voices that things are fair. Because early experiences in the person’s life were not fair, the child dwells on the concept of fairness exaggerating the injustice of the current situation. He angers himself due to self-righteous beliefs and a desire for vengeance thus justifying the “right” to be angry. He sees threat in situations that are ambiguous. Angry children often tell themselves negative thoughts based on their beliefs about unfairness which further cements their anger in. Their statements of injustice and revenge fuel their angry mood and foster entitlement beliefs about their right to hurt others.

Recent research shows that schools can reduce anger outbursts, bullying, and vandalism when they emphasize respect of self and others. Set high standards of behavior for children by giving them the specifics of what you expect from them as well as providing them tools for dealing with conflict.

Studies suggest that children are capable of inhibiting aggressive behavior when the social environment requires it. Violence is anything that denies or diminishes the humanity of another person. We can teach children to gain personal power by affirming, cooperating, communicating and problem solving during times of conflict. Children are exquisitely sensitive to the subtle expectations of adults in the social situation. When therapists set specific positive expectations to control aggression and teach prosocial skills, children are capable of moderating manipulation and tyrannical behaviors. With training, children can inhibit aggressive angry responses and substitute more healthy ways of dealing with threat.

Teach children to associate helping others with respect. Equate altruism and feeling good inside. Young people who deal drugs say they feel respect from peers by engaging in their illegal activities. We need to emphasize the true meaning of gaining respect—doing things that encourage and empower others!

### **The Ultimate Use of Praise**

We want to raise our children to be confident and strong and deal with the challenges and setbacks they will face in the world. Self-efficacy is a person's belief that he or she can succeed with a goal. This necessary-for-success skill is enhanced when a person can talk themselves into reaching their goals. Shame and the negative self-talk after failure causes people to give up. The advice coming from the research of Carol Dweck and her colleagues is *use process praise, not person praise*. Their research and that of others shows that how you praise your children affects how they view themselves to meet tough challenges.

“Process praise” sends the “I-believe-in-you” message that what the child does--his or her effort and actions--are the sources of success. This teaches children to believe they can improve their performance through hard work. It makes a child into a doer and risk taker feeling good about taking challenges in learning. Process praise emphasizes the child's actions, efforts and strategies. The idea is to let the child struggle and fail and then learn what doesn't work. For process praise, think of what the child did and recognize their actions and efforts. It urges him on and keeps him going through the frustration and aggravations.

“Person praise” is focused on the child's personal characteristics of looks, talent, skill, intelligence and general inflated praise statements such as “perfect!” They are things that the child has no control over. If emphasized too much, the child becomes proud of their beauty, talent or intelligence. Personal qualities praise sets up a trap for children because they think they can coast and rest on their laurels. Parents using person praise might say “You're a big boy. You are so cute” or use superlative words that don't give specific feedback on the child's effort. Some adults have the habit of automatically saying, “Fantastic, Awesome, or Perfect whenever the child does anything. These phrases get old quickly.

Researchers found that parents of toddlers who used process praise produced youngsters who welcomed challenges and had strategies for overcoming failure five years later. Children who were given process praise preferred challenging but not easy tasks. They learned to feel good about the effort they put into doing the work. At age seven and eight, they were more independent learners and had better strategies for dealing with hard learning tasks.

Praising children for their personal qualities such as intelligence, beauty, sports ability or talent send the message that they are valued only when they succeed in this arena. Praising them for their personal qualities rather than their efforts may make them feel more ashamed when they do fail or start to feel overwhelmed or lazy. When they can't depend on that special ability to get them through a task and fail, they feel ashamed and believe they have a flaw in their character that can't be overcome. They sink into discouragement and humiliation and don't have strategies for overcoming failure.

### **Use Meaningful Praise that Respects the Child's Efforts and Hard Work**

#### **Process Praise**

Look at you working so hard!  
I know you are going to figure that out.  
It's tough but you keep on going.  
You worked hard on that.  
You're trying your best  
Good effort on that homework.  
I like how hard you work.  
Wow, great effort!

#### **Person Praise**

Fantastic!  
Super good!  
Perfect!  
You are a good girl.  
You're a smart boy.  
You're good at this.  
You are a fantastic artist.  
You are great!

Children need strategies to overcome failure and the shame it brings up. We can teach children to correct their negative thinking and become their own cheerleader and coach. One way to do this is to teach them to praise him or herself for effort and work completed.

Over praise loses its meaning. Continual praise creates a child who either devalues or becomes dependent upon it. Praise only for sincere effort and work completed. Overly praising children for how they look creates a vain child. More importantly, ask the child to praise himself. Self effort is the key--get your child to recognize and praise his own effort. Always tie in your child's feeling good with his effort.

Process praise puts the emphasis on the child rewarding him or herself for effort and not on an outside source for good self-esteem. It helps a child learn to be conscientious and associate feeling good with effort and working through hard problems—a trait that hard working achieving people have. People who are successful in life have inner reinforcers that keep them going.

## About These Lesson Plans

These lesson plans present ideas drawn from the Positive Psychology research which studies the attributes and choices of happy, healthy people and how they have conducted their lives. Along with the specific social skills on anger containment, they present concepts of resilience, pride for learning new ideas, and known techniques to decrease anger and aggressive responses. These plans use visualization, verbal rehearsal, role playing and ask the children to make moral judgments about choosing their behaviors. They foster good self-esteem by tying in pride with learning positive anger responses by asking questions that put the responsibility back on the child such as, “Wouldn’t you like to feel good instead of flying off the handle when you’re angry?” They motivate the angry child to find positive reasons to change his or her impulsive reactions. The activities present psychological concepts through different sensory experiences giving the necessary repeated practice to learn new skills.

They teach children that there is a better way by learning tools to work with their emotions. Give the children this constant message: Exercising respect and finding better ways to treat people are daily choices you can make. There is a better way to act. There is a better way to live. You can choose to live the better way where everyone is safe and no one gets hurt. You don’t have to wait for others (parents) to change to learn this new way. You can start living the better way now. When you use positive social skill nobody loses and everybody wins.

The lesson plans give a common language for identifying and talking about feelings. They use pictures from the internet or stuffed animals to teach concepts like being irritable or reacting with anger. You can use any stuffed animal that represents the idea or a picture from the internet. Weebles, Lego People, action figures or any doll that represents an emotion help hold the children’s interest. Posters of the different feelings can be obtained by Googling Images and Feelings Charts.

Novelty companies that sell small inexpensive toys such as Kipp Company, Oriental Trading Company, Rhode Island Novelty and others can be found on the web. For example, Rhode Island Novelty has small plush, stuffed pillows called Emoji with different facial expressions (Emoticons are pictures of the different emotions used by people who text) which cost \$8.40 a dozen. There are over 60 different smiley face toys. Included are bendable zombie toys, monster face balls, stretch toys, plastic stamps, stickers, coil springs, finger puppets and yo-yos. Prices run from \$1.60 to \$9.00 a dozen. You can use the different toys as prizes for the anger management chart or as props for the lesson plans. I keep a basket of assorted toys nearby for the children to handle while the lessons are presented. Having something to do with their hands decreases the children’s nervous energy as they talk about their unhappy experiences and feelings.

The ideas about working with anger as presented here in these lesson plans are purposefully repetitive. Going over and over the concepts and needed social skills in different ways help give the needed duplication for incorporation into a child’s mind. You are reprogramming little minds and psyches to overcome their earlier negative experiences and incorporation of unhealthy beliefs and inappropriate behavior.

Pick and choose from these lessons and activities according to the needs of your children. Ignore what doesn't fit with your personal philosophy. Change the language level given in the dialogue to fit the developmental understanding of the children. The psychological principles behind them are true no matter what the age level. Mix it up! You know your kids. Customize these lesson plans to fit the needs of your children.

I hope you have fun with these ideas and adapt them to your own use! A bit of silliness helps the anger management lesson go down much easier. Your modeling emotional intelligence by speaking your own feelings with sincerity and humor helps children learn to do the same.

This book is one in a series of helping children learn to work with their feelings. *Teaching Emotional Intelligence to Children*, *Lesson Plans for Teaching Resilience to Children* and *Lesson Plans to Help Bullies* use similar ideas from the psychology research but teach a different skill set. You can find my books at [angriesout.com](http://angriesout.com) with some being available as a free pdf download. All can be found as paperback books on [amazon.com](http://amazon.com) or as e-books from Smashwords and different electronic publishers. Children enjoy learning new skills for navigating their world. I've found that when the same curriculum is taught year after year, some older children get bored and make fun of the ideas.

My mind is deeply seeped in the concepts from Positive Psychology and positive intention for healing. Our children deserve the best learning experience so they can have the happiest lives possible. The best way to break into the shame of a child who is hurt and angry is to teach these lessons with a light and loving heart. Anger work can be fun. 😊

Lynne Namka, Ed. D.

## **BE YOUR OWN SUPER HERO!**

Objective: To identify with the positive internal characteristics of super heroes.

Activity: Learning about the Mind's Superpowers. Everyone likes super heroes! Who is your favorite super hero? Why do you like him or her? What extraordinary powers do they have? Yes they can do cool and powerful action things like fly, master martial arts, have enhanced abilities to see through things or have special weapons.

Super heroes foil bullies and criminals. They stand for fair play. They help people with problems and stand for basic human rights. They are willing to risk their own safety to do good for others. They see what needs to be done to make things better and do it! They have a sense of responsibility to make things better for the world. Superman is true to his values of not hurting good people. Batman and Robin stand for justice. What else do super heroes do? They are smart and use their strong minds to figure things out. They have learned ways to work with their anger to make things better. They do their job and don't get angry except for the Hulk whose alter ego Bruce Banner is still trying to figure out his anger from his unhappy childhood with an abusive father. (Read up on the Hulk and Bruce Banner's suppressed rage from being abused in childhood on Wikipedia in case you get some questions about this troubled soul who is trying to work his rage out.)

It would be fun to be a super hero and have super powers. You can make yourself strong in other ways. You have something that can make you into a super hero: your very own mind! Your mind can be trained to become super strong and powerful. You can work with your mind to help you be more in charge of what happens to you. Super heroes have a lot of common sense and figure out the smart thing to do.

Wouldn't it be great to have a super-sharp mind that keeps you calm and in charge when others are upset? You can learn ways to make yourself hardy and resilient. Resilient people are able to bounce back from setbacks. They know what to do when things go wrong. They learn skills and tools to deal with anger and other unhappy feelings that will help them stay strong in tough situations.

When you lose your temper in anger, you lose your power. Sometimes you say and do things you don't mean. You might get in trouble. Your friends might not want to play with you. You can learn some tools to put super powers in your mind to keep it strong so you handle your anger better. Then you will be in charge, not your anger. You can become your own super hero!

Activity: Who are Your Personal Heroes? There are people in your own lives who are heroic. Who do you admire for always knowing how to do the right thing? Who has the skills to make things right? Name those family members, friends, neighbors, teachers and coaches who swoop in and help people out?

Activity: The Hero in Me. Have you ever faced a challenge in order to help someone? How have you used your smart mind to figure out what needed to be done and then did it? (Using an empty picture frame, have each child look through the frame and describe how he or she went out of the way to come to someone's aid.) What super hero trait did you use? (Intelligence, caring, courage, problem solving, willingness to get involved, etc. Give a high five to each child who answers.)



**Step back!**

**Take control!**

**Be  
your  
own  
super  
hero!**

**Your  
mind  
has  
super  
powers!**

**Keep your mind positive  
and resilient.  
Good can triumph over evil!**

## IT'S OKAY TO BE ANGRY IF YOU ARE NICE ABOUT IT

Objectives: To express uncomfortable feelings in a safe way.

Materials: Crab stuffed animal or picture of a crab to represent irritability and anger.

Activity: How Do I Feel? (Teach the basic emotions of sad, bad, mad, glad and scared which is Southern talk for scared and demonstrate them to the children. Introduce the children to the crab as the angry part, saying that we all have our “mads.” The use of the word “mads” somehow makes anger an easier concept for children to accept. Anger is an acceptable human emotion that needs to be expressed in ways that are people friendly. Tell the children about your angry part--the part of you that gets grumpy, crabby, irritable, frustrated and upset with others and yourself. Talk about your own mads in a matter of fact way to show the children that real people have feelings that are unpleasant some of the time.

Invite the children to share experiences of anger. Listen for the expression of feelings behind the children's stories. Acknowledge these feelings by reflecting them back to the child. When a child shares a typical experience of anger (getting spanked or sent to time out), ask the others if they have ever felt the same way. If a child shares something that is particularly sensitive, you might ask if they would like to discuss this in private with you.)

### Questions to Stimulate Discussion:

- Who has some angry feelings today? Tell us about your mads.
- Does anyone else feel like \_\_\_\_? Tell us about a time when you were angry.
- What are some big mads you have had? Tell us about a time you had a “Big Mad Attack!”
- What are some little mads? What makes you crabby? When are you grumpy and irritable?
- How do you let grown-ups know that you are angry? Blow up, pout or run away?
- What could you say to make yourself feel better?
- Did you ever squelch your Mad Part? How does it feel to push your mads down?
- What happens if you keep pushing your angry down and don't let them out?
- Did you ever get mad at someone and take your anger out on someone or something else?
- Do you know anyone who believes that it is wrong to feel angry?

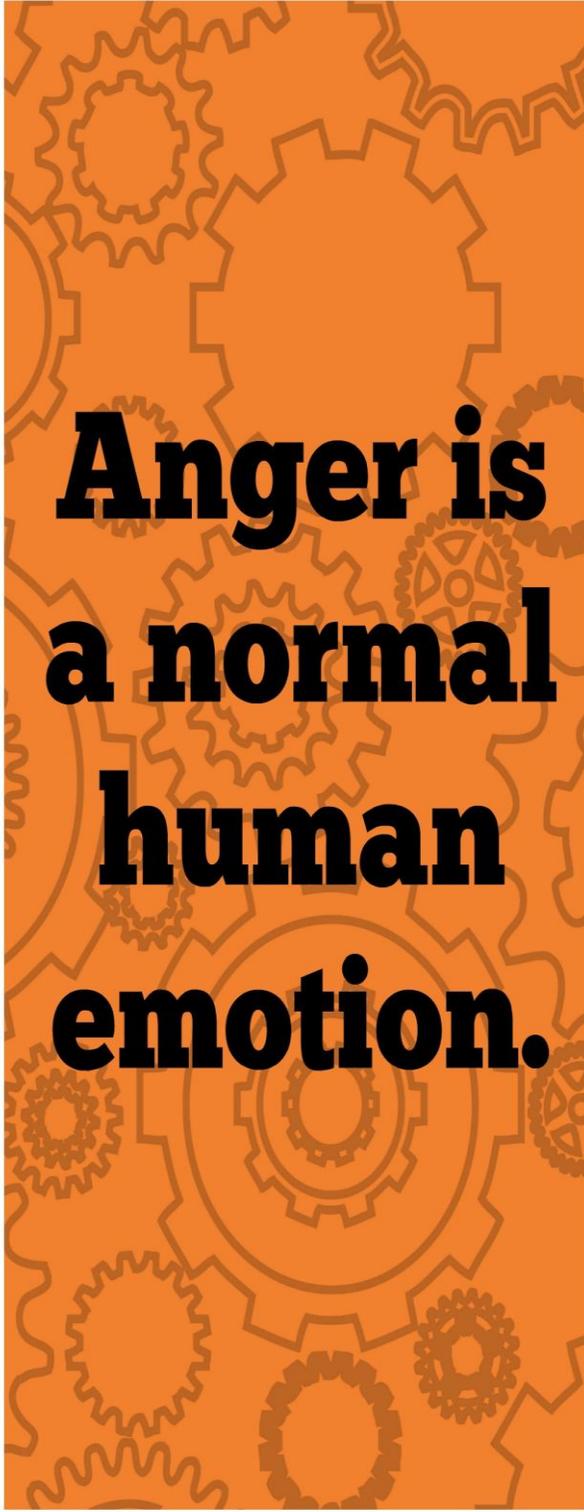
### Cues to Encourage Appropriate Expression of Anger:

- I know you are angry. It is okay to have feelings of anger. We can't hurt people though. Tell me about it.
- What is upsetting you? Tell me why you are angry.
- What can you do when your mads come up? Can you remember to step back and breathe?
- Use your words. Use your words instead of fists.
- Stop and think. Slow it down! What would be a better thing to do right now?

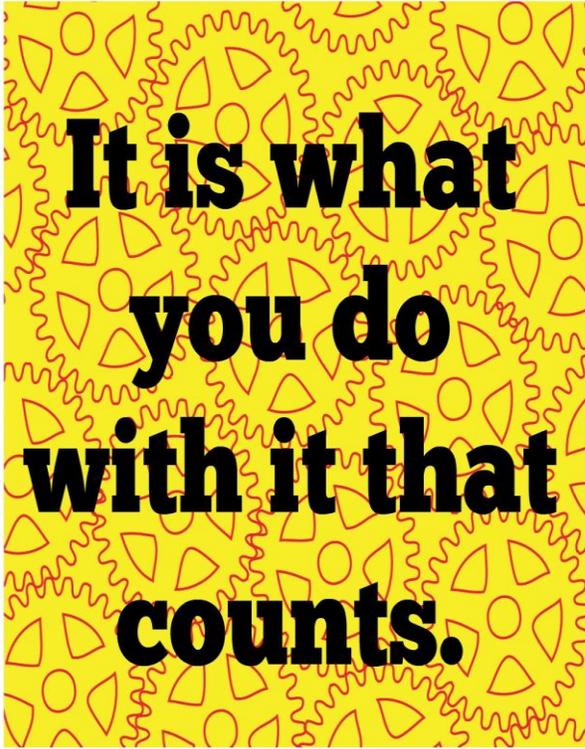
### Helper Words for Children:

- I can talk about my angry feelings.
- I deserve to be treated with respect. I treat other with respect when angry.
- I feel good about using my words to say how I feel. I use my common sense super power.
- I break into ugly words when I'm angry and replace them with firm and fair words.
- Mads come, mads go. I can let my anger go!

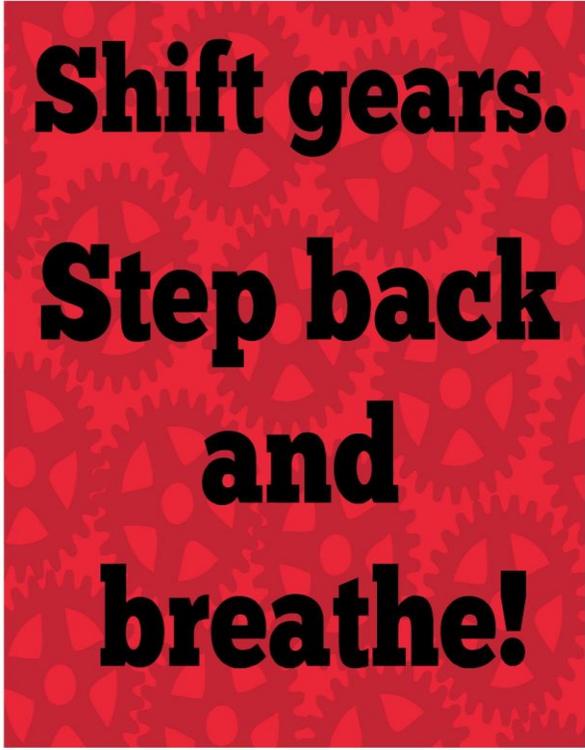
Tips for parents and teachers: Remember that you do not need to “fix” every child who is caught in pain and anger as he tells his story. The goal is to get children to talk about their problems. Just listen and acknowledge his feelings. If you feel uncomfortable or angry, focus back on the child and reflect back how you think he must be feeling. If you don't know what to say, ask the child how he feels about what he is relating. Children need to have a voice in saying what has happened to cause them pain. Sometimes just being heard and acknowledged is exactly what the child needs at this point in his life.



**Anger is  
a normal  
human  
emotion.**



**It is what  
you do  
with it that  
counts.**



**Shift gears.  
Step back  
and  
breathe!**

## TELL US HOW YOU FEEL

Objective: To learn that talking about feelings makes you feel better.

Materials: Chart of Feelings from Google Images, colored chalk and chalk board.

Activity: Making Talking about Feelings Safe in our Group. Tell the children that you want to make it safe to talk about the things that upset them. Remind them that people should not be hurt and if they are, then it needs to be talked about. Ask the children to make some simple rules and list them on the board.

Talk about what is bothering you.

Wait your turn and listen when others are talking.

Be respectful and caring when someone is talking about something that upset them.

Don't talk about what is said here outside of here. Keep what is said here private!

Activity: Learning about our Many Feelings. (Introduce chart and ask the children to choose each feeling to talk about.) Here's an easy way to remember. Feelings are sad, mad, glad and scad (that's Southern talk for scared). Other feelings are hurt and disappointment. What other feelings can you describe? We are people with feelings and that's a marvelous thing to be. We can learn about our feelings and how to work with them. Understanding about your feelings and what to do with them is called emotional intelligence. Draw a face shape on the chalkboard without the facial features drawn in. Tell the children that the face might represent their feelings. Sometimes they feel happy, while other times they might feel sad, angry or confused. Discuss how the inside feelings may be a secret. Some people smile when they are sad or angry inside. Their insides do not match their outsides and you can look at their eyes to see if they are happy.

Give the children chalk and have them draw faces on the board. (Or go outside and draw on the sidewalks.) Ask each child to describe a face that shows something that they feel strongly about. Reflect back to the child how he must have felt in the situation. If you do not know what to say because the child's experience was sad or terrible, tell him that you are sorry that it happened to him. Sometimes simply repeating the child's words back to him in a supportive way validates what he is feeling. Don't ask yes or no questions but draw the child out by asking "who, what and how" open-ended questions.

Activity: Learning about Anger Management. Learning better things to do when you are angry is called anger management. Ranting and venting your feelings on others doesn't work. Yelling and screaming when you are upset doesn't work. It may make you feel better for a short time, but it doesn't help you solve the problem. Screaming will cost in losing friends and getting in trouble. One of the best things you can do is slow down, step back and breathe. Slowing things down so you are in charge will make you feel good about yourself. Self-mastery is learning to work with your feelings in productive ways. You can feel proud when you use your anger management skills. Let's watch a video called Anger Management - What Lies under Anger? It's at [angriesout.com](http://angriesout.com) web site under Interactive videos or on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T9pRkmojY8U>

Here's another video about helpful tips about anger that we can read out loud together.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TnON-NYuGBM>

### Discussion Questions:

Tell us of a time when you had strong feelings.

How did you feel when this happened? Did this happen to anyone else in the group?

## Got Mads?

Anger is a normal feeling when someone threatens you or hurts your:

Body

Possessions

Feelings

Values—things you believe in.

Sometimes you feel angry when you lose someone or something important.

Anger is an opportunity for learning something about yourself.

Feelings are for learning.

It's normal to have angry feelings.  
It is what you do with them that counts.

Find safe ways to work with your angry feelings.

Share your anger management tools with others!

Each one teach one.

Teach others how to stay calm when upset!



## **UNDERSTANDING THE FOUR HORRIBLE H'S: HURT, HUMILIATION, HELPLESSNESS AND HOPELESSNESS**

Objective: To recognize and challenge emotions which contribute to shame.

Activity: Breaking into Feeling Helpless: Sometimes when you are attacked you might feel threatened and utterly helpless. You feel horrible. Right? The four horrible H's—hurt, humiliation, helplessness and hopelessness causes some people to get angry. (List these four feelings on the board under the heading of Feeling Horrible.) Tell us about when you felt really, really bad. Sometimes when people feel helpless, they don't know what to do so they get angry instead. They can't stand horrible feelings so they make the bad feelings go away by becoming defensive and angry. Defensiveness is being afraid of one's own feelings. Sometimes it is a fear of being found out and being wrong. Don't go on an anger bypass to cut off horrible feelings. Challenge those uncomfortable feelings instead!

Activity: Find that Sinking, Helpless Feeling: Watch feel helpless. Listen to your body. Does your stomach knot up or your jaw clench? Do you stop breathing? Does your heart beat faster? Do you get a sinking feeling like you are a balloon with all the air going out? Helplessness feels horrible alright but you can get yourself through it. Note what you feel and give it a name so you know what you are dealing with. Use your Helper Words. Use your feeling moving tools. They are just horrible feelings to move out.

Maybe something bad happened to you and you felt worthless. Did someone call you bad names when they were upset with you and you believed them? Did someone say something bad about you that you started to believe it? Has anyone told you, "You're no good? You don't belong?"

These ideas are wrong! (Stamp your foot for emphasis!) Don't take in hurtful ideas from an angry person. They are lies thrown at you when they felt frustrated and didn't use anger management. Don't believe them. Say, "Just because someone called me names doesn't mean it is true. I refuse to take in ugly ideas. No dark hole of helplessness is going to suck me in."

Activity: Learn to let Horrible Feelings Go. Let's chant while we huff and puff those four bad feelings out: Name each feeling. Hurt: huff, huff, huff. Humiliation: huff, huff, huff. Helplessness: huff, huff, huff. Hopelessness: huff, huff, huff. (Repeat going faster and faster each time while you smile and then do something silly like pretending to get dizzy and fall to the ground to get the children laughing.) Now let's chant happy, happy, happy!

(Repeat the chanting exercise with each of the "no good" messages listed above. Change the pronoun to first person, act disbelieving and add a dismissing sound and gesture. "I'm no good." Pfffft, not true. Wrong idea get out of here! Out of here. Out of here. So not true. Not true. "I may do things wrong sometimes, but at the core I'm a good person." Laughter helps the abused child break into these negative core beliefs.)

Activity: The Mad Family gets their Mads Out video. This is my book that started it all—my mission to help people learn about feelings. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n9KybT2wkyY&feature=youtu.be>

Tips for parents and teachers. Negative core beliefs are at the bottom of poor self-esteem and loathing and much anger. Most people who come from angry families believe the negative labels they are told and feel worthless inside. They operate at the subconscious level affecting important life decisions. Get the children to challenge negative core beliefs. Remind them, "Just because somebody said it and I believed it, doesn't mean it is true."

**Do you get angry when you get scared or feel uncomfortable?**

**That's Fear of Feelings, folks!**

**FOF is an epidemic going around!**

**Substituting anger for uncomfortable feelings keeps you from being real.**

**Risk! Do the hardest thing on earth.**



**Face your vulnerable and scary feelings.**

**They are just feelings after all and feelings are meant to be felt!"**



**Lynne Namka**

**[angriesout.com](http://angriesout.com)**

**[timetoloveyourself.com](http://timetoloveyourself.com)**

## BE A SUPER HERO: WORK WITH YOUR UNHAPPY FEELINGS

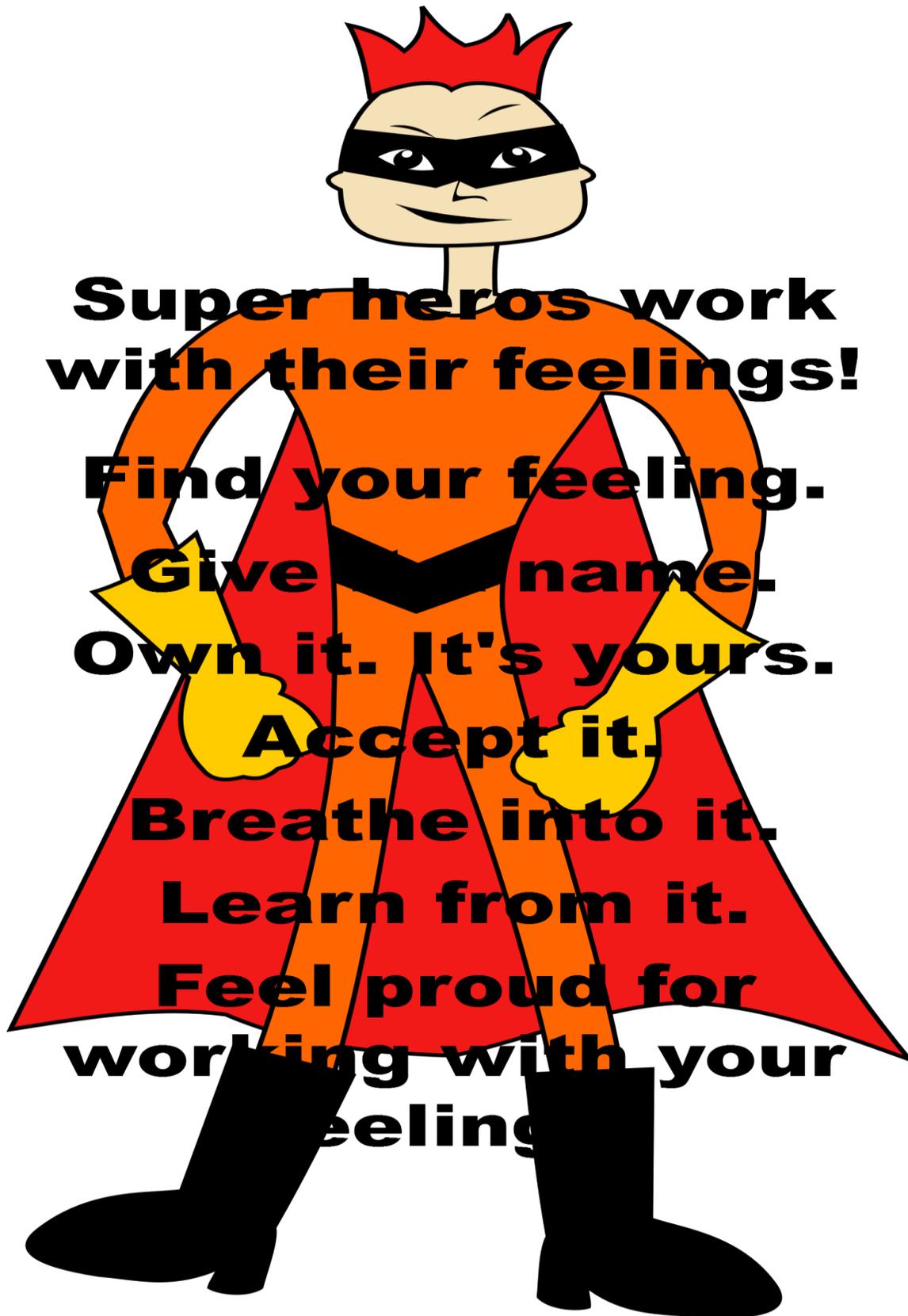
Objective: To learn to observe and work with uncomfortable feelings.

Activity: The Steps of Working with Feelings. To be a super hero, learn to work with your feelings. Think about a time that you had a strong feeling like anger. Did you know that there are variations of anger? (Draw a cyclone on the board and list these feelings starting at the bottom going to the top for the strong emotions.) Grouchy, irritation, frustration, annoyance, anger, rage, aggression, violence. Here are the steps to keeping them small. (Write the highlighted words on the board as you talk about the steps to work with unhappy feelings. Have the children make their own list of the steps under a heading of “I Learn to Work with my Feelings.”)

1. **Identify** the feeling. Call it out! Give the feeling a name. Say, “I’m furious, sad, scared, etc.” Allow yourself to actually feel the feeling. Stay with it. Don’t ignore it.
2. **Own** the feeling. Be responsible for it. Being responsible for your feelings gives you the freedom to deal with them. Make a rule for yourself: “If I feel it, I own it. I choose to get honest with myself. I can work this out or I can act it out. If I spot it, I got it! I’ll stay with it and breathe into it.”
3. **Accept** the feeling. Do not judge it or make yourself bad for having it. Say, “I’m mad that I didn’t get what I wanted.” Don’t blame others. Stick with the feeling for a moment and accept that you have angry feelings. Practicing self-acceptance helps to reduce your engaging in damaging behavior. When you accept your unhappy feelings, you are open to learn to work with them.
4. **Observe** the uncomfortable feeling. Just watch it! Be a detective and spy on it trying to figure it out.
5. **Breathe** into your feeling. Feelings come and go. Feelings are meant to be felt. Sometimes it passes if you just watch it and name it. Sometimes they can be tapped on and breathed away.
6. **Learn.** Your feeling can be your best teacher! Find what it is trying to tell you. It has information for you if you tune into them. Try to find what your anger is trying to tell you. Maybe it is telling you that you need to learn ways to deal with it. It may signal a boundary you need to set. Listen to what your anger has to say. Sometimes it reminds you to learn better ways to deal with feelings of irritability and frustration.
7. Be **proud** of yourself for recognizing and working with your feelings and owning your own part of a problem! Keep learning and growing in your search for healthy ways to deal with your feelings.

Activity: Breaking into the Tornado of Angry Feelings. Feelings can be like a funnel cloud of a tornado if you don’t break into them when they are small. They can build until they become out of control. Learn to take care of unhappy feelings when they are small. Angry feelings start out small and get bigger and out of control. Draw your own tornado on your paper. Write the names of feelings beside your tornado starting at the smallest point with the beginning of anger to the biggest point at the top where you are out of control. Tell us the order of build up going to the breaking point of blowing up. Which feeling do you feel first? Irritated, Frustrated, Annoyed, Building Up Steam, Anger, Aggression, Rage.

Break into that tornado of feelings before it gets bigger and carries you away! Draw a dark line on the cyclone where you want to interrupt your feelings before they gain steam. Start to observe your feelings and how they stack up getting bigger and bigger until you lose your control. Catch yourself with the smaller feelings of anger and shake them off.



## LEARNING ABOUT EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Objective: To understand Emotional Intelligence and the arousal pattern of anger.

Activity: What is Emotional Intelligence? You can be smart with your feelings. Emotional intelligence is the ability to understand and use your feelings to get along well in your life. Emotional intelligence is far more important than IQ, technical skills or experience in how you succeed in the world! You can be book smart, sports smart and people smart! People who use the skills of emotional intelligence deal better with their stress. They learn to handle angry feelings. They have happier, more satisfying lives and get along better with their families. They become the super heroes of their own lives. You can study emotional intelligence and learn to be smart about your feelings! Feelings are for learning. Feelings give you information. They are meant to be felt, understood, explored and released. Some people run away from their bad feelings. Some people push them down but then the feelings stick around and build up. All feelings are okay to have but it is what you do with them that count. Remember that it is not fair to hurt people (or yourself) with your actions.

You can learn a lot about yourself by watching how you act when you are upset. You can study your emotions just like you study any other subject giving you a positive life-long investment in yourself. Feelings can be appraised to determine if they are appropriate for the situation. You can learn to read the emotions of other people to know how best to deal with or negotiate with them. You can watch and see how your over-the-top emotions affect other people. Observe how your bad feelings and mood make you read things wrong and misjudge the other person's intentions. Watch how your bad feelings influence you to act out and make poor decisions.

Activity: How Your Body Reacts when You are Angry. Look at this picture of this boy. See how his angry arousal has taken over his ability to think straight? What do you think he is feeling? Notice his red face—he is caught up in emotional arousal. Who is in control—him or his feelings? How does his stomach feel? Why is he clenching his fists? Why do you think he's so angry? What is he saying? What self-angering thoughts might he be yelling?

Activity: Drawing Your Emotional Arousal. One way to learn about being smart emotionally is to notice how your body changes when you're angry. What does your body do when you get angry? Does your body get hot and tense? Do you feel excitable and react quickly without thinking? This is called emotional arousal. When your emotions get too high, you risk losing it and blowing up. Draw a picture of yourself being angry. Your body cues you to your feelings. Use your body reactions as clues so that you can step back and make good choices. Label the clues that your body changes when you feel threatened: Temperature, red face, anxious stomach, tense shoulders, chest tight and fists and jaws clenching. Breathe into any tight place. Tell yourself that you can be smart about feelings.

Activity: Imagine Cooling off your Brain and Body. Think of how your body gets hot when you are upset. Your brain can go into high arousal also. Your negative thoughts make you unhappy. You are not your thoughts. You can work with (not control) your thoughts. You can cool things down by imagining standing under a cool waterfall, or being in the cool mountains. Maybe you would cool yourself down with a cool rain shower or being in the snow. You might see yourself getting calm in a cool movie theater. What image would cool your steaming thoughts?

Helper Words to Decrease Arousal:

Next time I get mad, I watch what my body does. My body gives me cues when I'm getting steamed. I can learn to break into anger by observing how my body gets aroused. Feeling hot and tense is a cue to step back and take a deep breath. I take a chill pill.

**What high arousal cues do you see?**



**How could this boy calm himself down?**

## HELPER WORDS CAN SLOW DOWN YOUR ANGRY FEELINGS

Objective: To put feelings into symbolic form in a drawing.

Activity: Discussing Different Feelings. Free printable charts and activities for identifying and working with feelings for younger and older children are at <http://www.freeprintablebehaviorcharts.com/feelingcharts.htm>.

Activity: Learning about Helper Words. When you feel yourself becoming upset, you can say certain words to yourself that put you in charge of how you react. Super Hero Helper Words are things that you tell yourself to keep from losing your control. Helper Words are any positive thing you say to calm yourself down and remind yourself that you can deal with what is happening. Think for a moment. What types of things do you say to yourself just before losing your temper? You might say, “Whoa, I can deal with this. I chill out or I don’t have to blow up.” Or you might react before thinking in a way that is upsetting to you and others. Slow down the action by giving yourself some positive Helper Words. What could you say to take down the heat of the moment when it’s not in your best interests to get angry? (Pause and encourage the children to think deeply about what they already say for self-calming. List their Helper Words on the board.)

Activity: Draw Your Feelings. Have the children draw themselves with dark shading across the stomach to indicate how bad feelings get stuck in the body. Then have them draw a “thought balloon” above the head. Ask the children to write “I feel \_\_\_\_” in the thought balloon. Put your bad feelings in the drawing. Make that face really, really upset, angry or sad. Hurt, sad and disappointment can hide under the anger. Have the picture show how you feel. You can feel better by drawing your feelings. Why do Helper Words help you? Use your Super Hero powers and choose positive words to keep calm.

### Cues to Help Children Identify Feelings:

Notice what is going on right now in your mind and thoughts.

What could you say to keep yourself from exploding when you are upset?

You might be feeling frustrated right now. What could you say to help yourself feel better inside?

You can choose to share your hurt and angry feelings before they build up with someone safe.

You can feel good when you step back and breathe before reacting.

Be gentle with yourself as you are learning new skills. You are breaking habits of a lifetime. If you mess up and forget to use your anger management skills, step back and figure out what happened. If you do something mean that you wish you hadn’t, figure out what went wrong. Don’t beat yourself up—that only makes things worse. Tell yourself that you made a slip and you will be more careful next time. You’ll get better over time. Keep working on becoming the best person you can be. Be your own super hero.

### Helper Words to Work with Unwanted Feelings:

Upset feelings can go away when I learn to work with them.

Angry feelings are not the boss of me. I learn to cool myself off!

I’ve got emotional smarts! I can step back and take a breath before I blow up.

My bad feelings come and go. They go faster when I talk to myself in positive ways.

Tips for parents and teachers: You can cue a child to stop and think before acting in anger. Add these cues and other “Stop and think before acting” cues to your teaching repertoire. Practice two or three cues for several days until you hear yourself saying them automatically in response to situations where the child might blow up.



**I step  
back  
and  
breathe!**

**Its no big  
deal!**

**I'm in  
charge of my  
feelings!**

**I can  
handle  
this.**

**I use my  
Helper  
Words!**

**I use my superpowers!**

## **MAKING THE LIFE-CHANGING DECISION TO LEARN MANAGEMENT TOOLS**

Objective: To provide motivation to address problems of anger.

Activity: Do You Want to be an Angry Person? There are a lot of angry people in our world. Angry people are usually not happy. Think of an angry grownup you know. Is he or she a happy person? Do others feel comfortable around them? They might have the bad habit of losing their temper. Tell us about someone you know and how their anger affects their life. You don't have to name them. Angry adults are stuck in an unfortunate habit that causes them problems and keep people from getting too close to them. They didn't have anyone to help them learn anger management when they were young. You are lucky that you get to learn anger management tools. You get to decide if you want to grow up and be angry or not. Sometimes the way you react when you are upset is just a habit you have learned.

Activity: Finding your Motivation to Handle Anger Better. What would be a good reason to keep calm when you get upset? Find what motivates you to learn anger management skills. Why do you want to change? What other reasons might you want to stay cool? I'll list them on the board. Why would you want to be more in charge of your actions? Think about how making this change would make you the person you want to be. Stop for a moment and feel how proud you would be at learning a new habit. That's right, blowing up is a habit that you learned and you can unlearn it! You can learn to slow things down before you react. Slowing thing down is using your common sense super hero power.

Would you like to learn the habit of staying cool and laid back when you are stressed? New habits take time to take hold. The more you practice letting things go that upset you, the calmer you will be. Baby steps will be needed at first. Just keep trying to improve and until you have the new habit of acting differently.

You may forget sometimes to use your anger management skills. If you slip up, don't beat yourself up, that will make things worse. Instead, remind yourself what you will do to keep from losing it next time. You are learning something new and it takes time. . Tell yourself that you will bounce back after a setback. Forgive yourself and get a plan to do better next time. Think about stepping back and taking a breath and how this will improve your relationships. Think about cueing yourself so you will be successful. Tell us how you have been practicing using Helper Words to avoid losing your cool.

Activity: Rehearsing Leaving a Tricky Situation. During what activities do you blow up? Sometimes it's better to avoid situations where you get angry easily. When other people are grouchy, leave. Emotions are contagious, just like catching a cold. Avoid being around people where you might get yourself in trouble. When you are hungry or tired, stay away from cranky people. If you feel irritable, go off by yourself to chill out. Picture yourself starting to walk towards a group of kids or family member and notice that they are tense and having a bad time or fighting. See yourself thinking, "Not my business. I'm out of here" and leaving smiling. Whew! You got yourself out of a potentially bad time!

Helper Words to be in Control:

I remember to use my chill out words when I'm upset.

My anger management tools help me stay calm.

I can chill myself out. I'm cool. I can handle these feelings by thinking cool thoughts.

**“You can have all the expectations in the world but that’s just it.**

**Expectations.**

**Others don’t have to meet your expectations.**

**That’s free will.**

**A tantrum is not required.”**

Lesia Brown

## LEARNING TO SPEAK ANGRY FEELINGS

Objective: To learn the “I Feel \_\_\_\_ message”

Materials: The drawing page, *I Speak My Feelings when Upset*.

Activity: Using Your Words. Tell the children that nothing is so bad as to be hurting inside and not be able to talk about it. Remind them that they can always use their words and let the bad feelings go. Teach the “I feel \_\_\_\_ message” to express negative feelings. Model using a firm voice and a serious expression on the face when the “I feel” message is used. Show the children that this message helps them feel better about getting their uncomfortable feelings out. Its purpose is for self expression and taking power over the situation. It is not to be used to try to change the other person or make them do what you want them to do. So speak out and say how you feel.

Role-play the following examples. Ask for volunteers to play the role of the child who transgresses on the other person and the child who uses the “I feel \_\_\_\_” message.

Giving mean looks.

Bumping into someone.

Grabbing a pencil or paper.

Calling someone stupid.

Ask the children for examples of angry experiences from their lives. After each child tells his story, ask him to say the “I feel \_\_\_\_ message” to the person with whom he is angry. Ask each child to notice how different he feels after speaking his feelings. Remind each child that he can take care of himself by using his strong, firm words.

Activity: Discrimination Training: Sometimes it is not always wise to express angry feelings as there might be dire consequences from adults who will not accept openness from children. When might it not be a good idea to talk about your anger? (Angry, busy, stressed or intoxicated adults) Sometimes it’s best to hold your tongue and find other ways to work your anger out. When is the best time to talk with your mom or dad about something important? When is the worst time to nag them about something you want?

Activity: Drawing My Angry Feelings. Ask the children what minions are (followers or hanger ons from the cartoon *Despicable Me*.) Have the children draw little “Minions” as feelings with different expressions on the chart, *When I Am Upset, I Speak My Feelings*. Ask the children to talk about their drawings. Read the Helper Words for Children and ask them to repeat them after you in unison.

### Helper Words to Express Anger:

I get in touch with my feelings so I can know myself better.

I can’t always control my angry feelings, but I can control how I let them out.

I can use my words. I’ll say my angry and hurt feelings.

I’ll find someone safe to talk to when I’m upset.

Tips for parents and teachers: Learning to use the “I feel \_\_\_\_ when you \_\_\_\_” message is hard for children to do at first. The children may need lots of coaching at first. Choose more assertive children to model the phrase before choosing the quieter children. If a child freezes and cannot think of what to say, stand behind him and ask him how he feels. Then give him the words to repeat until he can say them on his own.



# I Speak My Feelings when Upset!

I Say, "I feel \_\_\_\_\_,

when you \_\_\_\_\_.



## USING GROWTH MINDSETS TO CREATE A POSITIVE FUTURE

Objective: To learn to take a growth mindset perspective.

Activity: Growth Mindset Rules! Fixed mindset people do not believe that they can change and that hard work pays off. Some children have fatalistic views of the future and do not understand long-term consequences. Children who don't view a very long life ahead of them give up on school, have fewer quality friends and commit more serious offenses. They think, 'Why bother with school work? Why go to school? I'm not going to be alive at age 21.' Why should I work hard? I'm not going to make it until next week, so why would I even care?' They go for instant rewards to feel better. They don't weigh the risks of their behavior. You can do better than this. You can think in ways that will help you have a happy future.

Boys and girls who believe that they can make a difference in their lives by working hard have happier lives. This is called growth mindset. What you do now in deciding the kind of person you want to be determines your success in life. How you set your mind is important. You can decide whether you have a growth or fixed mindset. Believe in your ability to work hard and you will change! Believe that you can conquer your anger problem. Give yourself a growth mindset and you will be a happier person! A growth mindset means that you believe that you can learn and grow through hard work and effort. The growth mindset puts you in charge; it knocks out old beliefs that hold you back. Henry Ford, who started the first automobile company said, "If you think you can, you can. If you think you can't, you are right." If you want to change, believe you can.

Your self-esteem is tied to what you think about yourself and how you tackle hard work. People who work hard feel better about themselves than those who goof off. Growth mindset people learn to handle failure and deal with it. They use positive Helper Words to talk themselves through challenging times. Think about a time you had to learn something really hard and you kept at it until you got it. Tell us about it. What uncomfortable feelings did you have when you were struggling? What did you tell yourself to get through it? How did you feel when you finally accomplished the task? (Write the Helper Words and positive feelings on the board under "Growth Mindset.")

Sadly, some people have a fixed mindset which is the belief that they can't change. They let mistakes, failure and hard work shut them down. They don't know that they can improve through practice and hard work. People with fixed mindsets give up easily. They say, "I'm not good at this. It's too hard. I don't care about this stuff. It's boring. Why bother?" They stop trying when the work is challenging. They don't like the uncomfortable feelings of failing and haven't learned how to work through them. Now think about something that is hard to learn that you gave up on. Tell us what was hard to learn. What uncomfortable feelings did you have? What did you say to discourage yourself? What did you tell yourself that made you stop trying? (Write the Fixed Mindset beliefs on the board.)

Activity: Don't Stunt Your Growth. Talk to the children about the word stunted which means to stop growing in one area. Show them a picture of a stunted tree along with a large tree. Stunted trees don't receive something important for growth like sunlight, water or good soil. People can become stuck in their growth if they decide they can't change. Admit your errors and you'll stretch and grow.

Activity: Think of someone whose life has not gone so well because they have made poor choices. How might they feel? Now think of someone who is a "Can-do person" who makes good things happen. How is a person who keeps trying and keeps their mind positive different from a person who gives up? What Helper Words can you use to become a growth mindset person?

## **I am a Growth Mindset Person!**

**A growth mindset gives me  
positive tools to deal with hard stuff.**

**I push myself through challenging tasks by telling  
myself to take a deep breath and chill out.**

**Helper Words help me gain confidence  
and believe in myself.**

**I am a “Can do kid” who deals with mistakes  
by talking myself through them.**

**My growth mindset helps me grow and  
learn through applying good effort.**

**Knowing I can change and believing in my ability  
to work hard makes me a winner for life!**

**I become the winner I want to be  
by using the powers of my super mind.**

**I practice becoming my very best super hero self.**

**Growth Mindset is the coolest attitude of all!**



## I MAKE A PICTURE OF GOOD ANGER CHOICES AND A POSITIVE FUTURE

Objective: To visualize a positive outcome regarding anger choices.

Activity: Visualizing a Positive Future. You can use your imagination to make positive pictures in your mind about being a strong, powerful person. See yourself one grade older. What kind of student will you be? Will you have good friends that get along and play well together? What could you do differently to make yourself into a student who learns well? How could you handle your anger better so that friends will want to play with you? Now see yourself two grades older having learned friendship skills. Remember that if you think you can, you can. You can learn ways to keep your anger under control with the choices you make. See yourself starting to get frustrated while playing a game. Remind yourself that you can talk yourself down when you start to get upset. Take a big breath and blow frustration out. See the frustration leaving your body as you tell yourself that you are a super hero who can deal with uncomfortable feelings.

Make a picture in your mind about being upset with someone in your family when they don't do what you want them to do. You can blow up or remind yourself that you are in charge of your feelings and won't let disappointment and frustration turn into anger. You can feel good about calming yourself down when you don't get your way. Let's practice letting go of bad feelings. Think about disappointment and frustration about being told no. Notice your body. Does it slump down in your chair, puff out in pouting or feel tight? Now tell yourself that you are strong enough to handle a small disappointment and let it go. What would you tell yourself to let go of anger? (Turn on some loud music to dance to) Let's dance and pump your fist in the air while saying to anger, "Out! Shoo! Go! Leave! Go away! I'm a big enough person who doesn't have to get upset when being told no. Dance it out. Dance your anger out. Notice how your body relaxes when you let go of unhappy feelings.

Activity: Using a Growth Mindset when Upset. (Remind the children that they can choose which type of mindset to be in charge of their anger.) You can change how you react when you are angry. Do you want to get along with your friends and family or do you want to be upset. Believe in your ability to change. Empower yourself! You and you are in charge of how you react when you are disappointed or frustrated. Say after me, "I choose growth! I choose growth! I can change and grow! (Pretend your ears are plugged up and say "I can't hear you!" And repeat it until the children are yelling and laughing.)

Activity: Enhance Your Confidence. Think of something that you do really, really well. What is that? How do you feel when you are super confident about doing something that you are great at? Now put that feeling in one hand and hold the good feelings there. Now think about feeling bad when you lost your temper. Doesn't feel good, right? Put that not so good feeling in your other hand. Good feelings can wipe out bad feelings! Good feelings are stronger than unhappy ones. Look at your super confident hand and remember those happy feelings. Look back and forth—good and not-so-good. Again feel the difference in your hands—good and not-so-good. Good can take over the not-so-good. Bring your hands together slowly and let those super confident feelings take over the unhappy ones.

Smile and tell yourself that you can change your behavior when you are angry. You are in charge of your feelings. You get to choose what you do. Do this exercise often to increase your confidence in being in charge of your feelings. Let those super confidence feelings about learning and growing change how you see yourself. Now bring those happy feelings into your heart. Take a deep breath. Think about getting angry and use your confidence to handle it differently. Tell us what happened.

## **My Growth Mindset Makes Me Super Confident!**

**I believe in myself and in my ability to grow and change!**

**I interrupt and throw out any negative beliefs.**

**Just because I believe something bad about myself doesn't mean that it is true.**

**Self-limiting beliefs are just beliefs that are not true.**

**I make myself super strong and flexible.**

**I believe in my ability to change.**

**I cheer myself on when the going gets tough.**

**I am strong and feelings of frustration will not stop me.**

**Change happens when I put my mind to it.**

**My growth mindset reminds me I am a winner.**

**I am confident and unlimited in my ability to change.**

**My growth mindset gives me super powers!**



## FINDING YOUR ANGER TRIGGERS

Objective: To recognize the triggers behind quick angry reactions.

Activity: What are Your Anger Triggers? (Talk to the children about how anger is a natural human emotion. It is a feeling that they can learn to understand and work with in healthy ways. Anger is an automatic response when we feel threatened or feel a loss. The threat may be to our body, to our self-esteem, our values, or when we don't get our way. Using the word "Mads" somehow makes anger a more acceptable emotion to children.)

Do you get frustrated and angry easily? You might have a case of the mads because you've not learned to challenge your triggers. Triggers are things that happen to you where you get mad quickly. Your mads come up when you feel bad or sad. There are different reasons that people get angry. Their mads come out when they feel threatened. Anger can come up very quickly along with the bad feelings inside.

- When someone hurts your body.
- When someone damages or steals your possessions.
- When someone says or does something to put you down and you feel bad inside.
- When someone doesn't play or act fair.
- When you don't get your way or get something you want.
- When you tell yourself that "It's not fair."
- When you do not get what you think you deserve.
- When your expectations are unrealistic.

Anger can also happen if you don't know how to handle feelings of frustration when things are difficult.

- When you don't do well in a game.
- When you have trouble learning something new that is challenging.

Let's list the reasons that people become angry on the board. When do you get angry? These are triggers. Some words and actions from other people can trigger you into feeling frustration and anger. What triggers your mads?

### Things that People do that make Me Angry:

Hurting my body	Touching my private parts
Hurting my feelings	Taking or breaking possessions
Seeing someone else being hurt	Being told I can't do what I want
Name calling, teasing, bullying	Things not going well for me.

Activity: Saying a Boundary. You can say what you want when someone does something you don't like. When you speak up and say what you don't like, it's called a boundary. You can practice telling the person who hurt you how you feel. Say "Don't do that to me. I don't like it." Tell him in a strong, firm voice. Let him know your boundary. (Role play setting boundaries.)

### Helper Words to Identify and Break into Triggers:

- I find what makes me angry and watch to see that I don't trigger.
- When I get angry, I watch to see why. I figure out my anger triggers to be in charge.
- I step back and breathe to slow myself down before I react.
- I think first before I act. My motto becomes, "Stop and think. Think before acting."

## **Take a moment!**

**The Step Back Moment can save your relationships! Take a second and step back before you respond in anger. Tell yourself, “I’m taking a moment. I take a step-back breather to interrupt my angry response to triggers. I give myself that split-second decision to watch instead of striking out. With a moment to think before acting, I get my control. I am in charge, not my anger.”**

**Lynne Namka [angriesout.com](http://angriesout.com)**

## YOU DON'T ALWAYS GET WHAT YOU WANT

Objective: To learn to decrease expectations and accept the word “No” for an answer.

Activity: Learning to Accept the word “No.” Some people get angry when they don’t get what they ask for like a new video game or going to a fast food place. Have you gotten angry when your mom or dad said no? Have you made a problem for yourself by begging or blowing up when you didn’t like what you heard? Some people believe that they should get something just because they wanted it. Have you ever made yourself angry by expecting too much? One skill you can learn is to be able to accept the word “No.”

Life is full of yeses and nos. Disappointment can come up before anger comes in. What does disappointment feel like? Learning to handle the feelings of disappointment when you don’t get what you want is a major skill in life. Feeling disappointed can make you feel desperate inside. Some people fall apart when told no. Some get angry and have a tantrum. Some keep on insisting that they be given what they want. This is called nagging or badgering. Some children badger their parents into giving in. Have you ever done that? Watch how you talk back to adults to get them upset.

One important skill in growing up is learning to handle disappointment. Is it a good idea to make yourself unhappy by getting angry when you don’t get your way? Name your feelings of disappointment and frustration and tell yourself that you can handle it. Tell yourself, “I take what I get and I don’t throw a fit!” Remember what Cookie Monster said, “Me want it but me wait.”

Activity: Breaking into Outbursts of Frustration. Feelings of frustration are normal when things don’t go your way. It is what you do with them that count. Challenge that outburst of frustration that you have when things don’t go the way you want. If you start to act out the frustration, catch yourself and choose a Helper Word statement to calm yourself down. You can own your feelings and behavior and feel good about yourself.

(Have the children role play handling disappointment over not getting to go to an event, a fast food restaurant or get a toy at the store. Cast yourself in the role of not getting your way and throwing a tantrum in the first skit to show the children how immature it can look. Then look happy and announce, “I can make myself happier by not expecting so much. My home will be happier if I stop asking for so much.” Ask the children whether being spoiled makes them into happier people.)

### Helper Words:

I didn’t get what I wanted this time. Oh, well; that’s life.

Sometimes I get what I want; sometimes I don’t. That’s just how it is.

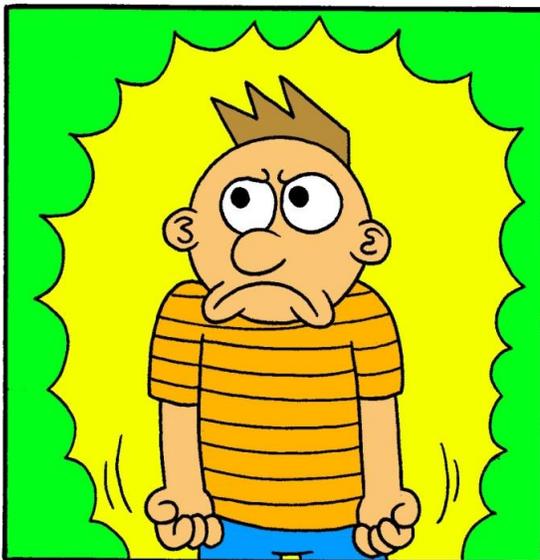
It’s my parent’s job to say no some of the time. I handle not getting what I want.

Even though I don’t like to hear no, disappointment is just a feeling that I can handle.

Tips for parents and teachers: Today’s children are more entitled than any other generation. Not being able to handle disappointment and to keep on pushing to get what one wants at the expense of others is a precursor to narcissism. Narcissistic people are able ignore distractions and hone their focus to keep on hammering the person to get their way. (Think of an obnoxious telemarketer who keeps insisting after you say no.) Business people know that negotiations are still open as long as people stay at the table talking about a deal. They know that they have to walk away when a relentless negotiator won’t take no for an answer! Use this walking away strategy with a firm No! I said no!” and make yourself unavailable.

This lesson plan and poster are from Lesson Plans for Teaching Resilience to Children available as a free pdf download at [angriesout.com](http://angriesout.com).

**SOMETIMES I GET  
WHAT I WANT.  
SOMETIMES I DON'T.**



## WHAT TYPE OF FIRECRACKER DO YOU HAVE?

Objective: To recognize the role of choice when expressing angry feelings.

Materials: Red string and red construction paper.

Activity: What Size Is Your Firecracker? Do You Have a Long or Short Fuse? Feelings of anger can happen when you feel threatened. The threat can be to your body, possessions, self-esteem (criticizing, sarcasm and name calling that hurt your feelings) or your values (someone does something which offends our sense of fairness). Tell us about a time when someone said something that hurt your feelings and you felt angry and blew up like a firecracker. Pow!

Are you a little firecracker or a big firecracker? Move your hands apart and show us how big your anger firecracker is. Do you blow each time you are upset like a little firecracker with a short fuse? Or do you have a long fuse saving up your anger until it grows huge for a big explosion? When do you get so mad that you explode like a firecracker? Are you a firecracker or a stick of dynamite? You can learn to stop having big explosions. If you get angry easily, time yourself out to cool down. Maybe you feel frustrated and blow when things go wrong for you. You have an unrealistic expectation that things should be easy.

### Short Fuse Firecracker: Feeling Helpless and Out of Control

**I should get my way/things should not go wrong for me + angry feelings + the right to blow up!**

Expecting that things should always go and believing that you have the right to scream and yell if it doesn't will make you miserable. A short fuse can mean that you have a hot temper! To make your fuse longer, let go of expecting that things must go your way. Things break. Things go wrong. People are unreasonable. They are unfair at times. They say no to you. You don't get what you want. Remember Murphy's Law--thing will go wrong if they can. Prepare yourself to live with this concept of stuff happens and get used to it. The Rolling Stones sang about you don't always get what you want into a song. Look at the cool Rocker Dudes chilling out in this poster. Can anyone sing part of this song?

Activity: Making Firecrackers. (Make firecrackers by rolling the construction paper into tube and covering one end. Put a long length of the string through the end of the firecracker to stimulate being able to keep calm and problem solve instead of exploding quickly.) It's about expectations. High people expectations have short fuses and explode quickly. High expectations and the belief that you have the right to get angry over small things give you a short fuse. (Have the children move the string back and forth with short fuse self-talk such as "I don't explode over small things" and "I have to get frustrated when I don't get things my way." Make this a fun activity and get the children laughing over the ridiculousness of expecting things to always go their way.)

Activity: I Expected Something and I didn't Get It. When did you not get something you expected? Show us how short the fuse was on your firecracker. What did you say or do? Has anyone else acted that way? Let's figure out how to make the fuse longer so you're in control. Super Heroes keep their control. What could you say so you don't create a short fuse? Watch your unrealistic expectations and demands and how they backfire on you. Get real. Reality is how things work, not how you want them to work. Get fierce with reality! Want a happier home? What expectations could you let go and say, "I make my short fuse longer by taking a deep breath and stepping back."



**“You don’t always get what you want.  
But if you try sometimes, you just might find,  
you get what you need.”**

**The Rolling Stones**

## TAKING A TIME OUT TO DEAL WITH FRUSTRATION

Objective: To deal with frustration when losing a game or feeling out of control.

Activity: Step Back from Frustration and Talk to Yourself. People who have trouble with a difficult assignment, lose points during video games or strike out during a ball game can have feelings of frustration that build up. Frustration is a feeling you have when things go wrong. You feel frustrated when you feel helpless and out of control. Have you thrown a remote control down after losing a game? Blowing up and stopping playing is called “rage quitting” and that’s no fun. Have you ever blown up with frustration? When have you felt frustrated?

You can learn to deal with frustration. It is only a feeling. If you want to be happy and successful, choose a growth mindset and see yourself as someone who can grow and change your behavior because you are strong inside. See yourself as someone who can try hard and learn new things and you will! Instead of blowing up and leaving in anger, remind yourself that you are in charge of your anger. Sometimes it’s good to go to a calm place where you can calm yourself down. Announce that you need to go take a breather and you will be back in a second.

Activity: Step Back and Calm Yourself. You can take your own Time Out to be in charge of your anger, not the other way around. Go to a quiet place and use Helper Words to give yourself a good talking to. Remind yourself that having fun is the best reason to play a game. It’s okay if you don’t win every single time. It’s okay if you don’t get it right every single time. Tell yourself that you are big enough to handle losing. Keeping your cool and enjoying the game is more important than winning.

When you feel the angry feelings coming on, before you lose your cool, go off somewhere quiet and calm yourself down by deep breathing and talking to yourself about keeping your cool. Start thinking about how you are in charge of your feelings. Tell yourself that you are strong and resilient and you can handle things. You can make yourself into a happier person by believing you can change. Believe that you can change how you react when you are angry and you will! You can change to become the best person you can be if you keep choosing better choices when you feel irritated or frustrated. With whom could you share this message about being able to change your frustration and disappointment response?

Helper Words during Time Out to Reduce Angry Thoughts:

I can handle disappointment. I remind myself to take a step back.

Stepping back slows down the action so I don’t react when I feel frustrated.

I take a deep breath and remind myself that it is just frustration. I’m in charge of my feelings.

I’m happy that I’m learning new ways to keep from losing my temper.

I tell myself, “Step back, Crackerjack! I am not my angry thoughts.

Tips for parents and teachers: Chant the Helper Words over and over with the children to help them internalize them. The child’s hearing the positive ideas in his own voice allow him to own them. Emphasize feeling GOOD! Chanting them and singing them in silly rhymes and song tune helps open up the happy endorphins in the brain which is then associated with learning a new skill. Get goofy!

## **I Learn New Ways of Thinking!**

**I learn how to take criticism.**

**I learn to deal with disappointment,  
frustration and anger.**

**I am in charge of my anger,  
not the other way around.**

**I make good anger choices.**

**I have a bring-it-on attitude to  
deal with hard times.**

**I'm proud that I can change!**

**I choose a happy life!**



## WAYS TO DEAL WITH THREAT

Objective: To learn better coping strategies to deal with feeling threatened.

Activity: How Do You Act when You Feel Threatened? Let's pretend that you are a cave man or woman and a saber tooth tiger jumps out in front of you and growls. Of course you would feel threatened and scared. What might you do when you feel a big threat? (List the five ways that people move when they are threatened or stressed on the board. Act each way out to demonstrate. Have the children draw stick figures to illustrate each response when dealing with an aggressor.)

1. Move toward the threat (fight back and return the negative energy).
2. Move away from the threat (Run away. Sometimes this is an appropriate choice.)
3. Move away from the threat in the mind (feel helpless and space out).
4. Stay present and let the threat hurt you (give in to the aggressor.)
5. Stay present to deal with the problem (stand up to the aggressor, problem solve.)

Sometimes people get angry when they are threatened and they get ready to fight. They don't know that there are other things they can do instead. The first three ways that people move when they are scared or threatened are called the "Fight, flight or freeze" responses. Or you can give in to the person or take a deep breath to clear your mind and address the problem directly.

Activity: Step Back in your Mind when Threatened. Today we don't have saber tooth tigers but mean and aggressive people threaten or scare us. Think of a time when you felt threatened or bullied. Can anyone give an example of feeling threatened and we'll do a role play about it? (Have the children role play these five ways and ask them how they felt with each response. Set up some scenes of threat such as someone calls you an ugly name or grabs your paper.) Knowing positive actions to take makes you feel more powerful! Your breath is your best friend and it is always there with you. You can call up your deep breath which brings oxygen to your cells to give you energy. Breathing calms your mind when you are scared or confused. Breathing helps calm the fight, flight or freeze reaction so that you can stay present and deal with the situation. Deep breathing clears your mind and helps you think more clearly!

Sometimes you can tell the person what they are doing that you don't like. Other times it's not safe to share your feelings. When should you walk away and not tell the other person why you are leaving?" (Most children can discriminate situations when it would be dangerous to express their anger.) When things are at their worst, promise me you will believe in your ability to find people who treat you well. Hang out with people who will treat you well and be a good friend back.

Activity: Step Back and Walk Away. If you have a quick temper and blow up and yell at people, you will lose friends. If you cuss and name call, some people will be afraid of you and won't want to be around you. Using ugly words when you are threatened will give you the reputation of not being a nice person. Walk away when you sense you might have an outburst. Take your anger outside or to a different room where you deal with it on your own. You have a challenge of learning to deal with a temper. Step back, take a breath and walk away before you say something hurtful.

### Helper Words:

I take a step back to slow the action down before I react.

I take a deep breath and decide do I need to negotiate or leave?

I am the Change Maker! I am the Captain of Change!"



## USE YOUR FIRM, FAIR WORDS

Objective: To be assertive and talk out feelings instead of acting them out.

Activity: Role Playing. (Encourage problem solving to deal with angry feelings and using words instead of fists. Set up role situations to practice this new skill of anger release. You can model the incorrect and correct ways to act and ask the children to act out the different ways of dealing with a threatening situation. Choose some real life conflicts from your classroom after the children get the hang of saying the formula in pretend situations. Role Playing allows the child to gain mastery over a new skill in a nonthreatening situation. Here are some examples. Ask the children for others.)

Mary, pretend that you bump into Joe when he walks by. Joe, you start to feel frustrated. Remember your job is to remember to use your words if you feel angry. What can you say to her to express your feelings? Remember to use your firm, fair words to take care of yourself.

Gary, let's pretend that Jeff has just grabbed your ball. You can choose what to do. Hit him, chase him, tell the teacher, act like it is part of the game or take care of it yourself. What would happen if you do each of these things?

Your little brother goes into your room and gets into your stuff. What could you say and do? What deal about respecting each other could you make? Could you make an agreement to play with him more if he stops?

Helper Words to Internalize Ways to Handle Angry Feelings:

I can say how I feel if I am fair about it.

I can be firm and speak out using my feeling words.

I can keep my control. I can make a good choice when I'm upset.

I can take care of myself by using chill down words.

Generalization: Reinforce children who use appropriate expression of anger. When children come to you to tell of conflict, tell them to use their words and work it out with the other person. Given a few guidelines, children can be remarkably effective at working out their own problems. If a child is overly reactive to another child tell him, "Sounds like he's got your number. Maybe you need to get an unlisted number. Change your number so he can't get to you!"

Use the "I feel \_\_\_\_ formula" yourself, modeling appropriate ways to express uncomfortable feelings to the children several times during the day.

I feel frustrated when you interrupt the group.

I feel angry when I try to talk and your voices are so loud that I can't be heard.

When I see you hit yourself in the head like that, I feel sad.

I'm feeling upset now. I'll say how I feel before I blow up.

Tips for parents and teachers: Children can learn that anger is a normal human emotion that needs to be brought to a conscious level so that they can make better choices on how to react when angry. They can learn to bring their hurt and shameful feelings to a conscious level where they can be recognized and labeled. Getting the child to acknowledge his anger is a step which slows the response down so that a better choice can be made. Sometimes feeling helpless (one of the four H's) sets off anger. Remind the children to make a good decision when he notices he is feeling out of control.

# Got Mads?

We all get angry at times.

Angry feelings are part of being human.

Feelings are for learning.

Feelings have information for you.

Feelings can be expressed in safe ways.

It's what you do with your feelings that count.

Feeling helpless is a sign to  
step back and breathe.

My pledge is to be in charge of my feelings:

Three things I can do instead of blowing up:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

## IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT GETTING ANGRY

Objective: To learn to speak angry feelings in appropriate ways.

Materials: The chart, “*The Most Important Things to Remember about Getting Angry.*”

Activity: It is Okay to be Angry but You cannot Harm Others or Yourself. People deserve respect and should not be hurt. We are not allowed to hurt others, ourselves or property when we are angry. Discuss the firm, fair and friendly way of responding to threat. Introduce the concept of using words to release anger and problem-solve situations that are upsetting. Remind the children to “Use your words to say how you feel.” Discuss “*The Most Important Things to Remember About Getting Angry.*” Ask them who they could share some of these ideas with.

Discussion Questions: Big angry feelings stick around if you stuff them down inside. Stored anger can build up and blow up like a volcano. Angry feelings have to go somewhere. They can get stuck in the bodies or they can be released by learning anger release skills. Pushing your bad feelings might cause a bigger explosion later on. So it’s important to learn how to talk about them with someone safe.

What are some different choices you can make when you are angry? Let’s list these on the board. Which ones do you do? What might happen with each choice?

- Verbal or physical aggression
- Withdrawal, run away and hide
- Deny and suppress the anger
- Slow things down and step back and breathe before reacting
- Problem-solve the issue.
- Express feelings with someone who is supportive
- Learn anger management skills to take the anger down
- Figure out what didn’t work and do something different next time.

You feel better about yourself when you learn new skill. Remember how good you felt when you learned to ride a bicycle? Anything new is hard work at first and then you feel proud. Learning to talk about your anger can make you feel proud. Feel good about speaking up and saying what you feel in a firm, fair way. Did you ever feel good about expressing your feelings even though the other person didn’t change?

### Cues for Making Better Choices During Conflict:

You don’t have to yell. I know that you are mad but you don’t need to yell.

Use a strong voice that shows you are mad but keep your voice down.

Ask before you touch. Maybe \_\_\_\_\_ doesn’t want this bothered.

Ask and respect her answer. You can feel good when you respect \_\_\_\_\_’s feelings.

Don’t hit him. Tell him about it. Say, “I feel mad when you \_\_\_\_\_.”

It is okay to feel angry but you may not hurt anyone here.

Tell him. Tell him with your words. Use your words not your fists.

Calling her a name is not the answer. You need to talk about what you want. Tell her how you feel.

You are angry because you aren’t the boss right now. Remember, you don’t always get to have your way.

Tips for parents and teachers: Teaching children to do self talk gives them tools plus your positive messages to carry around with themselves. We are reprogramming little minds here to teach them to be more realistic in their demands and change the negative thoughts that go through their minds. Remind them to go with what is real in the world, not what they want to be real in their mind. The small amount of time that you spend in rehearsing the children in the Helper Words statements will save you from time spent on reprimands. Group rehearsals via chanting as the standard group practice done in Chinese schools assists learning and builds group connections.



## **The Most Important Things to Remember About Getting Angry!**

**It is okay to feel mad. It's not okay to hurt others or yourself when angry.**

**You are responsible for your own feelings. Own your feelings. Talk about them!**

**Don't try to control your anger. Understand it and learn ways to work with it.**

**Take responsibility for your actions when upset. Watch what you say and do.**

**Learn to make better choices to contain your unhealthy ways of expressing anger.**

**To feel good about yourself, find healthy ways to express your anger.**

**Use "I statements" when you are upset when it's safe to do so**

**Be respectful to yourself and others.**

**Dealing with threat and conflict is one of the most important skills you can learn.**

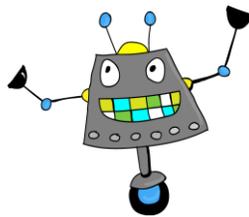
**There are people who can help you understand and release your anger.**

**Find safe people to talk to. Keep looking for people who can help you.**

**Let those uncomfortable feelings go by talking about them.**

**You don't have to hold on to anger. You can learn ways to let your anger go!**

**Feel good about yourself. Express anger in ways that are helpful for you.**



## CHALLENGE THOSE DARK THOUGHTS

Objectives: To learn about and identify negative beliefs and self angering thoughts.

Activity: Learning About Hot Thoughts. Did you know that you can make yourself angry with your thoughts? Did you know you can keep yourself angry with your thinking? You can anger yourself! Hot Thoughts are the things that we say out loud or in our minds to keep ourselves angry. They turn up the heat inside. Hot Thoughts keep us upset so that we might be tempted to do things we regret later. Hot thoughts keep you upset. You can spend your energy on negative thoughts or in trying to solve your problem. Dark thoughts can become a bad habit. Which dark thoughts do you have?

1. Name Calling: Name calling keeps people angry at each other. Calling other people names does not solve the problem. Instead of calling names, try to figure out what to do. Calling yourself ugly names, like stupid or dumb when you've made a mistake also keeps your mind upset. Learn to challenge mean names.

2. Saying Dark Thoughts that Keep You Upset: What you tell yourself can keep you in an irritable mood. Here are some examples of dark thoughts that you can challenge when you say them.

Thinking about how bad another person is. "You jerk." "You are crazy."

Deciding that certain people "deserve" to be punished.

Believing that you have the right to hurt others who are different or weak.

3. Life Isn't Fair. Telling yourself that it isn't fair is a dark thought that keeps you angry. Sometimes things are not fair. It's sad but it's true. If you have had a rough time of it in life with other people hurting you, you may have reason to be angry. Maybe you made a bad decision that hurt you. Under your anger is disappointment, hurt and sadness. It helps to share your feelings. Feelings shared can become smaller. Find someone safe to talk with. Saying, "It's not fair" over and over keeps you upset. Get over your expectation that things should go your way. Stop thinking people should give you what you want just because you are you. Get over yourself—that part that expects too much. You can do it. You can make your mind happier by thinking of other people.

4. Assuming Others Are Out To Get You. Do you keep yourself upset because of wrong ideas? There are facts or things that really happen. There are ideas that you have about a situation that might not be true. Decide between facts and what you assumed to be true. Assumptions are things you make up in your mind that are not real. Always check your assumptions. Get real! Be fierce with reality. When in doubt about someone's motivations, do a Reality Check. A Reality Check is when you ask someone else for their opinion on how you view a bad situation. Remember, when it doubt, check it out!

5. Not Taking Responsibility for Your Part of the Situation. Blaming others is a way that people try to stop feeling bad inside. People who cannot take responsibility for their own behavior turn the energy outward to someone else. You can feel proud of yourself when you learn to own your part of a problem or conflict! Tell us of a time when you owned up to your part of a problem and felt better about yourself.

5. Mountains Out of Molehills. Another form of dark thoughts is making small things big deals are another way of turning up the heat inside. Blowing up over small things can be a bad habit that you've learned as a way to deal with stress. Making mountains out of molehills can also be a way of trying to get attention. Tell us about a time when you blew things out of proportion.



**I challenge all self-  
angering thoughts.  
I interrupt my hot  
thoughts.**

**I take my  
super power!**

**I stop name  
calling, blaming  
others, using words  
and telling myself  
that it's not fair.**

## INTERUPT DARK THOUGHTS WITH SELF-SOOTHING

Objective: To learn Thought Stoppage and practice imagery techniques to calm the mind.

Activity: Breaking into Angry Thoughts. Angry emotions can hijack your common sense making you say and do things you regret later. Wouldn't you like to feel good instead of flying off the handle when you are angry? Dark thoughts pull your mood down. They are mean and spiteful but you can challenge them. You are not your unhappy thoughts. When they come up, do something about them. You can't control or push bad feelings and thoughts down. Learn to work with them and let them go.

Catching and breaking into dark thoughts can be done with Thought Stoppage. You can learn to interrupt your thoughts and get back to your more positive mind and change your mood. Yelling "Stop!" or "Negative thought get out of here!" puts you in charge of your mind. Distracting yourself and telling yourself "I'm not going there" gives you more control of your mind. Adding a gesture such as shrugging your shoulders or pretending to push the thought away gives added emphasis. Stop giving negative thoughts free rent in your brain! Let's practice Thought Stoppage by using your imagination. Think of being angry at someone and feel it in your body. How are you self-angering? What do you say to keep yourself upset? Think that thought and yell, "Stop! Think the thought and knock it away with your hands. Brush it off your shoulder and say Get out of here!" Type the dark thought on your computer or phone and delete it. Be tough with any negative idea. Don't allow it. Do something active to move it out!

Activity: Calming Your Aroused Brain. Self-soothing is anything that you say or do to calm yourself. Rewire your brain by doing a self-soothing exercise. You can learn to work with your emotions to bring about changes in your brain! The brain is elastic and can be programmed with stress management techniques. Your brain has an emotional part that works with your feelings called the amygdala. It reacts quickly when you sense danger. You can learn to relax the emotional part of your brain by deep breathing. Here's a YouTube video that shows how your emotional brain works and how to calm it. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zs559guIGDo>

You can learn to self-soothe so that you, not your excessive emotions, are in charge! Self soothing techniques are things you do-activities, exercises and habits-to calm yourself when you are stressed or caught in unruly emotions. Relaxation rules! Thought Stoppage works! Positive experiences turn on the pleasure centers in the brain and reduce brain areas that have strong emotions like anger. Let's watch the video again and practice calming the amygdala. (Stop the video and ask the children to think of someone whom they are angry with including themselves. Practice each calming technique.)

Watch your dark thoughts and what they do to your mood. Dark thoughts might tell you to hurt yourself or others. They pull your mood down. They tempt you to do things that are wrong. Chase them away and don't give them power. Don't allow them to hang around. Interrupt ugly thoughts to work with your emotional brain. Rewire your brain so that you respond in cool, calm ways when you feel stressed by ideas that are ugly. Learning something new that is hard makes you a stronger person. Challenge any dark thought that sneaks into your mind. Mastery of dark thoughts creates self-esteem.

Helper Words:

I can feel proud about learning self-soothing techniques that keep me calm.  
I feel strong and powerful when I interrupt negative ideas that keep me upset.  
I feel good when I practice calming my excitable brain by telling thoughts to leave.  
I interrupt dark thoughts and send them packing to become a powerful person.  
My common sense is my super power! I stop angering myself with my thoughts.



**Dark  
Thoughts?**

- Beat yourself up?**
- Hurt yourself?**
- Hurt others?**
- Revenge?**

**Use  
Thought Stoppage.  
Tell yourself, "Stop, stop,  
get out of my head!  
Push those thoughts away!"**

## KNOCKING DARK THOUGHTS AWAY

Objective: To challenge and interrupt negative thinking of harming self or others.

Activity: Yelling at the Dark Thoughts. Dark thoughts are those ideas that come through your mind when you are angry at yourself or someone else that are destructive. They come up out of the blue or when you are in a bad mood. They call you names or tell you to hurt someone else. They steal your good mood. They are nasty ideas that need to be sent packing! Be a detective on thoughts that sour your mood. You are not your negative thoughts. You can work with (not control) your thoughts. Get tough with them. You are in charge of your mind. Catch them and give them a good push out the door. Yell at the thought, “Get out of here. Get out of my brain. Get out the door!” (Have the children write down their dark thoughts on the poster. Have them yell at and dismiss any dark thoughts they come up with using a definitive hand gesture.)

You have two parts of your brain that work with your emotions: 1. The front part of your brain helps you think and make decisions. It helps you make cool choices. It is flexible and rational. It is the place like a big freezer that you can put your hot thoughts in. Your breath helps you move hot thoughts to the freezer. The front part of your brain is the Command Central of your brain helping you figure things out. 2. Your fiery emotional brain (the limbic system and amygdala) prepare you for action. It is the center for those fiery hot thoughts! It makes you impulsive and get ready to pounce or blast off. You lose your common sense when something upsets you and you go into the fire center! You say and do things you don't mean. Stepping back and taking a breath helps you get back to your rational brain and those cool choices. You want to get your mind back to Command Central where you're in charge.

Activity: Interrupting Angry Impulses. Do you act out and get yourself in trouble? Angry impulses often come that emotional part of your brain and from moving too quickly. If you feel stressed by something someone does, take charge of your mind and slow it down. It helps to set goals. One goal might be to chill out more easily. Tell me another goal and I'll list it on the board. The dark thoughts that come through your mind are going to try to knock those goals down. Visualize your goal of chilling out when you are upset. Think of taking a chill pill. See yourself choosing your words wisely and speaking them slowly. What solution do you come up with? Visualize your success. What obstacle might keep you away from your goal? Picture that obstacle and using your super hero powers to get past it. Say, “I am not those thoughts. Woah, pull back and throw those thoughts away. Breathe and slow it down!”

Activity: Snap Yourself Out of It. The first Thought Stoppage technique was using a rubber band on the wrist to snap yourself every time you heard a negative thought in your mind. Bad thought—snap! This was a small punishment for an unwanted behavior. Let's practice. Think a dark thought. Smack your wrist fast and say, “Dark thought, get out of here!” (You can hand out rubber bands but be prepared for the children to get excited and snap each other. Demonstrating on your wrist with the rubber band and then passing it around is a safer bet!)

Tips for parents and teachers: It's an imperative that angry young people learn to work with the darker aspects of their nature. There is much darkness in our society. I'm writing this after another senseless mass shooting. It is almost like unholy thoughts can take on a life of their own and preoccupy some people. Suicidal thoughts can and do preoccupy young minds. It's frightening when harmful thoughts narrow in to a singular idea. Children need tools to get themselves through dark times when negativity takes over. Your call on whether you name the self-mutilating and lethal thoughts or not—cutting, suicide, homicide—depending on the age of the children.

# WHAT DARK THOUGHTS DO YOU HAVE?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_

CATCH YOUR DARK THOUGHTS AND CHALLENGE THEM WITH THOUGHT STOPPAGE.

THROW THOSE UGLY THOUGHTS OUT OF YOUR MIND!



## COOL THOUGHTS CHILL ME OUT

Objective: To learn to release angry feelings through self talk.

Activity: Learning About Cold Thoughts and Cool Tools. Negative thoughts about things that are not fair are not your friend! You can learn to break into them. Self Talk statements or Helper Words give you a new way of looking at things to help you break into dark thoughts. You can learn to be your own cheerleader and coach when you tell yourself positive words about how you want to be.

Ask the children what they say to themselves to let angry feelings go. Cold Thoughts are words and phrases that help take us away from anger. They turn down the heat that is felt inside. Chill Out words show you how to talk yourself down when you are upset. Remind yourself to breathe and keep your cool. Talk to yourself to become strong and resilient. Have the children list things that they say to themselves to release anger. (That's not worth getting upset about. I can let this one go. I can chill out.)

Activity: Cooling Off Places for My Hot Thoughts. Encourage creative thinking by asking the children to come up with the most outlandish place they can think of to put their Hot Thoughts to cool them down. Ask them to visualize the angering thoughts slide down the bath tub drain. Send them to the North Pole and having Santa's elves turn them into toys, etc. Acting silly with the children will reinforce this idea of letting unwanted thoughts go.

Activity: Tossing those Hot Thoughts Away. Demonstrate to the children how they can let their bad feelings go by writing them on a piece of paper and tossing them into the trash. Have the children draw and write about their mad feelings using the "I feel \_\_\_\_ when you \_\_\_\_" message and then wad up the page. Have the children throw the pieces of paper listing their anger feelings into the trash while saying "I can let my anger go. I am using a Cool Tool to throw away my anger." Then take the trash out to the dumpster.

Have you noticed that some grownups are not quite grownup? You are as grown up as you are responsible for your thoughts, feelings and actions. Growth is facing your uncomfortable feelings head on. Mature up! Be your own super hero! Grow up by learning how to break into hot thoughts.

Cues for Breaking into High Arousal:

Check your thinking--hot or cold? Think about a Cool Tool you could use.

How are your thoughts upsetting you? How can you take care of yourself?

How does wanting to get even help you? It's not a matter of what he deserves.

How would your getting even make you a better person?

Helper Words to Remind Responsibility for Being in Charge of the Mind:

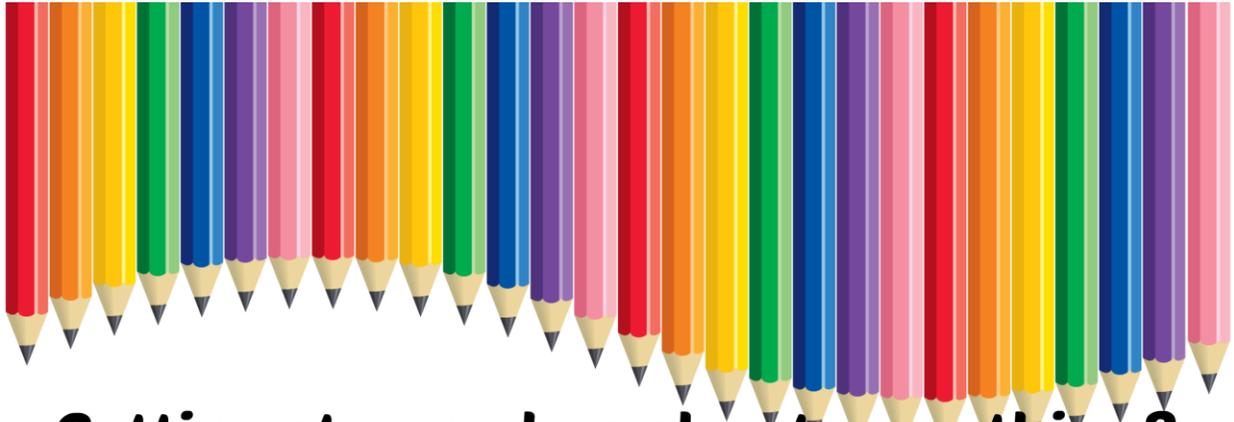
I chill myself down. Cool talk helps me take care of myself.

I use Cool Tools when I am upset. I am my own person.

I don't have to react to his teasing. I stop my sarcastic talk and Hot Thoughts.

I catch my mind when it starts saying dark thoughts and change my mental channel.

Tips for parents and teachers: Keep reminding your child that we are as mature as we are able to take responsibility for our own thoughts, words and actions. When a child is upset with someone, ask "What is your part in setting this situation up? Remember behavior is a product of how you think. What can you learn about yourself so you don't repeat this mistake?"



**Getting steamed up about something?  
Loosing your cool? Step back and  
breathe. Step back and leave.**

**Tell yourself, "I am so out of here. I'm  
going to go give my angry thouhts a  
talking to. I'll write those Hot Thoughts  
down. I send them out of my brain,  
down my arm and into my  
pencil or computer.**

**Then I erase or delete them.**

**I let my Hot Thoughts go!**



## THE OOPS! MOMENT: LEARNING FROM YOUR MISTAKES

Objective: To learn that mistakes are a valid part of the learning process.

Activity: Don't Get Angry at Yourself when You Goof Up. Mistakes are part of learning. When you make an error, turn on your thinking cap and try another way. New things are challenging to learn at first. Some tasks are hard. Growth mindset people tell themselves that they will get it. They deal with the frustration.

You may stop yourself from doing something important because you might be afraid of failing. You will make mistakes; that is part of learning. Things will get you down. How you explain failure will help or hurt you. How you explain your mistakes can either spur you on to getting through the bad times or knock you down. If you view mistakes and change as opportunities for new learning and growth, you will become a winner in life. People who see failure as a reason for giving up need an inner cheerleader to cheer them on. You can become your own Inner coach or cheerleader reminding you to keep trying when you have a hard task or difficult situation. Take positive action when bad things happen by coaching yourself to learn something positive.

Activity: Choosing Learning over Frustration. (Tell the children of a mistake that you made when you were young and what you learned from it. Admit that you got angry at yourself at first and then decided to figure out what you did wrong so you could change.) Example: "I had trouble learning the multiplication tables. I thought I was dumb at first. I kept at it and became a winner. I got control over my strong feelings. I made the decision to be a learner instead of a loser!"

Now it's your turn. Tell us about losing your cool and what you learned from it. Mistakes take courage to admit but you can be a winner if you admit what you did wrong and clean up your act. If what you are doing isn't working, don't keep doing it! Sometimes your fear of bad feelings after making a mistake holds you back. You might feel embarrassed, frustrated or ashamed. So what, they are just feelings. You are courageous when you move through excuses and learn how to deal with a situation better. Go for a change by feeling good about learning from errors.

Mistakes are not just opportunities for learning. Sometimes they are the *only* opportunity for learning. So turn those times you mess up into an Oops Moment. Treasure them! The Oops Moment is a valuable opportunity for learning to do something different! Your brain changes when you decide to apply effort to learn something valuable. People who want to learn something new when they mess up make fewer mistakes in the future. Setbacks are opportunities for changing something important about how you handle things. Don't hide your mistakes because you feel embarrassed (not even from yourself)—call them out and show them the light of day. Become a Mistake Expert! Be a learner about doing it wrong and then figuring it out so you can get it right. Don't get frustrated, just get learning! Courage is owning up to what doesn't work and replacing it. Make new mistakes; don't keep making the old ones over and over. The chief trick to making good mistakes is fail fast, fail smart! Tell yourself, "I'm resilient. I learn from my mistakes. I can do this." Say it. Say it until you become it!

### Discussion Questions:

Describe your feelings when you've done something wrong. Would you like to feel good instead?

What could you say to remind yourself that a mistake is an Oops Moment for learning?

Define mistakes in a new way that will help motivate you to change.

What will you say to yourself to deal with your uncomfortable feelings after messing up?

"Change, change, change will do you good" is a line from a song. What change would do you good?

## THE OOPS MOMENT!

So you slipped up and forgot your  
anger management skills.  
A mistake gives you an opportunity  
for valuable learning.

You have three choices:

Ignore it.

Beat yourself up.

Get it and correct it.

Turn your brain on with the desire  
to correct your goof up!

Take your opportunity to Super Chill!



## ERROR CORRECTION AND DEALING WITH CRITICISM

Objective: To take responsibility for mistakes and stop pushing shame and humiliation down.

Activity: Handling Correction. Some people get angry when they are corrected or criticized. They can't stand their uncomfortable feelings of embarrassment and shame when they are criticized. They push them down and turn the blame on someone else. When they are scolded they make excuses or say "It's not my fault." They look for someone else to blame or get angry when scolded and try to block their bad feelings of guilt. They might even blow up to make the other person to back off. Stop and think; did you ever get angry when someone corrected you and said that you were wrong? Getting angry when you are corrected or scolded is a habit you've learned so you won't feel bad inside. You can break this bad habit and learn to deal with your uncomfortable feelings. Get comfortable with your uncomfortable feelings! Remind yourself, "I made a mistake. That's okay if I'm corrected. It doesn't matter if I feel awkward. That's just a painful feeling. I challenge it and let it go."

One of the biggest lessons in life is learning to take responsibility for things you say and do. You know what is right and wrong. How you act and what comes out of your mouth has consequences! ☺. You will make some mistakes along the way. Error correction is making things right again. Error correction means cleaning up what you did wrong. It means picking up the living room after you messed it up, saying "I'm sorry" when you hurt someone or replacing something you broke. There are no mistakes when you learn something. The only mistake is not trying or giving up.

Criticism can be hard to listen to because you feel uncomfortable inside but you might learn something that will help you. Think about a time when you messed up and wanted to hide it. Remember those bad feelings inside when your mom or dad found out what you did? Did you get mad and deny you did it? Think of how proud you could be if you learned from your mistake instead of getting mad. ☺ Getting angry or feeling frustrated with yourself when being given feedback makes your problem worse. It can blow up into a big bubble like bubble gum going splat in your face!

Activity: Listening to Criticism. No one likes to be told that they did wrong, but with practice you can learn to handle criticism. Part of learning is doing things wrong so you can learn to do them right. Everyone goofs up from time to time. Think of something you did that you got scolded for. Remember you know that you did it and now you got caught. Let's role play some different ways you could react. (Have a child take something from your desk and put it in the trash, then you correct him.) It's okay (i.e., human) to have unhappy feelings when you do something wrong. Feeling uncomfortable inside may not feel good, but it is just a feeling and feelings are meant to be felt! You don't have to run from bad feelings. Acknowledge them and breathe into accepting them. Feelings of embarrassment and shame won't power over you when you accept them for what they are—part of being human. Feel proud and take ownership because you can learn instead of feeling ashamed.

Activity: The Door of Fear of Feelings. Draw a picture of your fear of bad feeling with a big, dark ugly door that you are afraid to go through. Label it The Door of Fear of Feelings. List the bad feelings on the door: anger, frustration, discouragement, embarrassment, shame, etc. When you face your bad feelings and challenge them, they grow smaller. They are only feelings. Things will get better for you when you challenge fear feelings. That door of fear about uncomfortable feelings is a ghost one. What could you tell yourself to go through that door? Put those words on your picture. Take a deep breath for courage and see yourself walking right through the door. You won't bump your head on it! I promise!

**Take responsibility for your  
angry feelings.**

**Instead of saying, "He or she makes  
me feel so angry," remember that it  
is your feeling.**

**No one is inside your head  
making you feel angry!**

**Instead of saying, "My Mom makes  
me angry when \_\_\_\_\_," say, "I make  
myself angry when I think \_\_\_\_\_."**

**Own your angry feelings.**

**Become the master of your life!**

## TWO WRONGS DO NOT MAKE A RIGHT

Objective: To learn how revenge thoughts keep you angry.

Materials: Tough looking stuffed animal or picture.

Activity: Learning About Pay Backs. Pay Backs are dark thoughts of revenge about how we would like to hurt someone. Thinking about getting even keeps us angry. Thinking about how to hurt someone else keeps us caught in anger. Fantasy is used to regain feelings of power, but it is a false feeling of power. The mistaken belief here is feeling powerful in our thinking about revenge instead of taking the real power and doing something differently in life. Tell the children that angry thoughts do not hurt others but they do hurt you. Pay back thoughts and actions only fuel the fire of anger. Secret pay backs do not hurt the other person; they keep you upset.

Pay Back Words:

I'll make her sorry.

He can't get away with that.

I'd like to punch him out.

He did that on purpose to hurt me.

I'll get back at him.

He deserves to be hurt.

Why do people need to hold on to the belief that they can feel good by making someone else feel bad? Do two wrongs ever make a right? Thinking about the need to get even takes away the time that you could spend playing and having fun. (Discuss the Golden Rule.) If everyone treated others as they wanted to be treated, bullying would disappear for good. A lot of problems would disappear.

Activity: Explaining Pay Backs: People who have revenge thoughts usually have been hurt by someone or they have been around adults that say threatening things about others. They feel the need to hurt others back. They are afraid so they act tough. They are afraid to be open and show their hurt feelings inside. Getting-even thoughts help them hide their pain from themselves. People who have revenge thoughts can learn to talk to get the bad feelings out so they can feel better inside. Wanting to hurt someone when you are angry is revenge. Revenge is wanting to hurt others, because you have been hurt. It can be a way the mind tries to avoid pain. It has the reasoning, "I've been hurt so I can hurt others." Revenge fantasies can have a satisfying feeling to them, but that is short term and doesn't address the real problem. If you act out revenge, you cause more suffering to yourself and to others. Use your common sense super power and save your time and energy for fun things.

If you have been hurt by the grownups in your life, you find someone who can help you with your strong feelings and dark thoughts. Look for someone with wisdom who can help you sort out the confusing ideas and feelings. Find someone who can acknowledge your pain and feelings of revenge, but won't let you get stuck in victim thinking. There are good people who can help you do this and show you how to hold your head up high and do well. Don't try to go through it alone. Find caring people who believe in you. You only get one life. Make it the best one you can by reaching out to wise people who believe in you to help you learn to believe in yourself.

Questions to break into Revenge Thoughts:

How does getting even help you? How does that get you friends?

What is another way for you to feel good about yourself instead of getting even?

Spend time thinking of fun things to do not wasting your time thinking about someone else.

Think about taking care of yourself, not how you want to hurt someone else. You are worth it!



**"TEMPERS ARE A WAY OF KEEPING YOUR SELF-  
RIGHTEOUS FIRE GOING BURNING YOU UP.**

**GRUDGES ARE FROZEN ANGER WITH  
HEAVY, STAGNANT ENERGY THAT EATS UP  
AT YOUR CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM.**

**REVENGE IS A WAY YOU KEEP POKING YOURSELF IN THE  
SIDE WITH  
A POISON-TIPPED SWORD.**

**WE SET OURSELVES FREE WHEN WE LEARN POSITIVE  
WAYS TO WORK WITH OUR ANGER."**

## FINDING THE HURT PLACE UNDER THE ANGER

Objectives: To locate and decrease the Sad Part that has been hurt.

Materials: Picture of a sad child or puppy stuffed animal with tears drawn on with a magic marker.

Activity: Learning about Sad Feelings that Lie Under Anger. (Introduce the Sad Part by showing the picture or stuffed animal. Ask the children why he or she might feel sad inside. Ask them to guess how he was hurt and how he feels inside. (Some children project their own problems on the puppy) Tell the children that they can have more than one uncomfortable feeling at the same time. Hurt and sadness sometimes hide underneath anger. Look for the hurt in “angry” children and the anger in “hurt” children.)

Feelings come and go. Think about being sad and your hurt feelings underneath may show up. Tell us about your sad part. Talking about the sad and hurt feelings can help them go away.

Cues for Talking about Hurt and Sad Feelings:

Feelings of sadness and hurt can hide under anger.

Let's check down deep and see what feelings are there.

That must have hurt your feelings when that happened. Tell us about it.

Tell us about a “Great Big Hurt” or a “Little Hurt” that you had.

No wonder you are feeling bad. That must have been very painful for you.

Can you find the hurt under all that mad? How were you hurt?

I feel sad that this happened to you. It makes me sad and angry.

I feel as if there is so much hurt inside you. Hurt sometimes comes out as anger at someone else.

Maybe if you let the hurt out, you wouldn't be in trouble so much.

You might be feeling disappointment and sadness as well as anger. Look under your anger.

I'm sorry that happened. No wonder you're angry. Talk about the hurt and sadness under the anger.

What you feel is normal. I'd feel very sad about that if it happened to me.

Activity: What Does Your Heart Look Like? Fold a piece of paper in half. On one half, draw a picture of what your heart might look like if it were hurt. Is it a sad valentine heart or a real heart? What colors are there? Is it bruised or cracked in two pieces? Does it have pushed in places like someone has punched it? Does it have tears in it? Does it have a sad story hiding inside? Does it hold something that needs to be released? You deserve to have a happy heart. What could you do to make your heart feel better? Close your eyes and pretend that you can talk to your heart. Those hurting places will feel better when you talk to someone. Breathe into that hurting place and know that you are safe. Tell your sad part that you are sorry that it feels hurt. Tell it that you want it to mend and get better. Remind it that it deserves love and to be cared about. Tell it you will listen to it and its needs to be whole. Draw a picture on the other half of the paper on what your whole, happy beating heart would look like. Then smile and think for a minute of some ways that you could change so that your heart would be happier.

Tips for parents and teachers: Studies of male and female adolescents in juvenile facilities show that they believe that their use of aggression was an appropriate response. Violent responses helped the young people avoid feelings of shame and a negative self image and actually increased positive feelings about the self. Waylay this belief with the children in your group by associating feeling proud with helping others. Strengthen the association between feeling good inside and treating others fairly by keeping the children focused on their internal feelings of satisfaction and pride when helping others.

“Resisting feeling your emotions is like feeding them and bottling them up.

Emotions can grow fatter and fatter if they aren’t let out in safe ways.

If you aren’t aware of your feelings, you act them OUT in harmful ways.

Or you can act them IN and become anxious and depressed.

The third choice is to learn about them and release them.

Who wants fat, stuck feelings?

Stuck feelings want to move!”

## THROWING THOSE MADs AWAY

Objective: To learn to use symbolic play to release anger.

Activity: Throwing Snowballs with Mads in Them. (Children enjoy using movement and metaphors to symbolize letting go of their anger. The message is that they are responsible for their uncomfortable feelings and can learn to let them go by talking them out and releasing them through movement and activity. Do this pretend game of putting the anger in snowballs and throwing it out the window.)

Reach way up high.  
Reach way down low,  
Gather up, gather up  
Gather up snow.

Pack it up  
Pack it up  
Pack it just so.  
Put your mads in it.  
More mads, more mads!

Okay let's roll it.  
Roll it, roll it.  
Round and just so.

Harder, HARDER, HARDER!  
Wind up. Go way back  
Way, way back-----

Go way back, way back,  
Now drop it!  
No!  
YES! Take a big breath. Let it go!

NOW, EVERYBODY DUCK!

Anonymous

Cues to Inhibit Angry Responses:

You have a right to be angry but don't throw your anger on others.  
We use respect here. It's not okay to be rude with others.  
Use your smart brain and find Helper Words that will calm you down.  
Use your words. Use your words and talk out your anger.

Helper Words for Children:

People and all living things are to be treated with respect.  
I can feel good about owning up to my mistakes and accepting the consequences.  
I can be kind to myself when I mess up. I fail fast and fail smart and live and learn!  
My common sense is my super power! I develop super keen common sense.



**I use my super  
powers to keep  
my cool.**

**My breath is my  
best friend!**

## PUTTING YOUR ANGER IN A SAFE PLACE

Objective: To find where anger is stored in the body and release in a symbolic form.

Activity: Bury Your Anger in a Hole Instead of your Body. Let's find the anger hidden in your body and move it out and bury it in a hole. (Demonstrate this using an exaggerated movement to show the anger moving from the stomach up to your hands.) "I feel tense in my stomach. That's where my mads hide. I can make it go up out of my stomach, into my chest and down my arms. Now it is in my hands so I can dig a hole to put it in." (Pretend to grab a shovel and dig a hole of the necessary depth to hold all the anger. Throw the anger down in the hole shaking your hands and arms wildly to release it saying "Shake it out, shake it out. Get rid of all those mads." Check again to see if there is any anger left and go through the same routine again. (Sigh expressively with relief to show that your anger has released. Then shovel dirt on top of the anger saying "I'll bury these mads down in the ground instead of my body." Stomp up and down on the symbolic anger.)

Have the children take turns acting out bringing their anger up and out and burying it. Have each child use the "I feel \_\_\_\_\_ when \_\_\_\_\_." statement and "I'll throw my anger down in the hole." Generally, the more fun you have during this activity, the more the children will get the concept.

Activity: The Feelings and Thoughts Release Chant. When you feel angry, there are hot thoughts hanging around. Think of being angry at someone. What are you thinking? What do you say to keep yourself mad? Hot thoughts fuel your unhappy feelings. Do you tell yourself that it wasn't fair? Do you use mean words about the other person? You keep yourself angry by thinking hot thoughts! Let's list some hot thoughts on the board.

(Start the chant first out in a whisper while you scrunch down and then build to a loud voice: Throw your hands up over your head and expand your body on the word GO. Ask the children what other feelings they would like to release using this chant.)

Mads come, mads go. I can let my anger (pause with anticipation) GO!

Hot thoughts come and go. I can let my mad thoughts (pause) GO!

Unfair thoughts come and they can go. I make my unfair thoughts (pause) GO!

High Five! High Five! High Five's can stay. Happy feelings don't have to go.

### Helper Words for Children:

I can stand up for myself and use my words.

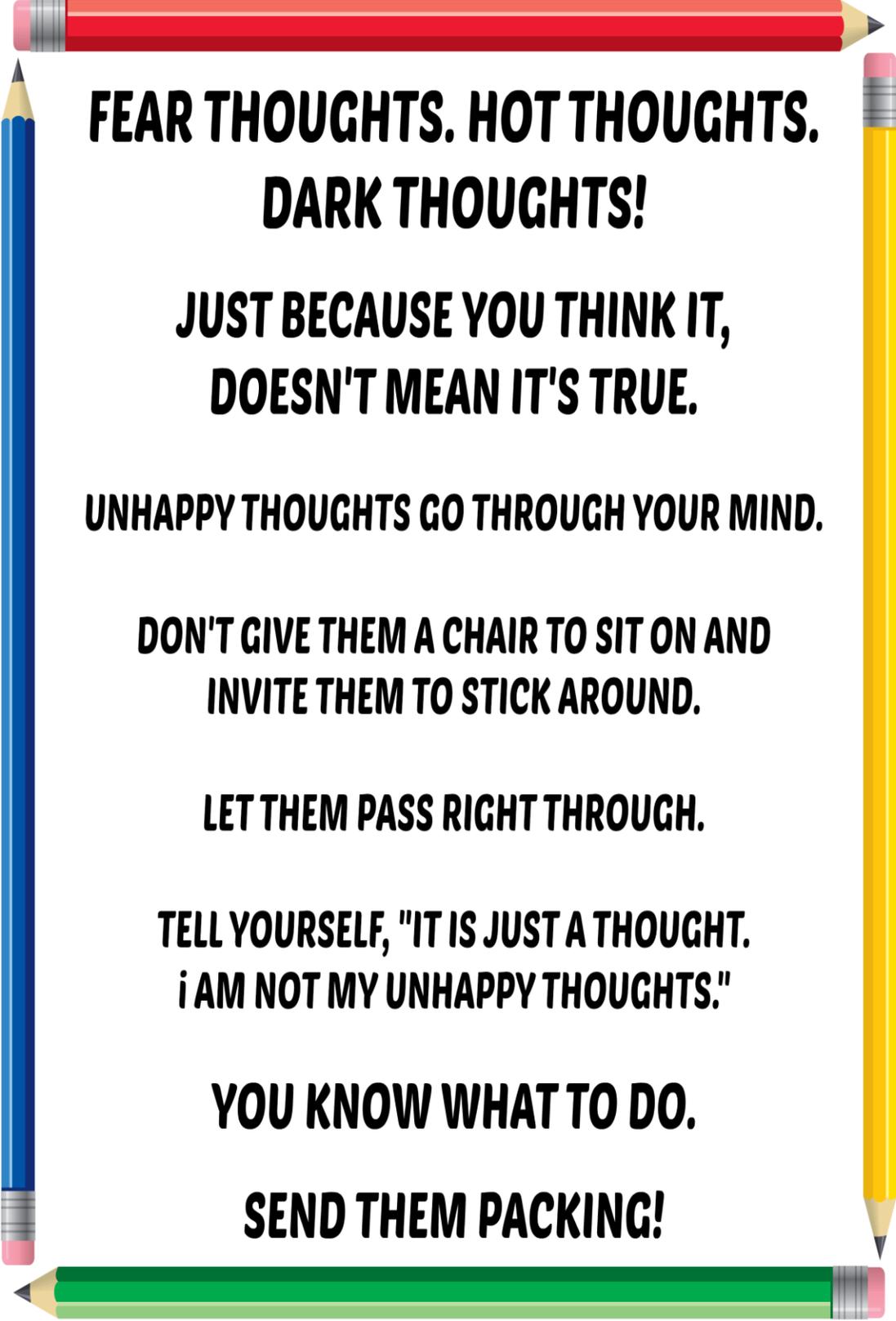
I can't make the other person change with my words but I can feel good about using them.

I can let go of the anger by finding it in my body and bringing it up to let it go.

I feel proud of myself for learning better ways to work with my temper. ☺

Tips for parents and teachers: Children by the age of four are beginning moral development and have a sense of what is right and wrong. At this age, you can teach personal responsibility and expect accountability. Moral development can be taught. If you use Time Out as a learning experience (Go think about what happened and how you could handle it differently. Then come and tell me and we can both feel happy) instead of making it a punishment, your children will take more personal responsibility.

This lesson plan is adapted from *Lesson Plans for Teaching Resilience to Children*.



**FEAR THOUGHTS. HOT THOUGHTS.  
DARK THOUGHTS!**

**JUST BECAUSE YOU THINK IT,  
DOESN'T MEAN IT'S TRUE.**

**UNHAPPY THOUGHTS GO THROUGH YOUR MIND.**

**DON'T GIVE THEM A CHAIR TO SIT ON AND  
INVITE THEM TO STICK AROUND.**

**LET THEM PASS RIGHT THROUGH.**

**TELL YOURSELF, "IT IS JUST A THOUGHT.  
I AM NOT MY UNHAPPY THOUGHTS."**

**YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO.**

**SEND THEM PACKING!**

## ANGER WORK CAN BE FUN!

Objective: To learn to release anger symbolically.

Materials: Nerf balls or other soft balls and magic markers.

Activity: Get Really Mad at Someone Who Hurt You. (Ask the children to draw a picture on the ball of someone who has hurt them. Discuss how adults get angry at children sometimes and do things which hurt them. Talk about how anger towards someone who hurt you can be released by talking about it. Tell the children that they cannot hurt people in real life, but that it is all right to take their anger out on pillows, balls or other safe objects within the safety of the group. Acknowledge that children who have been hurt by others are allowed to feel angry.)

Spread your arms out wide in the “so big” position to show us how big your anger was. Yell as hard as you can while squeezing the balls to emphasize getting the anger up. Encourage the use of the anger release message of “I feel mad, when you \_\_\_\_\_.”

It’s all right to pretend and get your anger out by pounding on something, but you can’t hurt a real person. At home you can beat pillows or hit your mattress. All living things must be treated with respect. We can let our anger go in safe ways that do not hurt others.”

Activity: Looking for and Shaking Out Anger. Remind the children that they need not hold onto their anger. Have the children check their bodies to shake out any anger that remains. Make this a playful activity by pretending to look for the anger in their legs, stomachs, arms, hair, ears and mouths pulling it out as a magician might and then shaking it out. Rub a part of the your body such as your hands, stomach or feet that might be hiding any anger then shake your hands vigorously in the air to symbolically draw out the anger with the refrain, “Shake it out. Shake it out. Let it go. Let it go!”

Helper Words for Children:

I can’t hurt people, but I can let my anger out on safe object.

I can let my anger go when I work it out and talk it out.

I put my anger in safe places by pounding on a pillow or drawing a picture.

I use my words to talk about my anger. I use my firm, fair words; not my fists.

Activity: Bouncing Back from Adversity. Super heroes bounce back when they have problems. Let’s watch Become the Bounce Back Kid from [angriesout.com](http://angriesout.com). It is also on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eVTO1nIK7CA>. Look for ideas about how you can become stronger when things are rough. (Play the video a second time and stop it when new concepts are introduced so that the children can give input about times they have been resilient. Discuss the Stoic philosophy of “It’s not what happens to you, it’s how you deal with it.” Ask the children what does the saying “When things get rough, the tough get going” mean.)

Tips for parents and teachers: Resilience and self-efficacy are believing that you can do something and make the necessary changes in yourself after a setback. Children who believe in their ability to make changes gain a new sense of self-esteem. Making these lesson plans fun by acting silly and then offering hope by changing a victim mindset will help break into the shame of family adverse events. My book, Lesson Plans for Teaching Resilience to Children is available as a free pdf download which has many posters on bouncing back after set backs is at [angriesout.com](http://angriesout.com). )



**Learning about anger is like learning how to walk. You didn't learn it all at once. First you learned how to crawl and stand up. You fell down a lot. You kept practicing and got better.**

**Learning to keep your cool when you are upset takes practice.**

**Be your own superhero!**

**Keep practicing Heber Words, stepping back, deep breathing and making better choices!**

**Practicing makes permanent!**

## MOVING THE ANGER OUT!

Objective: To learn anger emotions are temporary and can be released.

Materials: A large plastic beach ball with different angry faces drawn on it or a drum or old pot to bang on. Empty aluminum pie tins are also great as they crumple up when pounded with a mallet.

Activity: Pounding Out the Mads. Have the children pound a table as they chant. "It's my body and you can't touch it. It's my body and you can't hurt it."

(Remind the children that they cannot throw and kick things when they are angry at home or in the classroom. Punching something hard like a wall will hurt their hands. Remind them that people are never to be hurt in any way. Yelling at others is not an appropriate way to express anger. Letting their body get out of control when angry does not keep the child safe or others safe. The FIRST thing to do when angry is talk about it. The physical aspect of anger work is to be done and then move on to talk about feelings. If the child cries, congratulate him on letting the sad feelings come out.)

Activity: The "I feel Formula". Use the "I feel \_\_\_\_ when you \_\_\_\_" message to demonstrate pounding and using the formula. Hand the drum or pie tin to each child and have him repeat the message over and over while pounding on it.

Act as an anger coach, revving up the energy while the child does the anger work with the balls by pounding on them. Remind the child to make loud angry noises and intensify his actions to "really get his mad out." Stress that the child has the ability to release his anger by first bringing it up and then talking about it. Pounding on something safe is not enough. When finished with the catharsis work, get the children to talk about what upset them. After the discussion, ask the children to close their eyes and see any other unhappy feelings running out their fingers or toes. Demonstrate deep breathing and using the breath to become calm after moving the anger out.

Statements to encourage children to express their anger symbolically:

You are doing it now. Keep on pounding on that pillow to let those mads go.

Hit it harder. You are doing it. You are letting all your anger go.

Put your anger in that sponge. Let him know how mad you are. Tell him that children should not be hurt. We can't hurt real people but you can sure let your anger out on this toy.

Leave your mad feelings here. Let's sit and get calm before we go out.

Activity: Staying Calm when Angry Video. There are many ways to work with angry feelings. Watch and follow along with this video which you can read to the children. Discuss the ideas presented in the video about being a powerful person who is in charge of their own feelings.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DnmFfxWjsvs>

Tips for parents and teachers: Children who have been sexually or physically abused will show considerable emotion during this exercise. Catharsis helps release angry energy but is not enough to truly release deep feelings of hurt and betrayal. Children can overcome their feeling of helplessness brought about from the hands of others if they learn skills that make them feel confident. Talking about the disturbing events and doing body and mind techniques in therapy will assist releasing old body memories.

# **Feeling Stuck?**

**There are many ways to release  
angry feelings.**

**Talk them out with a safe person.**

**Pound on a pillow or mattress.**

**Use your creative imagination  
and send them away.**

**Move your eyes back and forth quickly  
while breathing deeply.**

**Use Helper Words to bring in positive ideas.**

**Keep trying different ways to let anger go  
until you feel better.**

**Anger is stuck energy that wants to move!**

## LEARNING FROM A TEMPER TANTRUM

Objective: To reinforce appropriate ways to cope with anger.

Activity: Slow Motion Temper Tantrum. You cannot always control feelings of anger when they come up but you can choose better ways to deal with them. You can choose higher level anger responses to cool things down instead of adding heat to it. Have you seen adults making poor anger choices? Most grownups did not learn how to deal with their anger when they were young. Most adults did not have someone to help them the way you are getting help. You know things they don't know because they didn't have anyone to share feelings with when young. You can make better choices now when you are upset. You don't have to do what your mom or dad does if you don't like how they handle their temper. You can be like your folks in other ways that you like. You have more choices than them because you have learned anger management skills.

Let's think about what your body does when you get angry. Two-year-olds have temper tantrums because they don't have words to talk out their anger. They use their bodies to show their anger. Just for fun, let's act out Slow Motion Temper Tantrums. There are different kind of body reactions such as jumping up and down while screaming, hands on hips and rolling your eyes, exploding out with the hands and folding your arms across your chest and pouting. (Demonstrate one type in slow motion, contorting your face and mouthing anger. Challenge the children to make it even more exaggerated and slower. The more you exaggerate this and the sillier you get will help the children see the ridiculousness of tantrums.) Are there other ways of using your body to show that you are angry?

What could you do when you are becoming aroused and about to lose it? Is there a safe place you can go to get away from conflict at home? What if you get mad on the playground? Where could you go to walk off your anger? If you lose it, learn from it! What you do after losing your temper is important. The best thing to do is to stop and figure out what went wrong and what you will do differently the next time you are frustrated.

### Cues for Making Better Choices when Aroused:

Stop and think. You can choose to do something positive about strong feelings.

Notice what is going on in your body right now. Are you holding your breath?

Your body looks tense. Is that a cue to remind yourself to take a deep breath and let it all out?

Is your body telling you that you are getting steamed up about this? Think what you can do to feel better.

### Challenging Feelings by Doing Something Different to Let Them Go

Talk about your problem with a friend, family member or even a pet.

Tell yourself that it was no big deal and you can handle it.

Laugh and see something funny about the situation.

Draw a picture about how you feel and send the bad feelings away,

Write about them in a journal or on your computer.

Step back and walk away to cool yourself off.

Do self-soothing--tap or rub your body while doing deep breathing.

Tips for parents and teachers: Catch a child being good! Stress the child's ability to make choices every time you correct misbehavior. The power of choice builds self-esteem- learning different ways to work with their feelings. Watch your children carefully to catch their efforts at responding in a positive way using their anger management tools when they are frustrated.

# **Choice Time!**

**After you lose your temper,  
you have a choice. A big choice!**

**1. Ignore it and deny it's a problem.**

**2. Feel bad and beat yourself up  
which makes your anger worse.**

**3. Use your supermind to figure  
out what you did wrong and  
make a plan to catch your anger  
to handle it better next time.**



## THROW THAT CHIP OFF YOUR SHOULDERS

Objective: To become aware of underlying irritability and hostility that adds to anger.

Activity: Drawing the Chip on your Shoulder. Some people get angry because they are easily offended. They feel insulted about small things that others would just let go. They bristle with anger when they think someone disrespects them. Sometimes they get upset when no insult has been given. It is like they have a hostile chip on their shoulder and blow up too easily. Maybe they are stuck in an irritated mood and overreact to small things. Have you ever felt this way—all prickly over small things? It's like you have a chip on your shoulder that makes you ready to strike out in anger when it would be better just to cool it. That hostile chip can be about your fears that others are out to get you so you have to act fast. Check your idea that someone is trying to hurt you. You might be right but you also might be wrong. Maybe you have been hurt in the past and fear that people are just waiting to hurt you again. Fear can hide under hostile chips. Draw a picture of yourself looking angry with that chip on your shoulder that makes you fly off the handle easily. What feelings are in that chip? Write those feelings around the chip: Annoyed. Worry. Fear. Irritable. Frustrated. Grouchy. Grumpy. Out of sorts. Are people really out to get you or is this just a belief?

Activity: Finding your Confidence. Think of a time when you felt really, really confident because you had learned something. You were so proud of yourself that you just glowed with excitement. Got It? Tell us about feeling confident. Put your confidence in one hand. Feel that inner confidence there in your stronger hand. Squeeze your hand and feel confident. Now think of feeling grouchy and irritable for no reason. Put that chip on your shoulders and anger in your other hand. It doesn't feel good, does it? Let the good feelings take over the bad feelings and throw off that chip on your shoulders. Look at the confident hand and then look at the feeling irritable hand. Get those confident feelings back—that's right, smile and remember how good you felt. Go back and forth from confident hand to the unhappy one. Confident or unhappy? Now bring your hands together slowly as you remember you can let things go that make you unhappy. Hold your hands in front of you and take a breath as you think of those confident feelings. Visualize that chip on your shoulders flying off to the moon or the bottom of the ocean. See the grumpies, grouchies and annoyances flying away and feel proud that you are in charge of your feelings. Bring those good feelings into your heart by putting your hands on your heart.

Activity: Watch and discuss the concepts of releasing anger on this fun video of my best-selling book, *The Mad Family gets Their Mads Out* on YouTube:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n9KybT2wkyY>

### Cues to Maintain Confidence and Control:

Notice if you are starting to feel threatened. Maybe it's just that hostile chip trying to take over. Let that hostile chip go. Knock it off your shoulders. You can choose to feel good. Remind yourself that you are confident about using anger management skills. Practice visualizing yourself making confident choices when you are upset.

Tips for parents and teachers: This technique which works with the subconscious mind to promote change is from Neurolinguistic Programming. My book, *The Case of the Prickly Feelings* addresses this issue of getting upset over small things where Jake, a little hedgehog from an angry family learns how to deal with feelings.

**ARE YOU ALWAYS LOOKING FOR A FIGHT?**

**DO YOU CARRY A HOSTILE CHIP ON YOUR SHOULDER THINKING  
OTHERS ARE OUT TO GET YOU?**

**YOU MAY BE MISREPRESENTING THEIR THOUGHTS.**

**YOU MIGHT BE MISREADING OTHER PEOPLE'S INTENTIONS THROUGH  
YOUR OWN LENS OF FEAR.**

**YOU MAY HAVE AN OVERACTIVE IMAGINATION  
THAT'S NOT BASED ON ACTUAL FACTS.**

**DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU THINK.  
CHALLENGE YOUR HOSTILE ASSUMPTIONS.**

**PRICKLY IS AS PRICKLY THINKS.  
PRICKLY IS AS PRICKLY DOES.**

**LEARN TO CALM ANTAGONISTIC FEAR THOUGHTS DOWN.**

**YOU CAN LEARN TO BE A MORE LOVING INDIVIDUAL.**



Lynne Namka

The Case of the Prickly Feelings

[angriesort.com](http://angriesort.com)

## TAPPING AND BREATHING

Objective: To change the energy of your body by pounding on it while you address a belief.

Activity: Tapping on the Body Calms and Energizes it. Your body likes rubbing, tapping and massage. You can use tapping and breathing to let go of unwanted feelings. Let's try it. Think of something that you are angry about. Move your hands apart to show how small or large your anger is.

Think of the anger inside your body and how it wants to move out. Make your hands into fists and start to gently tap over the top of your skull and the back of your neck while you do deep breathing. Tap down your arms and back up again and across your chest from one armpit to the other. Tap up and down both sides of your body and across your lower ribs. Pound from your chest down the front of your body. Tap across your toes. Reach around and tap on whatever part of your shoulders and spine that you can. Breathe deeply to get the energy flowing. Repeat to yourself:

I tap and breathe to get my anger moving up and out.

I forgive myself for having the strong feeling of \_\_\_\_\_.

I forgive myself so that I can correct this feeling and learn from it.

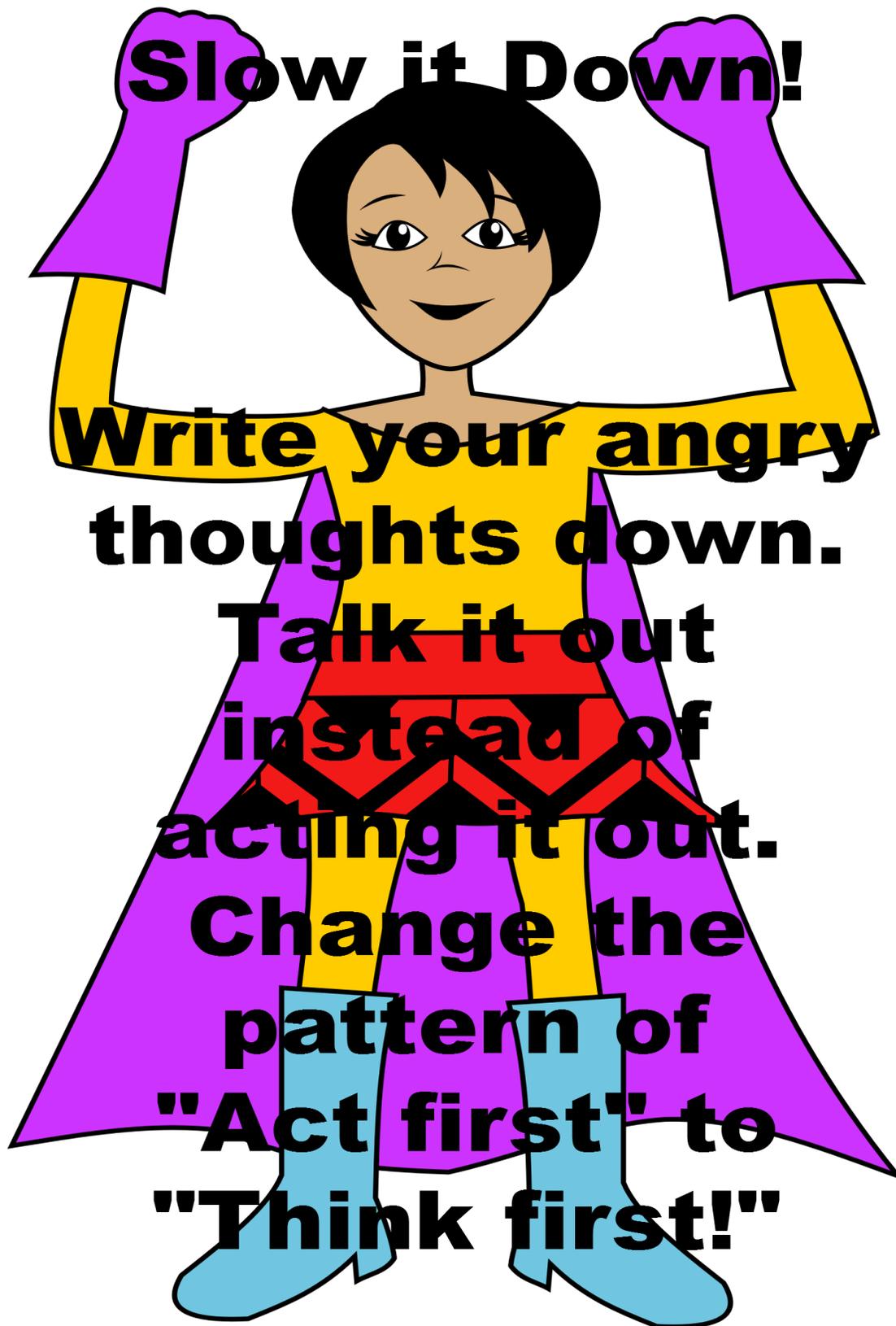
Do three cleansing breaths while thinking of what upsets you and blow your anger out:

1. Take a long, slow deep breath and hold it for a few seconds releasing the air from your stomach.
2. Take a half breath in and hold it briefly midway. Take the rest of the breath going to a full breath. Then let half of the breath out and hold briefly. Then let the rest of the breath out slowly.
3. Take small, rapid, flutter breaths in as you breath up, up, up, up as if you are going up a musical scale and then go down, down, down, down the scale breathing out in short staccato breaths. Repeat the small shallow breathing up and then down.

Forgive yourself for being human and having angry thoughts. Continue tapping and breathing until you feel clear. Stay with any unhappy memory that arises, tapping and breathing until it loses its emotional charge and you see the experience as just something that happened to you. Check your overall energy level and sense of well-being after doing this exercise. Tapping on the body helps relax and energize it at the same time!

Show with your hands now how upset you are. Take a big sigh and let it all go! Notice how you feel now. Did your anger go away or get smaller? You can teach others about how to let anger go. Go home and teach this anger release technique to members of your family!

Tips for parents and teachers: My book, *Teaching Emotional Intelligence to Children*, discusses the most common emotions (anger, sadness, guilt, fear, anxiety and using food for comfort) felt by children and how to understand and work with them. It features The Emotional Freedom Technique which is a tapping protocol that taps on the major meridians in Chinese Acupuncture.



## KEEPING TRACK OF HOW YOU ARE CHANGING

Objective: To use a motivational chart to chart positive behavior change.

Activity: Dealing with Threat. Now let's look at some cool techniques for handling feeling threatened in this video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0U6M880Rjx4> Practice each of these techniques at home.

Activity: Here's how I've Changed. (Review the Anger Management Skills chart with the children.) What have you learned about yourself from these lessons? What do you do differently as a result of these lessons instead of blowing up? Which are your favorite anger management skills? Imagine the way you could be different, in a good way I mean and then let go of the imagining and go out and do it. Your life can be more than the sum of your negative parts. So subtract out the negative and then all you have to do is lovely addition.

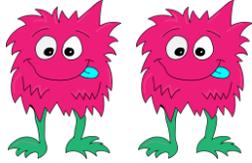
Activity: What's your Favorite Anger Management Technique? Have the children analyze their charts and share what they have been doing that works for them. Make observations about their strategies and suggest they add more of different ones. Have the children discuss what techniques they used with specific situations. Challenge them to set a goal of adding new strategies and increase the check marks on their chart. Laugh and tell them to go out and get angry so they can practice their new strategy. Remind them that they can use more than one technique when angry to be in control of the situation. Habits! We are building new, positive habits here.

Activity: Teaching Anger Management Ideas to Others. You are learning so many ways to take care of your uncomfortable and angry feelings. Think about someone else who might be helped if they had ways to cool themselves off when they are upset. Who might listen to you sharing these ideas? People can't hear new ideas when they are high in body arousal, but they might when they are calmer. Become an anger management teacher. Who could hear these ideas? Who would not be ready for them? Think about your younger brothers and sisters. Which technique might help them? Share what you have learned about keeping your control and how you feel extra proud of yourself.

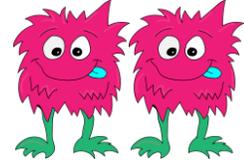
Activity: Bounce Back: Become a Resilient Person. Learn how to deal with life's setbacks with the YouTube video at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eVTO1nIK7CA>. It is also on [angrieout.com](http://angrieout.com) under Interactive Videos.

Activity: Would You Like to be a Happier Person? What you think or feel belongs to you so you can learn ways to take care of thoughts and feelings. What makes you happy? There are things that you can do to put yourself in a good mood. You can learn from happy people! Here is a YouTube video on being happier. Can Happiness Be Learned? - GoStrengths!  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mCHLdtG4W>.

Tips for parents and teachers: Apps of behavior charts can be found for your smart phone and ipad. One is called Happy Kids Reward which features response cost (taking away points for misbehavior) as well as points for positive behavior.



**My Super Hero Anger Management Skills!**



	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Step Back and Take a Deep Breath							
Stop and Think Before You Act							
Stop Hot Thoughts							
Use Helper Words							
Say, "I can Handle This!"							
Observe and Name Your Feelings							
Do Thought Stoppage							
Handle Disappointment							
Figure Out Your Triggers							
Learn from a Mistake							
Listen to Criticism							
Share Your Feelings with Someone Safe							
Picture Letting Anger Go							
Draw a Picture							
Write Your Feelings							
Tap Your Body							
Give Yourself a High Five							
Feel Proud for Trying Something New							
Teach Anger Management							

## **DON'T HIT YOUR SISTER WHEN YOU ARE MAD AT YOUR MOTHER!**

Objective: To express angry feelings directly instead of displacing them towards others, property or self.

Activity: Don't Hit Your Sister When You Are Mad at Your Mother: Sometimes it's not safe to express your anger directly with an adult or someone bigger than you. Have you ever have hurt another person, an animal or kicked or threw something when you were angry at someone? Sideways anger is taking your anger out on someone else instead of saying it to someone who might harm you. Some people put their anger onto objects, animals and other people instead of saying it directly to the person with whom they are mad. They snap or yell at someone who is safe. Have you received someone else's sideways anger? Tell us of a time when you were angry at a grownup but it wasn't safe to express it. What did you do with those feelings? Is it fair to blow up at someone who has nothing to do with your angry feelings just because you can?

It's not fair to throw your anger on unsuspecting people. What can you do when you can't talk to a person directly? Go for a run, pound a punching bag or work out in a gym. Putting your anger into something by using your muscles is called catharsis. Big muscle motions can release SOME of the feelings temporarily. But this is limited as it doesn't get to the source of the problem.

Ask yourself what you really want to have happen. What do you want for yourself? Tell yourself, "I want to stop blowing up quickly. I want to hold my temper. I want to be in charge of how I react. I want to be in control of my feelings so I can make good choices. I can stop throwing my anger on other people who have nothing to do with it. I stop sideways anger!"

Activity: What is Respect? We can make our home or class a place where people respect each other. What are ways that you show respect? Are you a respectful person? You or anyone else does not have the right to hurt any living thing. What is the Golden Rule? How do you apply it in your life?

Activity: Take a Time In--A Time In means you go somewhere all by yourself when you start to get angry rather than stay and yell mean things. It is kind of like a Time Out, but you do it for yourself so that you can take care of your angry feelings in private. While you are taking time for yourself, do deep breathing and use positive Helper Words to calm yourself down. Helper Words give you certain phrases that "curb" your behavior. For example, telling yourself "Don't go there!" might be a Helper Word that could slow down your temper coming out in the wrong way. What will you say to keep your cool the next time?

### Helper Words:

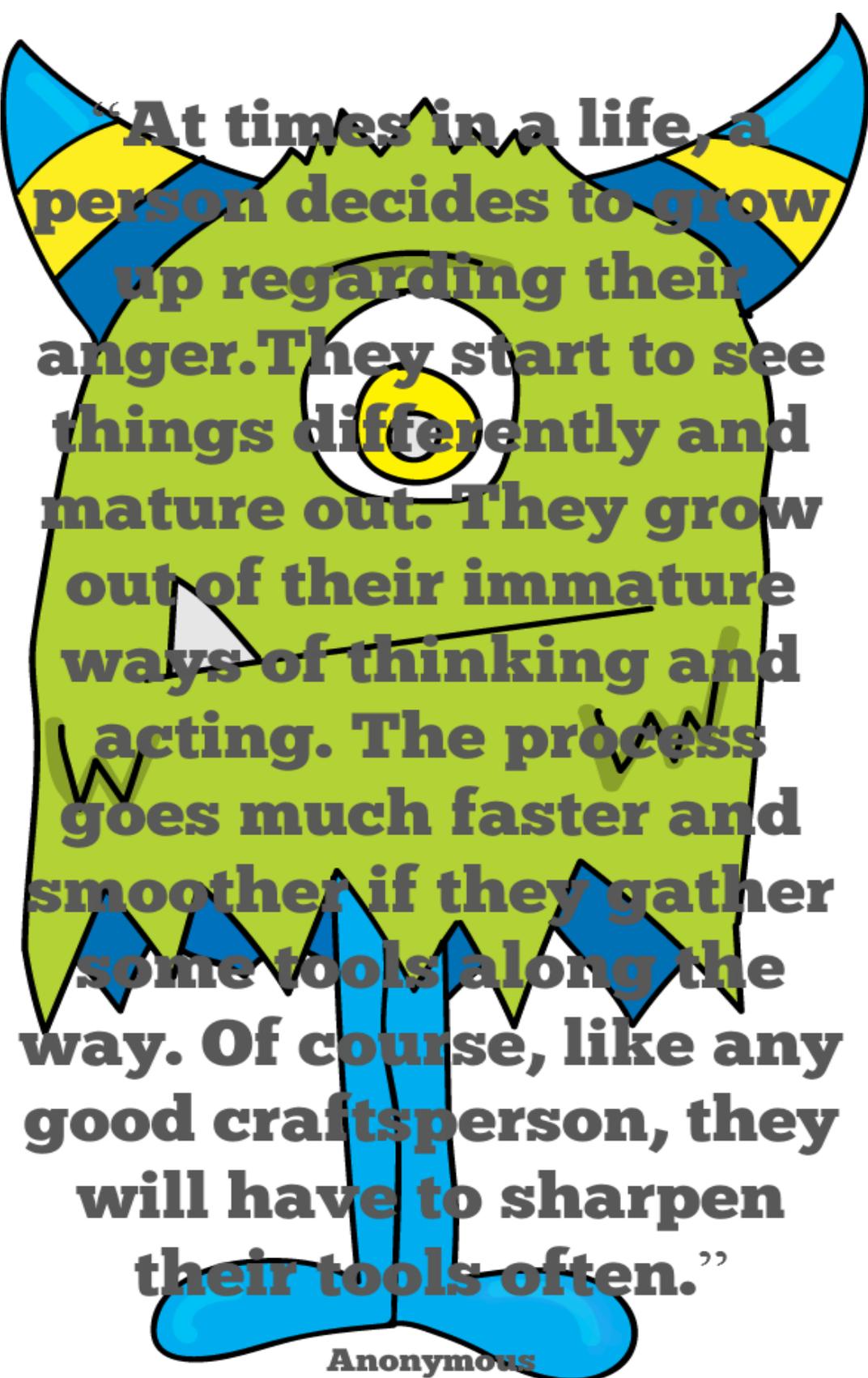
I don't have to respond to what he said.

Just relax and let this pass. Let the anger go, man, let it go.

I'm going to go take a Time In and calm myself down.

Activity: Learn to Relax your Body. Follow along with the Progressive Relaxation Technique. Discuss stress and the things that happen to cause the body to get tight. Ask the children to notice the difference between the tense muscles and being relaxed. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aaTDNYjk-Gw>

Activity: Calming your Mind through Mindfulness. Learn about chilling yourself out with mindfulness with two YouTube videos. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5d46amlJEkI>  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GIIjn5XhqPN8>



**“At times in a life, a person decides to grow up regarding their anger. They start to see things differently and mature out. They grow out of their immature ways of thinking and acting. The process goes much faster and smoother if they gather some tools along the way. Of course, like any good craftsman, they will have to sharpen their tools often.”**

**Anonymous**

## BIG DEALS AND LITTLE DEALS

Objective: To discriminate between “Big Mads” and “Little Mads” and fit the response to the magnitude of the threatening event.

Materials: *Separating the Big Deals from the Little Deals* chart.

Activity: Don't Sweat the Small Stuff. (Some children are easily angered and become frustrated over things that others can let go. Emphasize the difference between Big Deals and Little Deals. Big Deals or BIG MADs are situations where someone was really hurt. Little Deals or Little Mads are when the child wants his own way and can't have it. Discuss when you had the “Really Big Mads” (When someone hurt you) and the “Little Mads” (When something went wrong or you didn't get your way. Have the children give you several examples. Ask the children if they ever knew another child who got his way all the time. Teach the children to feel good about not sweating the small stuff. Teach them the “Oh, well,” response along with a hand gesture which emphasizes just letting the problem and feelings go.)

Activity: Chanting Angry Thoughts Away. Have the children chant Cold Thought messages cooling themselves off. Cue younger children to say the “I can let it go” or “No Big Deal!” phrases as you describe typical anger situations. Hold up flash cards with the different Cold Thoughts for the older children to respond in unison. Have the children generate different responses to the more serious infractions.

Activity: Finding Your Inside Super Hero Helper Part that Stops You from Hurting Others. (Have the children bring a stuffed animal from home that represents the part of them that stops the hurtful words and actions from coming out. Ask each child to describe why he chose that particular stuffed animal.) Each of us has a stop sign inside that stops us from doing things that harm others. This is your Super Hero Part that knows right from wrong and helps others. What do you do to keep from saying and doing mean things? Your Super Hero part stops the action when you are angry and wants to strike out. What stops you from hurting others? Describe it; what does it look like? What name would you give it? Where does it live in your body? If it is in your mind, what does it say to you? What types of words does it say to you? What would your Super Hero Part say to your mean part? Have the children draw pictures of this Super Hero Part and write a story about how it works.

Cues to Remind Children to use Cool Down Thoughts:

No Big Deal. Don't make a Big Deal out of a Little Deal.

I'll put my hot thoughts in the refrigerator and cool myself off.

I am responsible for my angry thoughts. I can make different choices.

Don't sweat the small stuff. Remember to say “Oh, well.”

Helper Words to Remind Children that They are Resilient.

My Super Hero Part reminds me to use my Helper Words.

I find that strong part of myself that reminds me to make good choices.

I feel good about saying “Oh, well” and let small things go.

I notice when I'm irritable or frustrated and stop myself from having a mean attack.

Tips for Parents and Teachers: Do you have a Helper Part? Discuss your experiences with your Helper Part and how it keeps you making good choices. Give examples of your life of how you stopped yourself from doing or saying something that might have hurt someone when you were a child. Children love stories of how their parents messed up when they were young and they learn from hearing about how parents learned from their mistakes.

## SEPARATE THE BIG DEALS FROM THE LITTLE DEALS!



**The Small Stuff:** Say how you feel and let it go. Then you can feel proud!

Mom says “No way. You can’t have candy or a toy at the store.”  
Your parents say it is time to go to bed.  
Your mom says you can’t go out and play.  
You are grounded for hitting your sister.  
You have to go to time out for something you did wrong.  
Another kid bumps into you accidentally.  
You don’t get your way.

### NOT SO SMALL STUFF: SAY HOW YOU FEEL AND PROBLEM SOLVE!

The same kid bumps into you again. You think he did it on purpose. (If you don’t know, check it out. Then use your words.)

Another kid starts to hurt a younger child.  
Someone grabs your toy.  
A boy says that you can’t play with him and his buddy.  
A kid calls you a name and laughs at you.

### THE REALLY BIG STUFF: FIND A SAFE GROWNUP TO TALK TO!

Someone touched your private parts.  
You or other people in your family are being hurt.  
You remember someone really hurting you when you were little.  
You have bad dreams about a really scary thing that happened to you.  
You feel afraid that a friend of yours is being hurt.  
You feel so bad inside that you think about hurting yourself.



**CHILDREN DESERVE TO BE SAFE!  
TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF WITH YOUR WORDS!**

## WE CAN WORK IT OUT!

Objective: To deal with conflict directly by speaking up and decrease tattling and the need for adult intervention.

Materials: The chart on *Lower and Higher Anger Responses*.

Activity: Let's Figure It Out Ourselves. Ask the children what their definition of sharing is. Use role playing to set up situations where two children want the same thing and have the opportunity to work it out. Role playing allows the child to gain mastery over difficult situations by trying on new ways of acting. The most common solutions to teach to the children are:

Negotiating for what you want.

Ask for what you want but know you won't always get it.

Find something else to do until the toy is free. Cheerfully!

Turn taking. Make an agreement of "my turn then your turn."

I'll play with it for two minutes and then give it to you.

Say, "Not now, maybe later" if you choose not to play with him. Later invite him to play.

Playing with it together.

Trading another toy for the desired toy.

### Cues to Make Good Choices During Conflict:

Use your words with \_\_\_\_\_. Tell him, don't tell me.

You need to take care of yourself and let \_\_\_\_\_ take care of himself.

How do you *really* feel? What do you *really* want to say to \_\_\_\_\_?

You need to listen to what \_\_\_\_\_ is saying to you. Look him in the eye and listen to him.

You two go over there and figure out what is fair. I like it when you work it out with your friend.

Activity: Find Alternatives to Fighting. (Ask the children to seek alternatives to violence. Talk to them about choosing to use their firm fair words when they feel threatened. Remind them that they can move past hurt and anger into positive personal power if they learn to communicate with others in positive ways. Give the children many opportunities to practice problem solving playground conflict. Discuss the chart of Lower and Higher Level Responses to threat. Lower Level responses turn up the heat. They add fuel to the fire either of the situation or internally in the person who has been hurt. Role play situations typical of threat to children where they can practice compromise and negotiation skills. Have the children demonstrate both the negative and positive way to deal with confrontation. Have them speaking up assertively in a firm and fair voice. Children who are uncomfortable about speaking loudly will need some extra practice. Whisper back, "I can't hear you!" until they speak louder and louder.

A boy pushes you out of your seat.

A big girl calls you a bad name.

A big kid pushes you out of your place in line.

Someone grabs your lunch box and taunts you to try to get it back.

Your sister tattles on you for something that you did not do.

Your mom yells at you for something you didn't do.

Tips for parents and teachers: Surprisingly children can work out their own problems if taught a few tools to do so. The psychological research shows that children learn at an early age to moderate their aggressive behavior and use more mature problem-solving in the face of conflict if adults require it of them.

## **LOW LEVEL RESPONSES ARE NOT RESPECTFUL OF OTHERS**

**(The fight/flight/freeze defenses.)**



**Physical Aggression:** Hitting, kicking, pinching, slapping, threatening gestures.

**Verbal Aggression:** Name calling, cursing, sarcasm and cruel teasing.

**Dissociation:** Become confused, space out and leave mentally while staying physically present.

**Displacement:** Take the anger away and hurt another person or animal.

**Denial:** Hide the anger and pretend it isn't there.

## **HIGHER LEVEL RESPONSES SHOW CARING TO OTHERS**



**Shrug off the less important situations--don't sweat the small stuff.**

**Try to understand the motivation behind the behavior of the person.**

**Take a "time out" to sort out feelings and solutions then return to work it out.**

**Use movement or exercise to release the pent-up feelings. Work the anger out physically**

**Laugh. Bring in healthy humor by laughing at the situation or at yourself.**

**Take direct action and attempt to problem solve the threatening event.**

**If you can't work out the problem, get an adult to show what helpful words could be used.**

**Express your feelings. Use the "I feel" message. ("I feel \_\_\_\_ when you \_\_\_\_.")**

## I CAN CHILL OUT. I CAN COOL OFF!

Objectives: To learn to recognize irrational statements and contain unnecessary anger.

Materials: Stuffed animal crab or picture of a crab and the chart on *Turning Your Heat Up or Down*.

Activity: I Find My Crabby Part. Introduce the crab as the part of ourselves that gets upset easily. Give several examples from your life of what makes you crabby. Ask the children to tell about things that make them feel cross and irritable. Ask them how many different words can they come up with for feeling crabby and write these words on the board. (Grouchy, annoyed, irritable, out of sorts, etc.)

Activity: Hot and Cold Thoughts. Review the chart, *Turning Your Heat Up or Down*. Discuss things that the children think and say that turn up the heat (Hot Thoughts) and things that turn down the heat (Cold Thoughts) in stressful situations. Let each child hold the crab as he describes a Hot Thought and have him give it back when he describes a Cold Thought. Talk about how sometimes irrational thoughts creep in the brain to keep people upset and angry. Remind the children that they are responsible for taking down their own anger by remembering to use Cold Thoughts.

### Hot Thoughts Keep Me Angry

It's not fair.

I hate him.

Labeling and name calling.

I want this and must have it or I'll get angry.

I keep myself upset.

### Cold Thoughts Keep Me Calm

I can deal with this.

I cool off. I'll take a chill pill.

I'll figure out what to do.

I don't always get what I want—that's cool.

I feel good about calming down hot thoughts.

Instead of praising or correcting a child, ask her to find some Helper Words to use. Asking the child to repeat the cues to herself helps internalize them for future use. You can work yourself out of a job if you use cues that encourage the child to speak her own instructional or reinforcement statements.

Activity: Some Days You Feel Irritable. Sometimes you might have a bad day and feel grumpy and grouchy. Just because you feel crabby doesn't mean you can snap at others. You need some anger management tools! You can work to change your mood. Let's watch this YouTube video on getting through at bad day. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3vdfQpsBq70>

Activity: The Mad Family gets their Mads Out video. Watch this charming video of my book by Shannon Linville who is a great mom who posts videos of children's classic books. Replay it a second time and ask how many of the anger management techniques they use.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n9KybT2wkyY&feature=youtu.be>

### Helper Words:

Cool it. I can take my anger down by breathing.

Take it slow. I can do it. I'll stop and think before I act.

I'll cool down the hot places in my body.

Tips for parents and teachers: Children appreciate being given tools to help them curb their destructive responses. They need lots of practice and encouragement when they learn these new skills. After a blow up, process the situation with the child. Help her to determine what internal thoughts led to her lashing out. Help her to see what she could have done differently next time.



## TURNING YOUR HEAT UP OR DOWN

### Hot Thoughts Keep You Angry

It's not fair. I hate him.  
Labeling and name calling.  
I want this and must have it or I'll be angry.  
You owe me this. Give it to me now!

### Cold Thoughts Keep You Calm

I'll breathe and figure this out. I'll breathe two times for peace.  
I can deal with this. I'm in charge of my feelings.  
I'll cool off. I'll chill out.  
I don't always get what I want. I don't need to upset myself over it.  
I can let this go. It's not that important. No big deal.

### THINGS I SAY TO KEEP MYSELF IN AN ANGRY MOOD

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### I CHANGE TO COOL TALK

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**I USE MY COOL THOUGHTS TO CHILL ME OUT!  
I AM A CHILL DOWN KID!**

SIGNED \_\_\_\_\_

## LEARNING TO DEAL WITH UNFAIR PEOPLE

Objective: To get a different perspective on dealing with difficult people and situations.

Activity: Dealing with Unfair People. Sometimes you have to be around adults and other kids who have difficult personalities. They do not act fair. Sometimes they are unkind. They have not learned how to use the super powers in the mind to create a happy life. They pick fights and do things that make others unhappy. Sometimes parents are stressed and do things that you do not like. You might have a teacher that you are upset with because he or she is tough on you.

That's life. Sometimes things are unfair, but oh well, we have to make the best of it. Expect it. You are being given a challenge to learn to work with someone you don't like. If you master this skill of dealing with unfair people, you will have it for the rest of your life--there will always be a boss or neighbor who is hard to get along with. Don't give unkind people power over you by giving into your anger.

Bad situations happen and the best thing you can do is make the best of it. How? By not spending a lot of time thinking about your anger and how unfair this person is. The more you think about how unfair it is, the angrier you will become. You might think that things are wrong and you might be right. Or it just might be an idea that you have. Don't make yourself into a troublemaker because you are angry. Have you noticed that the loudest, most active person gets the reputation of being a trouble maker and is picked on? So tone your behavior down. Reputations are hard to live down but you can do it.

Activity: Floating Above the Unfairness. Close your eyes and see the situation where you feel wronged. Notice your feelings and how your body gets tight and tense when you upset yourself by negative self-talk. What do you tell yourself? Challenge your negative self-talk about unfairness. Now hear yourself saying, "I WON'T LET OTHERS GET ME DOWN. They just aren't worth it. I am important and I won't anger myself. I'll get hold of hot thoughts and cool them down. I can be the bigger person that has a lesson to learn about dealing with unfair people. I won't let unhappy people get me down! I take this opportunity of learning to deal with difficult people and then I'll have it for life!"

Let's do it again. See and feel yourself upset when you think you have been wronged. (Repeat the dialogue given above to give the child practice in taking charge of his own mind.) Now visualize yourself using your time doing things that make you happy. If you are having a bad year, seek out people who believe in you. See yourself choosing activities that are fun that put you in touch with positive adults that support you. Practice helps you build up those strong mind muscles just like a weight lifter builds muscles!

### Helper Words:

I'm smart enough to learn ways to chill out my mind when things are unfair.

I take a deep breath and tell myself "Float and deal with this problem."

I tell myself that I will get through this bad time the best I can. (I'll just do it! Just do it! )

I challenge my belief that life must be fair. Sometimes life can be hard. I'll give this all I've got.

Tips for parents and teachers: My book, Lesson Plans for Teaching Resilience to Children, has a lesson plan on helping unhappy children choose a wise mentor for support. Troubled children need adults who believe in them! This book is available as a free pdf download on my [angriessout.com](http://angriessout.com) web site or as a paper book on amazon.com.

**Angry about small stuff?**



**Do the hippie thing.**

**Tell yourself,**

**"Oh man, I am so floating  
above this!"**



## THE DYNAMICS OF DREAD: IF IT DOESN'T FEEL GOOD, DON'T DO IT!

Objective: To learn how the dynamics of dread and self doubt shut down becoming successful.

Activity: Doing the Tough Stuff. Some people get angry when they have to do hard work. Then the work becomes harder! What do you hate to do the most and put off until you can't avoid anymore? Many of us have unproductive beliefs that cause you to put off dreaded tasks. Dread along with feelings of helplessness and discouragement come from doubting yourself. You will always doubt yourself until you use your Helper Words to finish the work. The more dread and anger about doing the work that you have the, less motivated you will be to get difficult tasks and boring chores done.

Sometimes putting your work off is rebellion. Some part of you may be angry at a teacher or your folks so you refuse to do the work. Rebelling by not doing what you have to do can backfire on you. "You can't make me. Oh no! I can't even make me." Getting past rebelling is part of growing up. Dread is one of those fear feelings that tries to shut you down. Not doing your job will cause you to feel bad about yourself and your self-esteem will drop. Tell yourself that you can push through the dark thoughts that you tell yourself about not wanting to do your homework or chores. Dread is just (1.) a feeling, (2.) negative ideas such as "I don't want to..." and (3.) body tension patterns. Your mind rules your body. Stop telling yourself that you don't want to do it and get down to it. ☺

Activity: How Your Body Acts Up when You Want to Get Out of Work. Think of something you know how to do but don't want to do. Finish this sentence, "The thing(s) I avoid until the very last minute or never get around to doing is \_\_\_\_\_." Think about starting the project and watch what feelings and body tension comes up. Did your stomach become anxious? Did your hands or shoulders get tight? Did you get a slight headache and a drop in energy? These are the body sensations that go along with the feeling of dread. What did you tell yourself? Watch what you say to yourself to put off doing a job you must do. Catch yourself when you are being lazy. The more bad thoughts that you allow in your mind, the harder the work will be. Get past your anger. Say, "Just get on with it. I'd better give myself a good talking to. I'll put in some get 'er done thoughts instead."

Giving into feelings of dread will keep you from achieving your dreams. The longest walk can be getting up from the couch or bed and getting started. Give yourself a deep breath and a good talking to! Decide what kind of person you want to become and then decide what you will have to do to become this person. Challenge the unwillingness to start the task. Sometimes getting started is the hardest part. Decide to become a "Take Charge" person in your own life! Tell yourself that you will feel relief when you finish the job. You can turn on the feel-good endorphins in your brain's reward system by accomplishing the task. Tell yourself, "Get a grip; get 'er done!" When you feel dread, just push that "Go Button" and feel good about getting your job off your plate so you can go play!

### Helper Words:

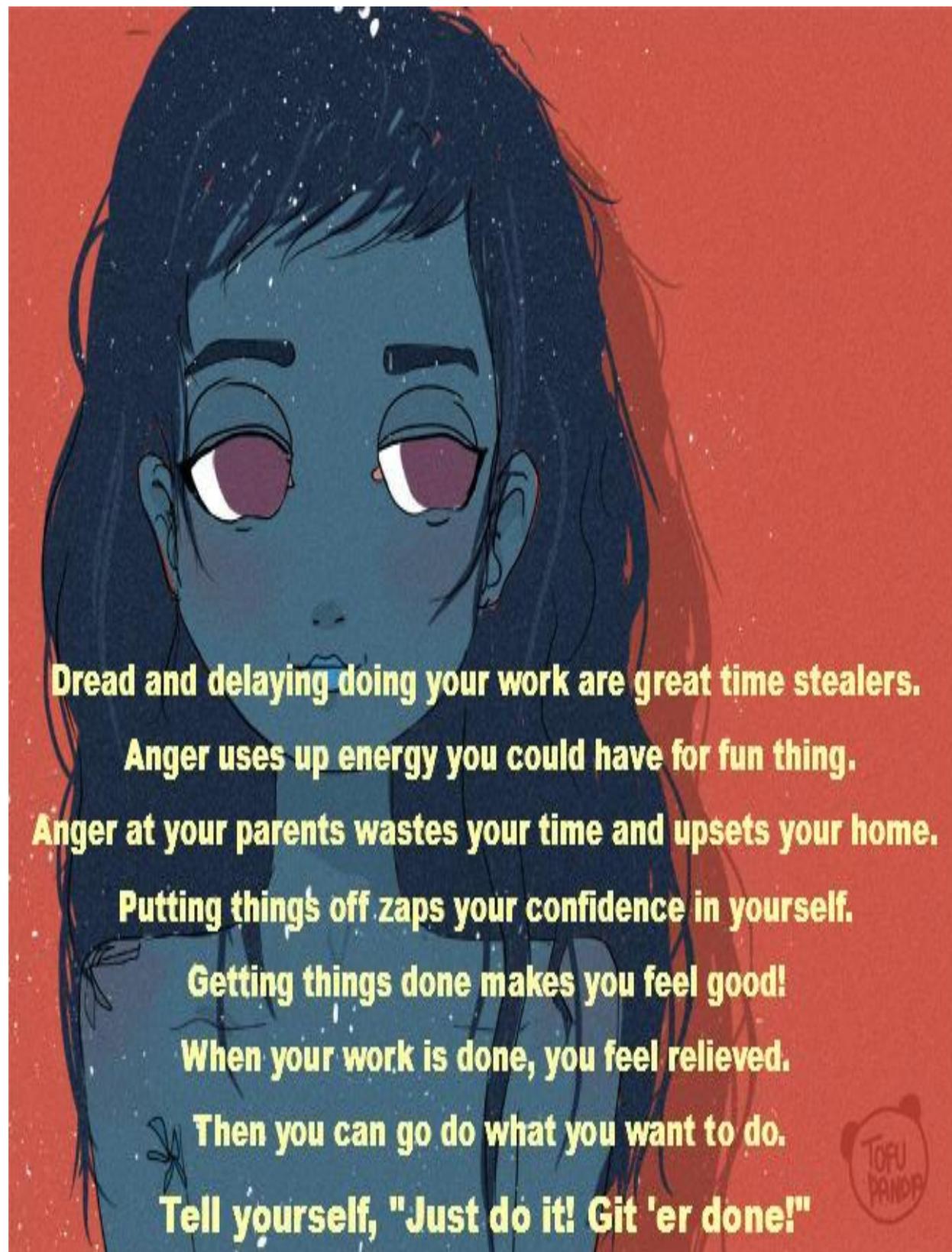
I can spend a lot of time hating the task, but I still have to do it.

I can dawdle and put off doing my chores but I still have to do them.

Why am I getting angry about something I have to do? The best thing is to just get the job done.

It's much less stressful to stop putting off what I have to do. Just do it!

Tips for parents and teachers: <http://www.kidpointz.com/printable-charts/> gives great printable chore charts to motivate children to get their chores and homework done. Behavior and chore charts helped my three children get their work done and broke into sibling squabbles when they were young. ☺



**Dread and delaying doing your work are great time stealers.**

**Anger uses up energy you could have for fun thing.**

**Anger at your parents wastes your time and upsets your home.**

**Putting things off zaps your confidence in yourself.**

**Getting things done makes you feel good!**

**When your work is done, you feel relieved.**

**Then you can go do what you want to do.**

**Tell yourself, "Just do it! Git 'er done!"**

## **MAKING YOURSELF ANGRY WITH NEGATIVE SELF-TALK**

Objective: To stop getting angry at others to avoid doing your work.

Activity: Are you a Doer or a Dawdler? Doers feel good about getting things done so they can go do what they want to do. Dawdlers put things off and can get irritable about having to do their chores. What do you do when your parents remind you to do your work? Do you get angry when your parent tells you to do your homework or chores? An error in thinking is that you only get to do fun things. Expecting things to be fun all the time is not realistic. Life is a mixture of exciting and boring things. Some boys and girls get hung up with this type of wrong thinking. Get real and go with how life is, not how you want it to be. Life is a mixture of fun and boring things sometimes. That is just how it is. Life is not all fun and games! It's best to get things off your plate so you can go do what you want.

Activity: Getting a Handle on Self-Angering Talk. Hot Thoughts keep you upset. Hot Thoughts are a way that you anger yourself by thinking about things that upset you. What Hot Thoughts do you say when reminded of your chores or homework? What do you say to make the other person give up and go away and make yourself angry at the same time? Let's list these obstacles to getting your work done on the board. Putting things off makes you insecure. People who put things they don't want to do off are not as happy as those who get things off their plate. They put their energy into making themselves feel bad by saying, "I don't want to. I'm too stupid to do this. This is so lame. I can't. Leave me alone!" They create a negative, angry mood for themselves. Then they beat themselves up for not getting their work done. Have you ever put things off, got angry at yourself and others and then said ugly words about yourself? Catch this bad habit and break into it.

Negative words of "I don't want to so I won't do it until I have to" take away your power and self-control. When you make excuses to not to do your work when it needs to be done, you feel bad. You might even get angry at your mom or dad reminds you of your responsibility. You might act out and yell. Distraction is one way people try to deal with negative feelings. You might try to make yourself feel better by playing video games or eating comfort foods. But too much distraction through food or game playing doesn't solve your problem. You still have to get the chore or work done.

Activity: Don't Hold Yourself Hostage to Angry Feelings and Beliefs. Think of a dark thought that wants to make you want to put off a chore or do something wrong. Close your eyes and check in with your creative imagination. Give yourself a break! See yourself stepping back from the situation and think of a different way you could handle not wanting to do work that you know needs to be done. Let's list what you could say to yourself to bypass the angry feelings and the words that make you feel worse on the board. Pretend that you are a super hero that takes charge. See yourself using a magical tool to catch those words and throw them out. You can lasso those powerful negative emotions and words and tie them up. You might use a specially powered super gun. Draw a picture of you interrupting those self-angering words with some super tool. Tell us what your creative imagination comes up with.

If you want to feel good about yourself, keep challenging those dark thoughts that turn you into a dawdler and make others angry at you. Set a goal of getting things done quickly so you can feel good about yourself. Mastery of work increases your self-esteem. What will you say to yourself to be a Doer? Be your own superhero! Doers have more fun in life because they get their work out of the way so they can go have fun! Write the words, "Doers have more fun." on your picture.

# **Are You a Self Starter or a Nag Starter?**

**Self Starters get things done on their own.**



**Nag Starters wait until someone is angry at them and they're mad also to get the job done.**



**Advantages of being a Self Starter:**



**Advantages of being a Nag Starter:**



**Get your parents off your back!**

## LET GO OF THE TROUBLE MAKER LABEL AND BECOME A SUPER HERO

Objective: To reframe negative self-identity labels and beliefs.

Materials: Post It Notes

Activity: Shaking off Ugly Names. Have you been in trouble lately? Do you feel people are upset with you? Have people called you discouraging names like jerk, troublemaker or stupid? Maybe you've been doing things that upset others. You goof off and others get angry at you. You can change this habit. Maybe you have felt lost because you're stuck in acting out. You can turn it around. Getting lost leads up to getting found. At times in a life a person decides to grow up regarding their anger. Superheroes figure out that not being in control of their frustration, disappoint and anger causes them to be unhappy. They start to see things differently and grow up. They decide to learn more mature ways of acting. They gather some tools along the way—the best ones they can find to help them with their unwanted feelings. They find nifty anger management tools to help them.

Has anyone told that you are dumb, an idiot, lazy, hopeless or worse? Do not take on negative labels that other people say about you when they are angry. That is their stuff, not yours. Shake off any labels they try to pin on you. You do have to look at what you might have done to irritate them. Own your part of it. You decide the person you want to be. If you act lazy or keep doing dumb things, people might call you those names. Shake it up! Change that behavior. Then you can drop the label! When you stop a bad habit, you can shake off a label. Write the ugly names that you have been called on these Post It Notes. Put the notes with the names on your shirt. Drop into your heart. Breathe and ask yourself, “Am I really these ugly words? No! They are just words that someone said. They are not me. I can shake them off!” Jump up and down and shake back and forth until the ugly names fall off. Knock them off as you remind yourself to knock off bad habits. Stomp on the ugly words. Tell yourself, “That name is not me!”

Activity: Being Your Own Super Hero. What do super heroes do? How do they take care of others? What do they do to take care of themselves? Super heroes learn ways to work with their feelings. They use emotional intelligence. What is emotional intelligence? It's being smart about using your feelings. Super heroes have lots of emotional intelligence. They have to figure things out in a hurry to know what needs to be done in an emergency. Think like a super hero and before you know it you will become one!

You can study emotional intelligence and how to work with your feelings. Learn to recognize and express your feelings in healthy ways. If you feel it or think it and you don't like it, you can change it. You don't have to give in to your mean thoughts or urges. Taking responsibility for what you think or feel is the beginning step. How you think and act will determine the kind of person you are. What you say and do makes a difference. Your choices today define who you will be tomorrow. Growth is facing your uncomfortable feelings head on. Own your problem. Hey, that is the way you learn. Forgive yourself and move on. You are as grown up as you are responsible for your thoughts, feelings and actions. Find your inner strength and do what's right. That's how you grow up to be a hero. The most wounded of people can grow up to be heroes. They choose better ways to live their life happier than the people who hurt them. Boys and girls who move through the hurt and anger for what happened to them and learn anger management skills are the true super heroes of our time!

Tips for parents and teachers: Sadly today's children associate being happy with video games, going shopping or eating which are activities that turn on brain endorphins but are not satisfying. Research shows that family and friends, having a meaningful life and being in nature are deeper sources of happiness. Remind children often that loving connections create happiness.



## **The To-Do List to Get Over It!**

**Wrap new ideas around your mind.**

**Adopt new super hero tools to make yourself feel better.**

**Think before you act; not react before you think.**

**Breathe. Breathe. Breathing is good.**

**Check your grumpy feeling at the door. Any door will do.**

**Throw out old family ways of reacting that don't work.**

**Lighten up. Be of good cheer. You will get it.**

**Grow out of your temper.**

**You haven't needed it since you were little.**

**Forgive yourself for being a kid with unruly feelings.**

**Don't give up. Keep trying. Learn from your slip ups.**

**Smile and be grateful for what you have.**

**You are a wonderful person with feelings  
and that is a marvelous thing to be!**

## References

Gunderson, E. A., Gripshover, S. J., Romero, C., Dweck, C. S., Goldin-Meadow, S., Levine, S. C. (2013). Parent Praise to 1- to 3-Year-Olds Predicts Children's Motivational Frameworks 5 Years Later. *Child Development*, DOI: 10.1111/cdev.12064.

Kernberg, O. (1989). Narcissistic personality disorder in childhood. In Otto Kernberg, (Ed.), *The Psychiatric Clinics of North America*, Vol. 12, No. 3.

Johnson, S. (1995). *The One Minute Mother (One Minute Series)*. William Morrow.

Namka, L. (2009). *Your Quick Anger Makeover Plus Twenty Other Cutting-Edge Techniques to Release Anger. Talk, Trust and Feel Therapeutics*.



## **GET YOUR ANGRIES OUT!**

One of my missions in the world is to help people learn to deal effectively with their anger. I've been writing about helping children with their feelings since 1992 when I was running therapy groups for young children who were angry and working their parents in therapy. I give a lot of the information away at my award winning web site at [www.angriesout.com](http://www.angriesout.com).

On the web site, children have written me about their anger. My answers and their letters were posted with their permission. Our features include kids who write in to "Ask the Lady Who Knows about Mads," an amends column called "I'm Sorry I Hurt Someone" and another kids page on "Here's How I Handled my Mad Attack." Here are some of the articles that can be copied for your children:

Rules for Getting Your Mads Out

Things to Do Later If the Mads Are Still There

Things to Do If Someone Bigger Starts To Hurt You

Helper Words: Catching Feelings; Break Into Confusion and Saying How You Feel

The Most Important Things to Remember about Getting Mad

Let's Learn About Bully Behavior

Helper Words for Bully Behavior

Making Peace in My World

When I feel Threatened by Someone

My Plan for Peace

Violence Prevention Pledge

Are You Secretly Angry?

Parents divorced? Kids copy this to give to them!

Free Lesson Plans on Stopping Bully Behavior

This book is one in a series of to help children learn prosocial skills. See my other books with lesson plans: Teaching Emotional Intelligence to Children, Lesson Plans for Teaching Resilience to Children and the next one which will be on lesson plans for helping bullies and selfish children.

Join my Facebook page called Anger Management and Spirituality to get positive ideas about healthy living and proven approaches to reduce and release anger.

## Talk, Trust and Feel Therapeutics



Talk, Trust & Feel Therapeutics provides innovative toys and books to help parents, teachers and therapists teach children to express uncomfortable feelings, take responsibility for their own behavior and learn positive social skills. Our commitment is to develop products to help children feel good about identifying and breaking into their acts of power and replacing them with acts of love. Our unique mission is to help children and adults learn how to deal with their anger and express it in safe, constructive ways. Our philosophy is that changing our world is possible when adults approach children's misbehavior with love and compassion and teach them better ways to act.

### **Books for Children on Healthy Feelings by Lynne Namka**

Available from [www.angriesout.com](http://www.angriesout.com) or <http://www.amazon.com/> and other online bookstores

*The Mad Family Gets Their Mads Out*

*How to Let Go of Your Mad Baggage*

*The Case of the Prickly Feelings*

*Teaching Emotional Intelligence to Children: Fifty Fun Activities for Families and Therapists*

*Parents Fight! Parents Make Up! Take Good Care of Yourself!*

*Good Bye Ouchies and Grouchies. Hello Happy Feelings: EFT for Kids of All Ages*

*Lesson Plans for Teaching Resilience to Children (available as a free pdf download on [angriesout.com](http://angriesout.com))*

*Lesson Plans for Stopping Bully Behavior*

