

The 10 Rules of Dealing with an Angry Child

by Carole Banks,

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1. Don't yell or challenge your child when he's angry.

But this will just increase your feeling of being out of control. The best thing you can do is remain calm in a crisis. So don't challenge your child when he's angry—that's just like throwing a match onto a pile of firecrackers. Just wait until he calms down.

2. Don't try to reason with your child when he's in the middle of a tantrum, tirade or angry outburst. We reason through things to defuse tense situations. This is always a challenge with kids because they don't have the same capacity to stop and reason like we do. Wait until he calms down and then talk it through later.

3. Pay attention to your physical reactions. Watch your physical reactions because your senses will tell you "Yikes, I'm in the presence of somebody who is very upset." Even though it's difficult, the trick is to act against that in some way and try to stay calm. Remember, you're lending your children your strength in these moments; you're showing them how to handle anger

4. Don't get physical with your child. Remember, if you get physical with your child, among other things, you're just teaching him to solve his problems with aggression.

5. Take a different approach with younger kids – up to age 4.

If child is in the midst of a temper tantrum, you want to move ever so slightly away from him, but don't isolate him completely...you want to help them to start to learn that they can have a role in calming themselves down until they feel in control. You're asking them to pay attention to themselves. "When you feel better and you're not upset anymore, you can come on out and join us." You can also give them a choice. You can say, "Do you need time to go into your room and get it together?" Again, don't challenge them when they're in that mode.

6. Don't freeze up. Sometimes your child will get angry on purpose to engage you; they'll bait you by throwing a fit or saying something rude, because they know that this will cause you to give in. So your job is to *not* take the bait—don't get angry, and don't give in. But remember, if you give in and renegotiate, even every once in a while, you're teaching your child that it's worth it to act out. Instead, let them calm down and try to coach them to use their problem-solving skills later. You are making a conscious choice to not get into an argument. You're saying, "I'm not going to renegotiate; I'm going to be calm."

7. Give consequences for the bad behavior, not for the anger. When your child throws a tantrum, starts screaming and really loses it, make sure you give him consequences based on his behavior and not on his emotions. For example, if your child calls you a foul name during his angry outburst, give him a consequence later for that infraction of the rules. Kids get angry just like we do; they need to feel that they have a safe place to let off steam. As long as they're not breaking any rules, allow them to have that time to be angry.

8. Don't give overly harsh punishments. Giving harsh punishments in the heat of the moment is a losing proposition. Ask yourself is, "What do I want my child to learn?"

9. Take a break. When somebody is angry, you can't reason with them and you can't rush it. So take a break and come back and interact with each other later when everyone is calm.

10. Role model appropriate responses when you're angry. try to role model dealing with their own anger appropriately in front of their children. Remember, you're teaching the lesson of how to manage your anger, and that's exactly what you want your child to learn.