



## Anger

Anger is an emotion that can be tricky to express in an assertive and healthy manner. For some, anger comes quickly and the expression of it includes physical outbursts or yelling. Others may hide or “swallow” their anger and we may see disordered eating, cutting, or other self-harm behaviors. In your family, it is important that you talk with your kids about their feelings openly and often. When discussing anger, you may need to establish ground rules for the expression of this emotion. Rules such as: swearing, name-calling or physical aggression are non-negotiables and not acceptable. There will be consequences for any violation of these types of behavior and it will occur every time. Furthermore, if someone in the family damages something while they are angry (e.g.; kicks a hole in a wall) they will either be responsible for repairing the damage or in helping with the repairs. The best behavioral programs in the world (including the self-help programs such as AA/NA) include a path where individuals must make amends for their behaviors; and making amends is not an apology. To make amends means to mend what you broke. You will also need to outline specific ways to cope with anger. Help your child identify specific steps he/she can take to manage their emotions. You may need to talk about how their body feels when they are angry, controlled breathing, and/or use of physical outlets such as walking, running, yoga, martial arts, etc. to release anger. Mindfulness activities have also been shown to be highly effective.

Finally, process your child’s anger once they have completely calmed down. Anger is classified (by psychologist types) as a “secondary emotion”. This means that typically we view it as an emotion that stems from a different emotion like: embarrassment, fear, shame, guilt, frustration, etc. When working with clients who struggle with anger we are often attempting to find out what these underlying emotions may be. Recently, I was listening to a talk about anger and the speaker said that a better way to find what is underneath the anger is to ask the question: “What were you trying to protect?” I thought this was a fascinating and insightful question. It takes away the sterility of asking someone to identify their feelings, and instead provides an avenue for exploring feeling’s from a different angle or perspective. I suspect that this approach may also result in a less defensiveness “posture” which we often encounter when we attempt to explore the roots of anger.

## Bullying

October is Bullying Prevention Month. Bullying is a serious issue and one study found that about 9% of students in the grades 6-10 were bullied at least one time per week. Just as concerning are findings that victims of bullying were 1.5 times more likely to carry a weapon and that the bullies were 2.6 times more likely to carry a weapon than other students (Harvard Mental Health Letter, September, 2009). Also of concern is that social media is becoming an primary tool to bully others.

In an effort to combat bullying online, Trisha Prabhu, a junior at Harvard University was awarded \$300,000 this week for her **ReThink** smartphone app which encourages people to use more courteous language online. This free app substitutes its own keyboard for the onscreen ones found on Apple or Android phones and works with virtually any messaging app, including Twitter and Facebook. The app monitors the words typed by the user and pops up subtle messages when it detects a swear word or insult. The user might see “Would you like to reword this?” The user can still choose to go ahead and type the insult, but Prabhu believes that the app may help to change the user’s mind if they receive a non-judgmental prompt. How wonderful is that? This would be a great step you could implement with your child if they have a phone and are part of any social media application. And, it’s free!



