

Rewards of Anger Control Worth The Work

by Scott Molaski

Even *a casual glance at a newspaper today supports the idea that the world is an angry place. The tragic events in Springfield last week reinforce that pessimistic view. Stories of kids killing others are becoming commonplace. Prisons are filled with adults who fail to exercise sufficient control over their emotions. We ask each other “What is happening?” “How do we fix it?” and “Where do we start?”*

The most logical place to begin correcting this problem is at home at an early age. A primary responsibility of parents is to provide a safe, nurturing environment for their children to grow. Screaming and fighting are not appropriate ways to settle disputes nor do they create a safe environment. For some people, anger control is a whole new way of thinking. If this is you, put the paper down and pick up the telephone directory. Call a counselor or other qualified mental health professional. You need help and the people around you will appreciate your getting it.

For others, anger control is a matter of convenience or fatigue. Many adults wouldn't think of yelling and screaming at their boss but later go home and take out the pressures of the day on their family. Think about it. As a parent, you really can't be replaced. As an employee, the day will come when you walk out the door and someone else will fill your shoes. Which is more important? Your job or your family?

If you find yourself struggling with anger problems, here are some suggestions:

- **Cool Off:** Stop for just minute. Take a deep breath. Visualize a stop sign. Whatever it takes to make you pause. Don't just think about what you want to say; plan on saying it better, more appropriately.
- **State the Problem:** Tell the person what you're upset about. Focus on the behavior, not the person. Speak clearly and calmly; you are in control.
- **Listen:** Many people find this step difficult. You have had your say and now it is the other person's turn. Try taking more deep breaths. Listen to what the other person is saying and you will see how he feels. Practice active listening so you can paraphrase what the other person has said when he has finished; for example, “This is what I heard you say....”
- **Talk It Over:** Hopefully by now everything is out on the table. If not, now is the time to clear up any misconceptions. Don't introduce new conflict by regurgitating past arguments or bringing up new issues. Stay focused on the specific disagreement.
- **Find a Solution:** As parents, this is the time we set consequences. By now, your child should have an idea of your expectations, so this shouldn't introduce any surprises. Be reasonable and firm. You are the parent, and it is your job to set limits.

Remember not to overwhelm your child. Provide some light for her at the end of the tunnel. Encourage her to get this over with so life can improve. Now is not the time to re-argue the whole issue. It is a time for action. Remember that during this entire incident your child was watching your behavior. You will reap what you have sown.

If this disagreement is with another adult, either one of you has convinced the other to adopt his opinion, you've reached a different settlement, or you've agreed to disagree. Don't allow his behavior to control your emotions for the rest of the day.

- **Ask For Help:** If things are out of control, find some help. Disagreements can sometimes become a competition. Even in professional sports there are referees and umpires to keep things fair and safe. Your family is more important than a game, so get the help you need.

Once things have returned to normal or at least have settled down, it is time to rebuild. When natural disasters strike, we rely on insurance companies to repair or replace what was damaged. As parents, we are the insurance company. Sometimes fixing things up can cost us incredible amounts of time and energy.

As you would hope with your insurance agent, act quickly. Parents do not have the luxury of waiting for children to make the repairs. If your children knew how to fix things, they wouldn't be out picking weeds or confined to their room. You are responsible for re-engaging them.

Try to schedule some time to do an activity they will enjoy. If hard feelings still exist, refuse to argue and focus on the activity. If your son or daughter still has something to get of his or her chest, you might learn something by listening.

Finally, realize that tomorrow is a new day. Put any problems to rest. Take a few minutes to relax and take care of yourself. This can help relieve any remaining tension and better prepare yourself for tomorrow's challenges.

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