

6 Steps to Manage Anger

Anger can be horrifying.

1. Stop.

As you sense your control slipping—STOP. If you are in the middle of a sentence—STOP—don't even finish your thought, except perhaps to say, "I'm getting mad!" If you are moving—STOP moving. Practice a STOP gesture that can be used as a way to put a physical brake on your emotions. A good STOP gesture is to hold your hands up in front of your face, fingers straight up, palms out. Push the anger away from you, and at the same time say the word STOP.

What if you are so angry at your child that you are ready to strike him and you cannot find the restraint to use your STOP gesture? In that case, channel your physical reaction into a burst of applause. When you feel yourself about to strike, clap your hands. Clap them hard and fast, while you express your feelings of anger.

This anger management technique of acknowledging anger and stopping yourself can be used for all problems. It can be effective with everything from minor irritations that bring irrational anger to major problems that require a clear head to solve.

2. Give yourself space.

When you are angry, the LAST thing you need to do is stay engaged in the situation that is making you mad—all that does is escalate your anger. It is critically important that at this point you do NOT try to deal with the situation that is making you angry. You cannot solve a problem in a fit of anger; it will likely just escalate the situation or create a new layer of problems to deal with. You are going to step away from your child so that you can calm and collect yourself and, very likely, allow your child to calm down a bit, too.

3. Breathe deeply.

Begin by controlling your internal, physical responses to anger. Likely your heart rate is increased, your breathing is rapid, your face is flushed, or your voice is raised. The first step to inner control is to breathe deeply.

Breathing deeply allows your body to fill with oxygen. This will stop the adrenaline rush that floods your body when you are angry. This extra oxygen flow will relax your body, clam your breathing, slow your heart rate, and allow your brain to resume rational thought.



Take a number of slow, even, deep breaths. Put your hand on your stomach and carry the air down until you feel your stomach rise. Try counting or repeating a calming word or phrase, such as “This too shall pass.”

4. Analyze.

Once you’ve calmed down, try to see what really happened. A good way to analyze what happened is to imagine that it happened to someone else—your sister, your brother, or a friend. Looking at the situation as an outsider might help you see the truth. You might more clearly understand where your anger came from, or you may see that your reaction was way out of proportion.

5. Define the problem.

After you have seen the situation more clearly, it is time to precisely define the problem in exact words. See if you can come up with a description of the problem in one or two sentences. Put it in clear, plain words that exactly state the real issue that sparked your anger.

6. Solve.

Once you’ve stated the problem, you can then consider options for solving it. You may want to jot down several possible options on paper or talk about options with another adult. There’s no reason for you to make decisions in a vacuum. I guarantee that the problem you are dealing with is a common one and there are lots of sources for solutions.

