

After the Buzz, social thinking ideas for parents and caregivers

From *What's the Buzz?* for Early Learners: A complete social skills foundation course



Lesson 10 of 16: Angry feelings

After the Buzz presents ideas for parents, guardians and educators to encourage the generalisation of the social thinking the children have learnt in the session. Children rely on our commitment to consolidate these skills by modelling them, and emphasising the language and the ideas used in the lesson.

Here are a few ideas parents can do at home to support the quality of their child's social thinking based around lesson 10, 'Angry feelings'. This is the second lesson of three dedicated to teaching students about feelings and how to deal with them constructively.

Our children learn from us

The best way to show children how to handle angry feelings is to model ours beautifully. We need to look resourceful in front of our kids. As an eleven-year-old client said to his mother, "Don't tell me not to be a psycho while you're acting like one!" So true – when a child is struggling with their emotion the last thing that will help is an out-of-control adult.

When your child is angry, think!

This is the time to be tactical and switch our attention to what should matter. Try not to reward your child's angry behaviours by being angry yourself and going on and on at them. Tactical ignoring is about ignoring misbehaviour that can be ignored – it is not about ignoring your child and all of their behaviour. Hindsight tells us that so many childish behaviours drop out with maturity. Yet, a few parents are not able to shift their pattern of tight control and high level reactions. Whatever you do, avoid power struggles and extreme emotions. From now on, when you find yourself in conflict with an angry child, try this. Try and react to it in the same way you'd treat the child of your most precious friend who is struggling with this emotion. Do you see the difference?

Role-plays

Let your children know that feeling angry is normal and should not be hidden. However, when someone becomes angry and breaks things, hurts others and says mean things it is not okay. When this happens there will always be a negative consequence later on. It is up to each of us to be the boss of our angry feelings. The best way to stay in charge of all kinds of feelings is to use, 'smart thinking' – a plan to stay calm, think and make good choices. Consolidate the lesson by role-playing how to do 'smart thinking'. Help your child rehearse these two vital steps:

1. State, to yourself or to another, why you feel angry...

"I feel angry because mum won't let me have it."

"I feel angry because they're not sharing."

"I feel angry because I'm last."

"I feel angry because I've been left out."

"I feel angry because no one cares."

"I feel angry because it's not fair."



“I feel angry because I wanted it.”

“I feel angry because I’m disappointed.”

2. *Take action:* To practice, roll the ‘smart thinking dice’ and act out the idea that appears. Do what we did in the lesson – when the act is finished, hold up one, two or three fingers, to rate it.

One finger = good

Two fingers = very good

Three fingers - amazing!

Continue until everyone in the family has had a turn. Remind them that in real life, when they don’t have their ‘smart thinking dice’, to imagine throwing it and doing one of the calming ideas. Practice makes perfect!

Deal with anger problems openly

During calmer times talk to your child about their tricky, quick temper. Gradually disarm anger as the preferred way to function. Our experience in working with children temper difficulties is that most feel terrible after the event. Discuss early warning signals experienced just before explosion – start to tune them in to how they feel. Most children talk about feeling hot, breathing faster, wanting to cry or noticing a rapid heartbeat, and most say it helps when their parents set up ways to help them redirect this pent-up energy.

Develop an exit procedure – a way to escape the situation before their emotion spills over and their dignity remains intact. When they attempt to do it, reward them! In the meantime, teach them that you will always remain calm and remove yourself if they can’t. Continue to follow through with an appropriate negative consequence following the temper outburst, even if it means they become upset again – maintain consistency. It is not failsafe, but an intelligent approach.

An anger/frustration outlet

The key to dealing with anger for many youngsters is to redirect them to an acceptable way to let the raw emotion ‘loose’ without placing themselves or others at risk. There are a host of ways to transfer this wild surge of emotion into the physical. Best results happen when children latch on to a particular strategy and repeatedly use it. Getting into a habit reinforces a new pattern of behaviour and quite soon the new behaviour becomes automatic. For example, they could:

punch a pillow

rip up a cheap foam pillow

punch a punching bag or mattress

take a deep breath and walk away

find a quiet spot and do some deep, slow breathing and relaxation exercises

take a shower or bath

bounce on the trampoline

do some colouring in

draw a picture of the person they are angry with and tear it into little pieces

rip up a newspaper, magazine or kitchen sponge into a thousand pieces (you’ll need a thin, cheap variety)

tear play dough or plasticine up into very, very tiny pieces

throw a ball repeatedly at a target

write an angry letter then rip it up or lock it in a tin

add a new entry to their anger journal

put in ear pieces and listen to loud music

play on a screen

go somewhere private and scream

phone a friend and complain

go for a run and really run

do their tomboy stitch

talk about it to somebody they trust even if it means shouting at them

take a long, long walk with mum or dad

Teach guided meditation

The aim of guided meditation is to take children from the challenges of the real world for a short time to an imaginative place that feels safe and enjoyable. It offers a temporary escape and soothes all kinds of fatigued feelings. Each meditation has a particular theme or story. Guided meditation, however, is more than listening – as you’ll find the children will become actively involved!

The following resources will help inspire your guided meditation sessions:

Donna Attard. Meditation for Children. Audio CD <http://www.newworldmusic.com>

Michelle Robertson-Jones. Faerie Guided Meditations for Children. Audio CD

<http://www.paradisemusic.co.uk/albumsDetail.asp?id=119>

Crystal Rainbow Pty Ltd. Joy – Imagination journey for kids. Audio CD

<http://www.crystalrainbow.com.au/products.htm>

<http://www.childrensmeditation.net/studio.html>

Joshua Books. *Small Souls – Meditations for Children*. Book <http://www.joshuabooks.com/Books/Small-Souls-Meditations-for-Children/flypage.tpl.html?keyword=meditation+for+children>

Diaphragmatic breathing and progressive muscle relaxation

These delightful anti-anxiety tools are outlined in Lesson 15. They also sooth anger and subdue worried and anxious feelings too.

Photocopiable and Online Resources

These resources can also be downloaded from www.whatsthebuzz.net.au