

## Appendix - Materials for use in a Parents' Workshop

**Mardi Alexander** has adapted materials from Units 1-4 and added customised pictorial handouts for use with parents. She can be contacted directly for samples and suggestions.

An outline for a half day workshop with parents is presented here, with suggestions re content and activities. The pages cover the following:

- ◆ **Outline for a half day session**
- ◆ **Rationale**  
*Written for the presenters. Parts could be adapted for distribution to parents too.*
- ◆ **Activity – What makes you angry?**  
*Worksheet and presenter's notes.*
- ◆ **Presentation / Activities – Ways to help your children manage their anger**  
*To supplement materials from Units 1-4, two overview sheets for presenters with bullet points to aid preparation.*
- ◆ **Summing Up Activity**
- ◆ **Tips for Parents**

### Programme Outline for a half day Parents' Workshop

<b>Introduction</b>	Aims of the workshop
<b>Activity</b>	What makes you angry? <i>Tea/Coffee</i>
<b>Presentation and Activities</b>	Understanding anger and exploring approaches for managing anger
<b>Summing up Activity</b>	

## **WAYS TO HELP YOUR CHILDREN MANAGE THEIR ANGER**

### **Notes for Presenters**

#### **The workshop - who, how and when**

This workshop can be held either during the day or in the evening to suit the needs of the parents. With some adaptation the materials can also be used for staff development in nurseries, etc. Parents could be invited personally or a letter could be sent to all parents and the interest gauged from the response. It is suggested that the group size does not exceed 10. There are many materials in Units 1-4 that may be of use in preparing the workshop. However, the presenter should, as far as possible, avoid supplying answers or giving out advice but rather help parents come to their own conclusions about what might work best for them and their family.

#### **Why have this workshop?**

*Anyone can become angry - that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way - this is not easy.*  
(Aristotle, The Nicomachean Ethics in Goleman 1995)

Children who cannot deal with their anger in effective, constructive ways need their difficulties to be acknowledged and dealt with. Increasingly anti-social behaviour can intensify and lead to criminal behaviour later on in life. The growing number of referrals to psychological services, many of them coming directly from parents, have led to looking at effective ways to help parents and carers who are experiencing difficulties with how children manage their anger. These difficulties can cause stress and tension within the whole family and can generate resentment in parents. Angry parents often make angry children and vice versa.

Angry children can also present considerable problems for classroom management as being very angry is for pupils to be out of control and to be caught up in their own agenda - a teacher's nightmare. Children who are angry or aggressive do not do well at school because they do not pay attention or cooperate.

Some children's anger is obvious and 'in your face' but other children may hold their anger within themselves. However, they are equally as vulnerable. Suppression of anger can also lead to depression and emotional disorders when older. Moreover,

parents have feelings and rights too and can get frustrated, tired and angry. Children, therefore, may not be the only ones needing to boost their self control.

The idea behind this workshop is to have a small group of parents work together to try to understand and manage their own anger better and, consequently, be more able to help support their children with their anger management. As parents and carers we have an important part to play in helping our children to deal with their anger and negative emotions in more appropriate ways.

Some reasons why we should help our children to demonstrate self control and manage their anger:

- if children can manage their own anger, time becomes available to teach other social skills
- children can then behave effectively without supervision
- anger management can lead to more lasting changes in behaviour
- children can enjoy better social relationships with their peers and adults
- toddlers who are angry will not grow into angry adolescents or adults.

**WAYS TO HELP YOUR CHILDREN MANAGE THEIR ANGER**  
**ACTIVITY 1 – What Makes *You* Angry?**

**What makes you angry at home?**

**What makes you angry at work?**

**What happens when you get angry?**

**How do you control your anger?**

**How do you handle your children's anger?**

## **WAYS TO HELP YOUR CHILDREN MANAGE THEIR ANGER**

### **ACTIVITY 1 – Notes for the Presenter**

In order for parents to be able to help their children to understand and control their anger they first have to be aware of their own anger and how they deal with it. This activity aims to look at what makes parents angry in various situations, what parents do when they are angry and how they control their own anger. The final question asks the parents what they currently do to manage their children's anger. Hopefully by the end of the workshop the parents will have increased their understanding in this area.

Encourage parents to complete the activity independently then discuss it in pairs. If there is time and participants are willing perhaps get some whole group feedback, especially to the last two questions.

1. What makes you angry at home ?  
  
e.g. being ignored or let down  
partner not helping with housework  
not being considered
2. What makes you angry at work ?  
  
e.g. being asked to do things at very short notice.  
working under inconsistent conditions  
being put under unnecessary pressure
3. What happens when you get angry ?  
  
e.g. shout, snap at others, increased body tension, increased stress levels  
be quiet, walk away  
explode in private
4. How do you control your anger ?  
  
e.g. talk about it with a friend; let off steam  
count to ten and take deep breaths until calmer  
step back from situation, reason in own mind  
express feelings in positive ways  
remember what worked in a previous situation
5. How to do you manage your children's anger ?  
  
e.g. talk, rationalise, calm, discuss  
listen and let them calm down; build trust  
send them out to cool off  
remove them from the situation  
model positive, constructive anger management techniques

## **WAYS TO HELP YOUR CHILDREN MANAGE THEIR ANGER**

### **Understanding Anger – some ideas for discussion**

Material in this section could be presented as overheads or handouts and used as the framework for a discussion on ways of understanding anger. Parents could be encouraged, individually or in pairs, to offer examples from their own experience and to explore the issues raised.

Examples that can be covered are:

#### **Flight or Fight**

Some children perceive themselves as being attacked and react badly using anger or anxiety - the most effective solution is to let children know they are valued, respected and loved.

#### **Perceptions**

Anger can often be a consequence of *perceiving* threats, either physical or psychological, even if this is not what is really happening. Feeling angry is natural; it is only when we respond inappropriately that problems occur. Sleep loss is one factor that can make this worse.

#### **Different Ages and Stages**

More self control is expected as children move from infancy through to adolescence. This is usually learned from our significant others and may not be a process of maturation. Parenting styles can have a distinct impact on behaviour

#### **Sense of Value**

Children who feel valued as an individual seem to deal more effectively with their anger. They are less likely to be troubled. Be genuine in your praise and encouragement.

#### **Self Control**

This is valued in our culture and can lead to more lasting behaviour changes. However, techniques and strategies have to be discussed and rehearsed. Unchecked anger can escalate into a rage that can result in damaging emotional outbursts. The higher we go up the *conflict escalator* the harder it is to come down.

### **Triggers**

Different ways of interpreting the triggers that can set off our anger will affect the outcome - for example, the same trigger may be seen as a direct attack or as an unfortunate accident.

### **Consistency**

This is important in helping children learn self control. If everyone uses the same rules, rewards and consequences it helps the children know what to expect and how to respond.

### **Status and Acceptance**

Friendships, which can be the most important thing to children, can also be seen as threatening and can be triggers for anger - perhaps arising from feelings of insecurity, a sense of inferiority or jealousy. Low esteem and anxiety in some children can lead to them being scapegoats - remember that peer group pressure can be very powerful.

### **Vulnerability**

Adolescents can be particularly vulnerable as they may feel their previous security is threatened. When they move from being someone's daughter or son to becoming someone in their own right, with their own values and beliefs, feelings of anger at their own perceived inadequacy can be displaced on to their parents. Alternatively, suppression of anger can lead to depression when older.

## **APPROACHES FOR HELPING YOUR CHILDREN MANAGE THEIR ANGER – some ideas for discussion**

Material in this section could be presented as overheads or handouts and used as the framework for a discussion about techniques for managing anger. Parents could be encouraged, individually or in pairs, to offer examples from their own experience and to explore the issues raised.

Examples that can be covered are:

### **Discussion**

Discuss with your children the idea that behaving well is the best way to get your attention. Wait until you are both calm before talking about angry outbursts.

### **Identifying Triggers**

These are the matches that light a person's fuse. Try to explore what triggers are causing a loss of self control.

### **Mr Angry Man**

What physical changes occur in your body when you lose control, eg tense body, funny tummy, sweaty palms, rapid breathing?

### **Changing Thinking**

Catch your children being good instead of reacting to the misbehaviour. Praise good behaviour and ignore misbehaviour, if possible. Defuse by distraction, communication, humour, relaxation techniques.

### **Relaxation / Calming Techniques**

Combine self talk with deep breathing techniques - count to 10 (or more), tense and untense muscles, use music and exercise.

### **Turtle Technique**

Going into your shell at the first sign of danger and coming out when it's over - without responding to any provocation.

### **Social Skills Training**

Teach eye contact, good listening skills, good turn taking skills, and empathy for others. Look at how to create win-win situations where both parties' needs are met.

### **Negotiation**

Agree rules together as far as safety allows (but be clear that this is not always an option).

### **Active Listening / Ignoring**

Value the children's point of view, even when you do not agree with it. You may sometimes choose to ignore mild angry behaviour for longer term gain. Silence can be your most powerful weapon if behaviour is attention seeking.

### **Developing Solutions**

Avoid making threats you cannot carry out and aim for a win-win solution. Enforce rules and consequences consistently - discuss 'what if's'.

### **Effective Anger**

Learning to express intense feelings appropriately will be a good foundation for adult life, but sometimes it is still good to see the funny side of things

### **'I' Messages**

Instead of saying 'You're so badly behaved' you could try saying 'When you do that I get upset'. Focus on the behaviour, not the child, and maintain their self esteem.

### **Special Time**

Set time aside for your children when you can listen to them without interruption and get them to share tasks with you, helping them to feel valued and respected.

## **WAYS TO HELP YOUR CHILDREN MANAGE THEIR ANGER**

### **Summing Up Activity**

This is a very brief activity to close the workshop. It also gives some feedback on how the participants felt the workshop went.

Encourage each in the group to sum up in *one word* what they are feeling at this time. Encourage honesty as far as possible and, if participants agree, let them say why they feel as they do:

- |      |                 |   |   |
|------|-----------------|---|---|
| e.g. | <i>confused</i> | - | too much information was given                    |
|      | <i>guilty</i>   | - | so much more that could be done to help the child |
|      | <i>annoyed</i>  | - | about something that was said                     |
|      | <i>relieved</i> | - | others are going through similar situations       |
|      | <i>glad</i>     | - | can go home now.                                  |

Remember not to put pressure on the group to participate, although usually most will be more than happy to by this stage.

If the sharing becomes rather negative, try to end on a positive note by asking participants to say one thing which they have learned or gained.

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### **Tips for Parents**

The following ideas may help your child to express their anger appropriately or avoid angry feelings arising. Some of the suggestions are more appropriate for younger children, whilst others are more suitable for adolescents:

- give choices when possible
- try to turn tasks into games
- give clear simple guidelines as to what is expected and clear roles, rewards and sanctions
- think how your child may be feeling in a certain situation and discuss this
- listen to your child's point of view and value it, even if you do not agree with it
- give clear warning signals before events
- be consistent and try to see that all the carers of your child take the same approach
- try to enforce rules in as consistent a way as possible
- try to remain calm when dealing with your child
- ignore your child's *mild* anger and misbehaviour, if possible
- help children to learn how to wait
- demonstrate ways of expressing anger appropriately
- encourage your child to ask for help to avoid frustration
- discuss situations which make your child angry - listen to your child and try negotiating, when possible
- label inappropriate *behaviours*, not your child (use 'I' messages)
- make boundaries explicit and clear and stick to them
- avoid making threats or promises that you cannot carry out
- wait until everyone is calm before discussing things.