



Understanding and Dealing with Angry Outbursts

Understanding anger

Anger is a normal emotion that everyone feels from time to time. Some more often than others. Anger may be an appropriate response in some situations, the challenge is to help children stay safe and to keep others safe too.

It is important to remember that anger is a secondary emotion that erupts due to an underlying emotion of maybe: frustration, embarrassment, hurt, feeling that something is unjust, fear etc.

To be able to express emotion, children first need to be aware of their feelings. You can improve your child's 'emotional literacy' by beginning to increase the amount you talk about anger and other feelings.

How does it make you feel?

Speak to your child about your own anger. How do you show your anger? What makes you angry? This can be different for everyone but certain things anger most people.

For example, the dishes not being cleared after a meal may make you angry, however, this wouldn't anger your child, but being ignored continually, would be something that would anger both adults and children alike.

Dealing with angry outbursts

As a parent - The first rule is to be patient!

Accept and acknowledge your child's anger.

You can help your child to understand how to deal with their anger safely, and reduce the frequency or severity of these melt downs/tantrums. You need to model calmness.

In all cases, we must help our children help themselves by learning strategies to cope with their anger.

The Firework Model

Example

In front of all their friends, Kelly tells Sammy that he cannot join their game. (Match)

Sammy feels sad, embarrassed and afraid he has no friends and no one will ever want to play with him again. (Fuse).

Sammy's heart starts racing, he clenches his fists and cries. (firework). Sammy punches Kelly and runs off. (Explosion).

Sammy sits on the playground bench; he takes deep breaths and tells a lunchtime controller what happened. (Water).

Strategies

- Make a safe 'calm down' area for your child. This can be in your sight, their bedroom or any room/area where they can be left alone safely.
- Make a calm down box/bag that can be left in their calm space containing distraction/sensory items in it. (There is a list of suggested items in this pack.)
- Try not to argue, reason or 'tell off' your child. If they are in a heightened state, they probably won't hear you and it may prolong the outburst.
- Leave your child for at least 45 minutes. (Double if your child has additional needs) to totally calm down. Once they are calm, they may be exhausted from crying etc. They will just need a cuddle and reassurance from you.
- Once totally calm, empathise with them tell them that you understand why they were frustrated, annoyed etc. and then explain your reasoning behind what caused the melt down. Also, tell them how they made you feel e.g.

"It makes me feel sad when you call me rude names, I will always love you but if you do that to other people they may not like you." Remember by expressing and naming your own feelings you are encouraging your children to do the same.

While calm, talk to your child, get their involvement with setting up their calm down space and calming activities, talk about how it will work.

- Older children may automatically 'stomp' off slamming doors on their way. This is a good thing: it is the child trying to calm down. Let them go and resist the urge to follow as this may prolong the situation. Let them calm down. Once calm, talk about what happened.
- Remember do not take it personally.

Suggested Reading for parents

The Incredible Years – Carolyn Webster-Stratton

The Book You Wish Your Parents Had Read (and Your Children Will Be Glad That You Did)

by [Philippa Perry](#)

Anger Management for Parents: How to Manage your Emotions & Raise a Happy and Confident Child

by [Susan Garcia](#)

Books to share with your child

Train Your Angry Dragon: A Cute Children Story To Teach Kids About Emotions and Anger Management (My Dragon Books)

by [Steve Herman](#)

What to Do When Your Temper Flares: A Kid's Guide to Overcoming Problems with Anger (What-to-Do Guides for Kids) (What-to-Do Guides for Kids (R))

by [Dawn Huebner](#) and [Bonnie Matthews](#)

Some resources to share with your child:

The Red Beast

Deep inside everyone, a Red Beast lies sleeping.



When it is asleep, the Red Beast is quite small. However, when it wakes up, it begins to grow and grow.

Strangely, as it grows, its ears begin to shrink (it can't listen) and its eyes get smaller (it cannot see how it is making people feel) and yet its mouth grows...bigger and BIGGER!



The Red Beast shouts, screams, and says hurtful things like:

“I HATE YOU!”

“GO AWAY, LEAVE ME ALONE!”

The Red Beast does hurtful things like hitting, scratching, pushing, kicking, throwing and spitting.

In some people, the Red Beast is very hard to wake up; it's in a deep, deep sleep. In other people, it can wake up quickly and easily; it's only in a light sleep.

We all need to try to tame our Red Beast because the Red Beast makes people sad and afraid. If we cannot control our Red Beast it might be that, we lose our friends.

Sometimes our Red Beast makes other peoples Red Beast wake up too and then everyone shouts and is upset.

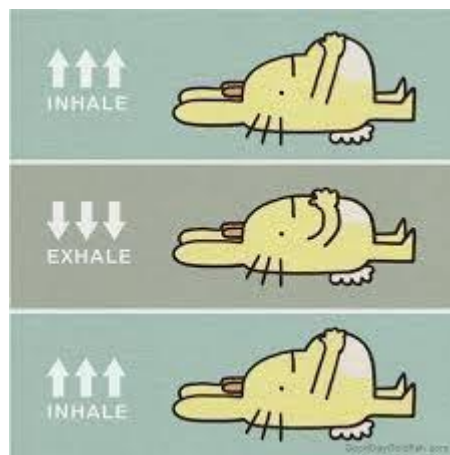
We need to be kind and use words to explain how we are feeling in a calm way so that other people can help us. We can do this by saying what has happened, how it has made you feel and what you would like to happen instead.

We also need to find ways of calming ourselves down when we feel our Red Beast waking up. We need to help our Red Beast fall asleep again.

We could do this by:

1. Having a box of things to help calm us down.
2. Doing some special breathing and telling ourselves that we can calm down.
3. Doing something active like playing outside or listening to music and dancing.

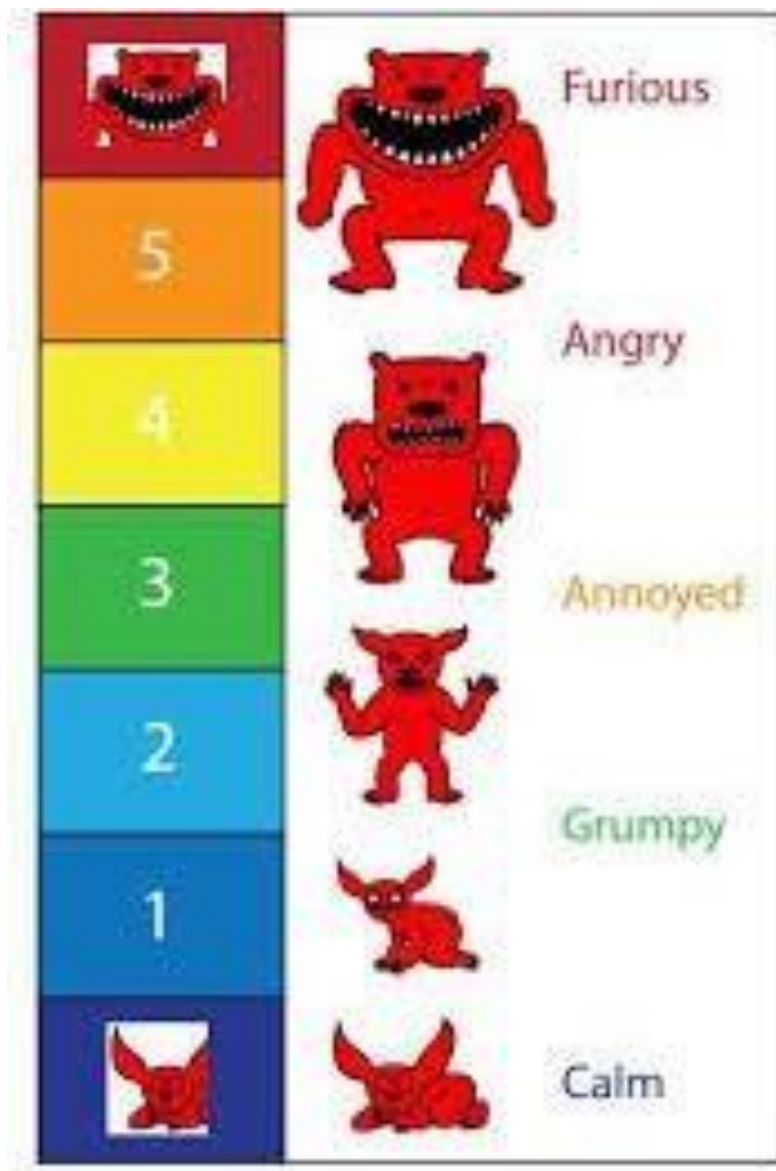
When we have learned to calm our Red Beast, everyone will be so proud of you and you will probably get a big hug or a reward instead of getting into trouble.



Where are you on the Red Beast scale?

Maybe you want to cut out the scale and keep it in your pocket so that you can show an adult how you are feeling.

Or maybe you could put it on the fridge or somewhere at home so that you can show how you are feeling there too.



I Can Calm Down

<p>Breathe in and out slowly 10 times</p> <p>Take deep breath</p> 	<p>Get a drink of water</p> 	<p>Talk to an adult</p> 	<p>Draw a picture about it</p> 
<p>Write your feelings down</p> 	<p>Do some stretches</p> 	<p>Push the wall</p> 	<p>Think about your happy place</p> 
<p>Read a book</p> 	<p>Do some colouring</p> 	<p>Listen to music</p> 	<p>Colour count</p>  <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>How many blue things can you count? Yellow things? Red things?</p> </div>

My calm down place is.....At home if I start to feel angry, I can go to my calm space. I can choose one or more of my calm down activities until I feel calm again. Later I can talk about what made me feel angry. What could I do next time?

Ideas for The Calm Down Box

- Stress ball to squeeze
- Bubbles to help regulate breathing
- Bubble Wrap
- String or wool to thread pasta tubes, beads or buttons etc.
- Colouring book and pencils
- Calming music
- Drawing pad
- Lavender bag
- Shells and pebbles
- Kaleidoscope
- Different fabric squares
- Putty
- Water snake
- Weighted pillow
- Soft toy
- Chew toy
- Reading/picture/pop-up book
- Slinky