

## Angry feelings

We all feel angry sometimes and often for a good reason! Children sometimes experience uncontrolled anger which can be harmful, but we can work together to manage your child's feelings and so prevent this happening.

Your child needs reassurance that anger is **not** a bad emotion. However it may become a problem if when they become angry they:

- ⊗ Hit or physically hurt other people
- ⊗ Shout at people
- ⊗ Break things
- ⊗ Lose control
- ⊗ Wind people up



In order to help manage a child's anger we use a variety of strategies. Hopefully by working together and using the same strategies this will give continuity and help your child make the right choices.

The following information can help us to change behaviours. These strategies are known as Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT).

1. We first need to find out what triggers a child's anger and then separate the thoughts, feelings and behaviours associated with it.
2. Then we need to find out what they were thinking and look at how this made them feel.
3. Finally we need to look at the consequences of their behaviour in order to build their self-esteem and feeling of self-worth.

Most recent developments in neuroscience have shown that the brain can be trained to change learnt behaviours. It takes a lot of patience and time but it can have a huge impact on the happiness of your child.

### **At Thistly we have found that the following strategies work:**

- Help your child recognise their emotions. Encourage them to name what they are feeling from an early age and let them know that whatever they are feeling is ok. Once they recognise anger, you can teach them ways to manage it so that they won't hurt themselves or others.
- Help your child understand their triggers. They might be particularly sensitive to certain things more than others. Knowing our triggers puts us in charge of our emotions and provides greater understanding.
- Teach reflection so that they can decide on the person that they want to become.
- Use breathing to get back in control. Slower and deeper breathing floods the brain with oxygen which releases calming chemicals. This process reduces angry feelings and our intelligent, more rational thinking, kicks back in.

- Try it and see. Give your child as many options as possible to see what works best for them. They then have their own anger tool kit for whenever it is needed.

These strategies are often very effective:

- Count to 10, 100, 1000! This gives them the time for their angry feelings to ease. It also activates their smarter brain by having to focus on something else and distracts their dialogue from negative self-talk.
- Do exercise - go for a walk. This gives the brain the time to get things under control and get away from the situation that may have triggered the anger.
- Suggest that your child tells the person what they did to make them angry. If they are still angry when they do this, people will only hear their aggression and not the message behind it, which is most important.
- Let the angry energy out! Punch a pillow, try to rip a magazine, telephone directory, stomp around, anything that is safe and won't hurt them or others.
- Talk to people. This helps with reflection and seeing what worked and what didn't work this time so they are more prepared for what to do next time.
- Scream loudly. This turns emotional distress into a physical expression and moves the anger onwards. However, depending where a child is, this may not always be appropriate!
- Give your child the freedom to cry. This releases stress which will make them feel drained and tired. Let them sleep if they can. Things nearly always look and feel better when they wake up.
- Help your child write things down. Expressing their anger at a person or a situation in words can help hugely. It is the process of getting the angry feelings out. They are allowed to think whatever they think; their thoughts and their feelings are really important. That way they don't need to hurt others when they are angry, they don't always need to know what they felt puts us in charge of our emotions. (The Blink Book2 – Anger Andrea Chatten)

At Thistly, if your child's anger is affecting their social or emotional well-being, our trained staff will work with them in a variety of ways to overcome their difficulties.

We will be happy to discuss your concerns over the phone or meet up with you at an agreed time.

