

CHAPTER TWELVE — DISCIPLINE AND THE ANGRY CHILD

He who hassles gets hassled.

Many situations will arise concerning disruptive behavior and the child who is angry. We should try to distinguish between anger and aggression. Anger is a temporary emotional state caused by frustration while aggression is often an attempt to hurt a person or to destroy property.

Handling children's anger can be distressing, draining, and puzzling to teachers and principals. Many times we must learn to accept the child's feelings and try to channel and direct them to constructive ends.

Strong feelings cannot be denied, and angry outbursts should not always be viewed as a sign of a serious problem. It should be recognized and treated with respect.

Anger may be caused by the following:

1. A defense to avoid painful feelings.
2. May be associated with failure.
3. Low self-esteem.
4. Feeling of isolation.
5. Anxiety about situations over which the child has no control. (8:1)

One could list at least one hundred more causes that could cause a child to become angry, but the idea here was to give you a list of the most frequent causes.

How do we respond to the angry child? Some of the

following suggestions for dealing with the angry child are given by Fritz Redl and David Wineman. They should be considered helpful ideas and not seen as a "bag of tricks":

1. Catch the child being good. Tell the child what behaviors please you. Respond to positive efforts and reinforce good behavior.
2. Deliberately ignore inappropriate behavior that can be tolerated. This doesn't mean that you should ignore the child, just the behavior. The "ignoring" has to be planned and consistent. Even though this behavior may be tolerated, the child must recognize that it is inappropriate.
3. Provide physical outlets and other alternatives. It is important for children to have opportunities for physical exercise and movement, both at home and at school.
4. Manipulate the surroundings. Aggressive behavior can be encouraged by placing children in tough, tempting situations. We should try to plan the surroundings so that certain things are less apt to happen.
5. Use closeness and touching. Move physically closer to the child to curb his/her angry impulse. Young children are often calmed by having an adult nearby.
6. Express interest in the child's activities. Children naturally try to involve adults in what they are doing, and the adult is often annoyed at being bothered.
7. Be ready to show affection. Sometimes all that is needed for any angry child to regain control is a sudden hug or other impulsive show of affection. Children with serious

emotional problems, however, may have trouble accepting affection.

8. Ease tension through humor. Kidding the child out of a temper tantrum or outburst offers the child an opportunity to "save face." However, it is important to distinguish between facesaving humor and sarcasm or teasing ridicule.
9. Appeal directly to the child. Tell him/her how you feel and ask for consideration.
10. Explain situations. Help the child understand the cause of a stressful situation. We often fail to realize how easily young children can begin to react properly once they understand the cause of their frustration.
11. Use physical restraint. Occasionally a child may lose control so completely that he has to be physically restrained or removed from the scene to prevent him from hurting himself or others. This may also "save face" for the child.
12. Encourage the child to see his strengths as well as his weaknesses. Help the child to see that he can reach his goals.
13. Use promises and rewards. Promises of future pleasure can be used both to start and to stop behavior. This approach should not be compared with bribery. We must know what the child likes - what brings him pleasure - and we must deliver on our promises.
14. Say "NO!" Limits should be clearly explained and enforced. Children should be free to function within those limits.
15. Tell the child that you accept his/her angry feelings, but offer other suggestions for expressing them. Teach children to put

their angry feelings into words rather than fists.

16. Build a positive self-image. Encourage the child to see himself as a valued and valuable person.
17. Use punishment cautiously. There is a fine line between punishment that is hostile toward a child and punishment that is educational.
18. Model appropriate behavior. Parents and teachers should be aware of the powerful influence of their actions on a child's or group's behavior.
19. Teach children to express themselves verbally. Talking helps a child have control and thus reduces acting out behavior. (8:2-4)

Good discipline includes creating an atmosphere of quiet firmness, clarity, and conscientiousness, while using reasoning. Bad discipline involves punishment which is unduly harsh and inappropriate, and it is often associated with verbal ridicule and attacks on the child's integrity.

These points could also be used in trying to solve your everyday discipline problems.

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