

Steps Teachers Can Take To Help Children Express Angry Feelings



These steps incorporate ideas from the **RETHINK Anger-Management Model** that have been simplified to help young children begin to recognize and express anger appropriately. Remember that children under 3 or 4 years of age are not yet developmentally ready to be taught by this model.

1. **Help** the child recognize that he or she is angry, and help them calm down. Tell the child in a firm, normal voice, "STOP and CALM DOWN." Suggest a way to do it. (Go to the chair and sit. Take five deep breaths. Start counting softly to 25. Say over and over: Be cool, be calm. Go to the bathroom and splash your face with cold water.) Help the child notice that he or she has been able to calm down.
2. **Ask** the child, when calmed down, to think. Ask the child to tell you why he or she is angry.
3. **Listen**, calmly, respectfully, and without interrupting to really hear what the child is saying about why he or she is angry.
4. **Help** the child empathize with the point of view of the other person (you or another child involved).
5. **Integrate** a respectful, caring response into your reaction that tells the child you understand how he or she feels. ("Jennifer, why are you so angry at Jake?" Stoop down. Gently touch Jennifer on the shoulder. "Can you tell me?")
6. **Decide** on the best choice course of action. After the incident, when here is time, role-play with the child what to do the next time he or she is angry. The skills you should expect will differ with the age and maturity of the child. It may be to (1) walk away; (2) get an adult to help; (3) assertively use an "I message" to say why you are angry, then walk away; (4) go to a special place to calm down.
7. **Reestablish** the relationship with the child. Let him or her know it is the destructive behavior that needs work, that the child is still valued. It is the out-of-control angry behavior that is bad, not the child. Praise or reward any efforts or improvement the child makes in calming down and in making better choices of what to do when angry.