

WHEN YOUR CHILD IS ANGRY

Like adults, children get angry sometimes. They may not get angry about the same things we do, and the things that anger them may sometimes seem insignificant to us, but their anger is just as real as ours.

It's important to listen to and affirm children's anger. Don't dispute or discount their experiences or feelings. It's vital to children's self-esteem that their feelings be accepted unconditionally, without debate. If a child feels angry, there is a reason, even if we as adults may not be able to see it or agree with it. To deny a child's anger or make light of it is a mistake. Children may learn from this that they can't trust themselves or their feelings, and they may come to think that their feelings don't matter.

The best way to affirm and acknowledge your child's anger is simply to reflect back the information that the child gives you.

Instead of saying:

- "What are you getting so upset about?"
- "It's not that bad!"
- "Good girls/boys don't get angry."
- "You shouldn't feel that way."
- "You shouldn't say that."
- "It's not nice to get angry."
- "You have nothing to be angry about."
- "Maybe Santa Claus is watching and you won't get any toys for Christmas!"
- "You don't know what real problems are."
- "I hate you too!"

Try saying:

- "I'm glad you can tell me how you feel!"
- "You are really angry right now!"
- "Everyone gets angry sometimes."
- "Anger is a part of living."
- "You are feeling very frustrated."
- "Wow, you sure are angry."
- "That happens sometimes."

Often this is all children need to work through and even get over their anger—a caring adult who takes the time to listen and say, "I understand how you feel and it's okay."

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