



St Helena
Government

Inclusion Service

ANGER, RAGE AND EXPLOSIVE OUTBURSTS: DEALING WITH EXPLOSIVE BEHAVIOR

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Everyone, children and adults alike, gets angry at times. Anger is a strong emotion that can range from mild irritation to moderate rage in a matter of seconds.

We are naturally disturbed by a child's rage. As a result, we may try to appease our children by giving in to their demands or avoiding certain situations in order to quell their rage. Alternatively, we can use intimidation or punishment to put a stop to the rage. In short, we are irritated by their rage.

Similarly, when your teen is angry and screaming at you, many of us are tempted to fight and scream louder in order to "win" the argument. But what does that accomplish? It's natural to want to push back or defend yourself if someone irritates you or provokes you in some way. We unconsciously internalise this message, which becomes a parent's mantra: "I'm not going to let my own child walk all over me."

"In addition to prolonging the argument- and encouraging your child to keep it going - yelling back also means that you're giving up your power"

The temptation to yell or fight back is so strong that it can be difficult to resist. Giving in to that temptation can be costly in ways you may not have realised.

WHAT'S IN THIS MONTH'S ISSUE:

- Why Anger, Rage and Explosive Outbursts?
- The Brain of an Angry Teen.
- Tips for Parents in Dealing with explosive behavior.
- Tips for Teachers in Dealing with explosive behavior.

The next issue will focus on mindset shift: how do we get our learners to shift from a fixed perspective to a growth mindset?

When you yell or scream at your child, you are essentially challenging them and effectively "upping the ante." Simply put, it escalates the argument. To make matters worse, you are relinquishing power; you and your child are now on the same level, which means you are equal. You are engaging in the exact behaviour, and as long as you do so, you will continue to receive it from your child.

The truth is that your child will encounter situations that will make them angry. You can't stop the triggers, but you can give your child the tools they need to understand their anger and deal with it appropriately and rationally.

"You can't expect someone to control their emotions- you can only ask them to control their behavior."

The Brain of an Angry Teen

First and foremost, it is critical to recognise that, while adolescents may engage in adult-like behaviours or attempt to act like adults, they do not have adult brains. Adolescent brains are still developing and will continue to do so until they are in their early to mid-twenties. Given this, it is unreasonable to expect children to behave in the same way that adults do.



Indeed, children frequently perceive things very differently than we do, due in part to faulty or distorted thinking. The danger arises when they use this distorted thinking to justify or rationalise their rage. Remember that faulty thinking is not something that someone does on purpose. Rather, these are automatic thoughts, such as "it's not my fault I broke the door, I was angry at my brother." "My teacher is a jerk; why should I listen to her?" If we all pay attention to our own thoughts, I am confident that we will discover that we all have faulty thinking from time to time, because it is not limited to children.

So, what can parents do when confronted with a supernova of rage? Here are six pointers you can start using right away.

1. Don't try to control your child's emotions: it's obvious that you can't—and that's okay. Emotions are normal; we all experience them. You can, however, expect your child to control their behaviour. It is normal and healthy for your child to be angry from time to time, as long as that anger is expressed appropriately. So, instead of asking, "How do I keep my child from becoming angry?" Instead, ask yourself, "How can I get my child to behave appropriately when they are angry?"

2. Try to keep your emotions in check: a child's rage will frequently trigger a parent's own emotions. When people are angry, how do you usually handle it? Some people are extremely uncomfortable with anger; it causes them anxiety and fear. For those of us who grew up in homes where anger was synonymous with yelling and danger, your child's rage may press some emotional buttons. If you are unaware of your own issues, you may respond in ways that are harmful to your child, such as giving in to their wishes or yelling back. Take a deep breath and a mental step back if you find yourself experiencing intense emotion; understanding where you are with your ability to control your emotions can give you empathy for where your child is in developing this skill. It is not simple; it requires discipline and practise.

3. Avoid escalation: Make certain that your responses do not exacerbate the situation. You are not giving in just because you choose not to argue with your child. Allow your child some space and time to relax. It is acceptable to wait for the consequences if they are screaming at you. The time to say, "That's disrespectful!" "You've been grounded!" is not in the midst of an emotional storm! When things have calmed down, you can always hold your child accountable.

4. Teach your child to recognise physical signs of anger, such as stomach clenching, a feeling of tension, flushing, and clenching teeth. When we are angry, we may unconsciously hold our breath. If your child recognises these warning signs early on, they will be able to prevent their anger from escalating into rage. "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," the saying goes.

5. Remember that emotion is not the same as behaviour: the problem is not the anger itself, but the behaviour that follows. You can validate your child's emotions while addressing the problematic behaviour. You could tell your child: "I understand you were angry when I said you couldn't go to your friend's house. Sometimes there will be rules or limits that may frustrate you, but breaking things won't change that rule or limit and will only end in a consequence for that behavior." Then help your child identify positive ways they can express their emotions.

6. Managing Explosive Rage: Some parents are concerned because their child's anger is out of the ordinary. Know that even if your child displays explosive rage, you can use the suggestions above to deescalate a situation. If your child's anger is out of control, you should seek counselling. Even if your child declines to attend, you can go yourself for support and guidance. Whatever level of rage your child displays, the fact remains that they are responsible for managing that emotion. Remember that this is a learning experience. It won't happen overnight, but with consistent support and encouragement, you can help your child improve their coping skills.

Explosive children require calm and confident parents. It can be difficult for parents to learn how to handle aggressive and angry children, but consistent behavioural approaches can make a big difference. These approaches assist children in developing the skills needed to regulate their own behaviours. Similarly, children express their anger, rage, and explosive outbursts at school, so sharing tips on how to manage such behaviours at school will be beneficial.



Here are six tips for teachers on how to manage and deescalate explosive behaviour in the classroom:

1. Recognize that anger is perfectly normal and healthy for children when expressed appropriately. Recognize learners' feelings and assure them that they are valid and that you understand. Learners should understand that being angry is normal, but that there is a proper way to deal with the emotions. Stress the importance of expressing anger in a calm and respectful manner.
2. Try to avoid situations in the classroom that are likely to cause frustration or anger. Make certain, for example, that the tasks and expectations are appropriate for the learners' age and abilities.
3. Take the initiative. Before an angry outburst occurs, discuss with the class acceptable and unacceptable ways of dealing with frustrating situations. When a problem arises, it is more difficult for learners to consider better ways to deal with their emotions.
4. Encourage learners to verbally express their anger. They can express their dissatisfaction verbally rather than physically.

5. Encourage an angry learner to "cool off" by walking away. This method can assist the learner avoid allowing their anger to overcome them. Create a cool down chair or spot in the classroom where young children can feel comfortable while calming themselves; for older learners, where appropriate, allow them to see the Pastoral team in your school.

6. Applaud the child for using problem-solving and anger-management strategies. When a child reacts appropriately to a situation, inform them. Recognising both positive and negative behaviours is critical.

Finally from me in this month's issue;

"Never respond to an angry person with a fiery comeback, even if he deserves it...Don't allow his anger to become your anger."

— Bohdi Sanders,