

Tips for Parents of Primary Age and Pre-teenage Children

- Give special time to children when you are sharing a task, without criticism or judgement. This is very effective in helping children feel valued and emotionally secure;
- Often, it is more effective to provide small rewards for good behaviour than to punish inappropriate behaviours (provided safety is maintained). Rewards can take many forms from a simple, "Well done, I really liked the way you..." to star charts and treats;
- Have clear rules and boundaries - explain them, and the reasons for them, to the child;
- Make it clear to the child what you did and did not like about their behaviour;
- When punishment is needed it will be most effective when:
 - It is clearly associated with the behaviour you want to change;
 - It is close in time to the event (try not to let punishments run on into the next day - have a fresh start);
 - It is consistently applied - research has shown that punishment does not have to be severe to be effective but it must be the same each time the behaviour occurs.
- Wait until you are both calm before you sit down and talk about angry outbursts;
- Avoid making promises or threats that you can't or don't intend to carry out;
- Listen to and value their point of view, even if you don't agree with it;
- Respond calmly when explaining your point of view;
- Teach your child to ask for help with difficult tasks before frustration sets in;
- Ignore mild anger if it will not escalate and is safe to do so;
- Where safe, allow children to sort out their own battles, but keep an ear open;
- Allow children to make mistakes and help them to learn from them;
- Help children to learn to wait;
- Stay calm - demonstrate ways of expressing anger that are not destructive;
- Label the behaviour you do not like, rather than the child;
- Provide a consistent approach to dealing with difficult behaviours;
- With older children, negotiation becomes more of a tool - allow them to make a choice but ensure that you would be happy with either option (win/win solution).

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Edited and abridged from Faupel, Herrick, Sharp

As children get older, it is easier to discuss their feelings with them. Being able to identify the reasons for angry outbursts is the first step to reducing them. One difficulty for children is understanding social relationships, both at home and at school. It is important to encourage children to learn negotiating skills in arguments with friends and family and not to intervene too quickly for them. As children become more able to master new skills effectively, it can sometimes be difficult for them not to expect themselves to get everything 'right' first time. It is important that children learn that getting things 'wrong' is an important part of learning and does not change their value or worth - in fact, persevering with a challenge is a very worthy attribute.

All children, whatever their age, need to feel secure both physically and emotionally. Emotional security becomes increasingly complex as children get older, especially as they head towards the teenage years. As adults, we can see the 'bigger picture' whereas children are often only interested in what they want at that particular moment - we sometimes have to 'be cruel to be kind'. Being firm with children *is* being kind to them, whereas giving-in will create unhappy, insecure children. It is important that we provide clear rules for children and that we make them explicit. Children also need us to be consistent where possible in order to be sure that we mean what we say. It is helpful too, if all of the significant adult in the child's life are doing the same thing. When schools and families are working together, children have a better chance of changing their behaviour. They also feel secure and confident in the knowledge that all important adults think broadly the same way.

It is important that adults act as role models for children, teaching them how to express their anger in a non-destructive way, by being calm and assertive. Provided the situation remains safe, it may be appropriate to ignore angry outbursts or inappropriate behaviour but this will only be effective if the child is given lots of praise, attention or even a treat when they are behaving well.

When punishment is needed, it is important that it is timely, appropriate and that it is clear what it is for in order that a child understands what they have done wrong. *The severity of the punishment is far less important than the consistency with which it is applied.* It is also important to help the child maintain their self-esteem by making it clear that it is the *behaviour that is inappropriate* and not that the child themselves are 'bad' in some way. As children get older, particularly as they approach adolescence, they are very concerned about 'fairness' so it becomes increasingly important to be consistent in our responses and to discuss the reasons for the limitations we impose. A major source of conflict between parents and older children is poor communication - misunderstanding about intentions and motives.