

Stress and Anger Management Skills



Strengthening Families
Program by Dr. Karol Kumpfer



- Use stress-reducing techniques and effective anger management skills
- Recognize emotional triggers and reprogram new responses
- Make goals to reduce anger outbursts; give rewards

FAMILY GOALS:

1. Fill out your “Managing Stress” charts; choose two new behaviors to reduce stress; choose and practice one “Relaxation Response.”
2. Discuss, post, and practice the “Tracking and Taming the Anger Monster” handouts.
 - a) Make goals to reduce anger outbursts.
 - b) Using pretend situations, practice positive responses for tense or recurring situations.
 - c) Reward appropriate behaviors.
 - d) Use “Step Out of Anger” game.
3. Use the “Emotion Coaching” sheet to help your child identify and discuss feelings.

FAMILY FUN:

Practice using the “Step Out of Anger” game to music to reduce recurring anger outbursts.

POWER PHRASE:

“Each of us can become a peacemaker by re-programming our anger habits with pro-social behaviors.”



Managing Stress

a) What causes stress, what it does to you, and what to do about it

When our brain perceives a threatening or stressful situation, it triggers chemicals that shut down body systems not needed for instant survival (like our immune system), raises blood pressure and heart rate, and diverts blood from our brain to our large muscles. While some stress is positive, in helping us become energized to finish demanding tasks, too much stress is negative. When our body remains in a negative stressed “high alert to danger mode” for long periods, it impairs our health. It also makes us more likely to respond aggressively to people or things that stress us. Because stress is triggered by our thoughts and circumstances, the more we take control of these, the more we are able to reduce negative stress. Use the chart below to help you and your children identify stressors, choose reducers, and write your plans to reduce stress in the spaces provided. Don’t try too many things at once; that is stressful!

Things That Cause Stress

- Negative thoughts about self/others
- Friendship problems
- Rejection
- Health problems
- Fighting, hostility within family
- Too many activities
- Too high expectations
- Too many demands
- Poor time management skills
- Being late
- Procrastination
- Disorderly home
- Not enough sleep
- Poor nutrition
- Lack of exercise
- Divorce of parents
- Changing schools
- Being bullied at school or online
- Excess time on social media
- Unsafe neighborhood
- Lying/dishonesty
- Financial problems
- Overspending; no budget
- Difficult co-worker
- Demanding relatives
- Loved one’s death
- Holding resentment, grudges
- Poor relationship skills
- Too many responsibilities
- Violent video games or music
- Too much “screentime” (computer, game screen, TV, smartphone, other smart devices)

Exercise to Reduce Stress

Exercise reduces stress by triggering “pleasure chemicals” in our brain such as serotonin and dopamine that make us feel calm and happy. It reduces anxiety, which affects mood, vitality, alertness, and feelings of well-being. Fifteen minutes of vigorous, heart-pumping exercise helped kids focus and be less “antsy” for two to four hours afterwards.

Plans to Reduce Stress

(Begin with a couple of easy ones)

Stressor _____

What I will do: _____

Stressor _____

What I will do: _____

Stressor _____

What I will do: _____

Eat Healthy to Reduce Stress

- Eat as much fresh, unprocessed food as possible. Frozen is next best to fresh.
- Meals and snacks should consist mostly of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, and some lean protein.
- For healthy protein eat: All kinds of beans—dry beans cheaper than canned; eggs; low fat cheese, cottage cheese; nuts; tuna, sardines, or other fish.
- Eat whole, unprocessed grains in breads, cereals, or on their own.
- Avoid pre-prepared foods with lots of ingredients you can’t pronounce.
- Avoid corn sweeteners, high salt, and trans fats / hydrogenated oils.
- Drink water, 100 % juice, or skim milk.

Stress Reducers

- Problem solve _____ (list what)
- Learn new skills _____ (list skill)
- Make new routines
- Change attitudes
- Be honest
- Eat healthy
- Exercise daily (min. 15 minutes)
- Get adequate sleep—before midnight is best
- Avoid caffeine
- Avoid alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs
- Learn relaxation techniques—deep breathing, muscle relaxation, mental imaging, mindfulness
- Rehearse situations beforehand
- Talk to a friend
- Be assertive; state feelings in polite, but firm ways
- Learn practical coping skills, e.g., break large tasks into small ones
- Replace negative self-talk
- Stop procrastinating
- Live within a budget
- Don’t demand perfection from yourself
- Listen to soothing music
- Work on fun hobbies
- Be with a pet
- Express gratitude
- Forgive others; give up revenge
- Limit screentime
- Limit social media
- Be kind and compassionate

Sleep Enough to Reduce Stress

Lack of sleep causes stress, irritability, and depression in most people. In one study, teens who regularly went to bed after midnight had a 24 percent higher risk of depression and suicidal thoughts than those who went to bed before 10:00 p.m. Teens who slept only five hours a night were 71 percent more likely to suffer depression.

Managing Stress

b) Teach your body to relax during stressful times



When our brain perceives a physical or psychological “threat” it activates hormones that prepare our body to run or fight—or sometimes “freeze.” These stress hormones instantly raise blood pressure, heart rate, and produce a chemical “rush.” When the brain perceives the threat is gone, it triggers a “relaxation response” that immediately returns all body processes to normal. When feeling stressed, we can trigger our own “relaxation response” using the Instant Stress Busters from Lesson 1 and the relaxation skills below. Like all new skills, practice makes perfect! Have everyone in your family choose one; master it, and use it whenever they feel stressed.

Tense and Relax

When you’re under stress, your muscles have a higher level of resting tension that causes fatigue. As you tense and then relax your muscles, the resting tension level drops. Even children can do this. Start by sitting comfortably, with good posture, hands in your lap, and then tense and relax each set of muscles. Begin with your feet, take a calming nose breath, hold the tension for five seconds, and then as you exhale say the word, “Relax.” Imagine the tension flowing out of the muscles. Then tighten and release the muscles, one set a time, in the legs, stomach, back, shoulders, arms, hands, neck, and face, including jaw muscles and forehead. This is also a wonderful relaxer to do lying in bed to help get to sleep. You can even use a short “whole-body-tense-and-relax” version while sitting in traffic.

Trigger a Relaxation Response

A “relaxation response” is the opposite of our body’s fight or flight response. We can trigger our body’s relaxation response with a simple breathing exercise that stimulates our vagus nerve. This nerve runs from our brain to our gut. As we take a deep breath and hold it for a few seconds, the pressure of our full lungs and our diaphragm press against our vegus nerve. This triggers neurons that lie underneath the gut lining to release serotonin, a calming neurochemical. This only takes a few minutes; and it can be done anytime—even standing up.

1. Sit or lie down; close your eyes.
2. Place one hand on your belly so you can feel it move.
3. Use your abdominal muscles to push your belly out, while taking a slow, deep breath through your nose. Using a count of four, fill your lungs completely full.
4. Hold that breath for six seconds.
5. Exhale very slowly through your lips to a count of eight. As you exhale, let your abdominal muscles push your belly button in to your spine.
6. End with two full, deep breaths; and relax all your other muscles.
7. Repeat steps 3–6 two more times. Practice at night and morning for better health and inner peace.

Imaginative Countdown Relaxation

PREPARE: Get comfortable in a chair and close your eyes. Imagine you are standing alone at the top of a beautiful winding stairway. It’s your private stairway, and you feel comfortable there. Visualize the steps in front of you. See the handrail. Imagine yourself stepping very slowly down the stairway as you count slowly backward from ten to zero. As you silently say each number, beginning with ten, breathe in deeply through your nose; hold it; and then breathe out. As you count, imagine you are stepping down the stairway. With each count, move yourself slowly down the steps deeper and deeper. As you step, you will relax more deeply as you go deeper and deeper into a state of profound relaxation. When you reach zero, imagine you have reached the bottom of the stairway. You then find you are in a place of perfect calm.

BEGIN COUNTDOWN: Ten, and take your first step. . . Nine, relaxing more deeply. . . Eight, deeper and deeper relaxation. . . Seven, gently walking down the stairs. . . Six, feel more and more relaxed. . . Five, deeper and deeper. . . Four, serene and calm. . . Three, very relaxed. . . Two, deeper and deeper. . . One, very, very profoundly relaxed. . . Zero, gently step off the bottom step into a perfectly relaxed and calm peace. Now, drift still deeper with five more breaths. Deeper and deeper. Feel that deeper relaxation all over and continue relaxing. Now, relaxing deeper and deeper, you should feel an emotional calm. . . tranquil and serene feelings. . . feelings of safe security. . . and a calm peace. Pause there.

Now, count from one to three. Silently say each number as you take a deep breath. When you reach three, open your eyes. You will be relaxed, peaceful and alert.

Managing Stress

c) Using a Stress Test* to recognize symptoms of too much stress



Besides too much stress causing physical symptoms like high blood pressure and insomnia, it can also cause changes in our emotions, attitudes, and productivity. In the chart below, put a check mark beside anything that you have noticed lately in yourself. If you have checked more than a few items, use our “Managing Stress” handout to identify your major sources of stress, and then find ways to reduce them. Be sure to use the basic Stress Reducers first which are: Problem Solving, Learning New Skills, Changing Attitudes, and setting up Positive Routines. Then make sure you consistently use the next three essential Stress Reducers: eat healthily, exercise daily, and get adequate sleep (7 ½–8 hours nightly; kids need 9–10 hours).

Test Your Stress

Check below for the symptoms of stress that you are feeling.

PHYSICAL	EMOTIONAL	ATTITUDINAL
<input type="checkbox"/> tired	<input type="checkbox"/> worry a lot	<input type="checkbox"/> empty feeling
<input type="checkbox"/> tense	<input type="checkbox"/> mood swings	<input type="checkbox"/> negative
<input type="checkbox"/> can't sleep	<input type="checkbox"/> bad dreams	<input type="checkbox"/> angry at self
<input type="checkbox"/> sleeps too much	<input type="checkbox"/> discouraged	<input type="checkbox"/> angry at others
<input type="checkbox"/> can't eat	<input type="checkbox"/> little joy	<input type="checkbox"/> apathy
<input type="checkbox"/> eat too much	<input type="checkbox"/> cry often	<input type="checkbox"/> unforgiving
<input type="checkbox"/> colds, headaches	<input type="checkbox"/> temper	<input type="checkbox"/> self-doubt
<input type="checkbox"/> muscle aches	<input type="checkbox"/> don't want to talk	<input type="checkbox"/> cynical attitude
<input type="checkbox"/> teeth grinding	<input type="checkbox"/> talk too much	<input type="checkbox"/> life meaningless
SOCIAL	THINKING	PRODUCTIVITY
<input type="checkbox"/> fewer friends	<input type="checkbox"/> forget things	<input type="checkbox"/> work piling up
<input type="checkbox"/> stay home more	<input type="checkbox"/> can't concentrate	<input type="checkbox"/> increased work absences
<input type="checkbox"/> angry at others	<input type="checkbox"/> mind wanders	<input type="checkbox"/> pressure at work
<input type="checkbox"/> feeling lonely	<input type="checkbox"/> confused	<input type="checkbox"/> can't finish on time
<input type="checkbox"/> manipulative	<input type="checkbox"/> think negatively	<input type="checkbox"/> procrastinate
<input type="checkbox"/> clam up	<input type="checkbox"/> feel bored	<input type="checkbox"/> work long hours

*Jansen, Paterson, & Blashko, 1993

Calm Anger by Rethinking Your “Stories”

Giving up angry, blaming thoughts helps us feel peace



You can change your emotional state, and thus the intensity of your anger, by being aware of what “stories” you are telling yourself about the things that trigger your anger. Question your thoughts about what happened to you and look for the part you played in the situation. (From *Loving What Is* by Byron Katie*)

What Are “Stories”?

Recurring anger usually comes from the “stories” we tell ourselves about things that happen to us, not from the things themselves. This allows us to feel victimized and to justify our anger, and prevents us from taking responsibility for our life and feelings.

In her book *Loving What Is* Byron Katie* states that angry feelings are caused by a thought that is untrue for us. Examine your stories by using this technique:

A. Fill in the six statements to the right (Part A).

B. For each statement, ask yourself the four questions in Part B. Meditate and listen as the answers surface.

C. Turn around your statements in Part A by putting yourself in the other person’s place, then find at least three specific, genuine examples of how each turnaround is true for you in this situation.

Example: “Paul doesn’t listen to me about his friends.”

Possible turnarounds:

- a. **To the self:** “I don’t listen to myself about my friends.”
- b. **To the other:** “I don’t listen to Paul about his friends.”
- c. **To the opposite:** “Paul does listen to me about his friends.”

The Judge-Your-Neighbor Worksheet — By Byron Katie

A. Begin by writing down the following:

1. Who angers, upsets, saddens, or disappoints you, and why? I am _____ with _____ because _____
emotion name
2. What is it in or about this situation that you don’t ever want to experience again? _____
3. How do you want the person to change? _____
4. What advice would you offer to them? _____ should/shouldn’t _____
name
5. In order for you to be happy, what do you need them to think, say, feel, or do? _____

B. Now ask yourself these four questions about the situation you’ve described above in Part A.

1. Are these thoughts true? (Yes or no. If no, move to question 3.) _____
2. Can you absolutely know that it’s true? _____
3. How do you react? What happens when you believe these thoughts? _____
4. Who would you BE without these thoughts? _____

C. Turn the thoughts around by stating their opposites and put your name in the other person’s place. See the example to the left.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

D. Let go of the negative thoughts each time they appear and feel freedom and peace.

Tracking and Taming the Anger Monster

a) Practice five key skills to reduce your anger



Anger is a natural emotion that is meant to alert and energize us when there is a need to change a harmful situation. Like a small flame shedding light on an injustice or problem, anger can trigger a pro-social response to a negative situation.

- **Pro-Social = good; eradicates crime or injustice; builds society**

Like any flame, anger can quickly rage out of control and become an anti-social and destructive force. Fueled by selfish or imagined grievances, faulty beliefs, and “hot thoughts,” untamed anger can damage health, destroy relationships, harm society.

- **Anti-social = selfish; seeks to dominate, punish, control; damages families, relationships, society**

Our Anger Monster responses are learned behaviors. We can change them by reprogramming our brain. We do this by “Tracking it” (noticing when and what triggers our anger), and “Taming it” using Reducers to calm our body’s stress response, Reminders to calm “hot thoughts;” and using “New Planned Responses” in aggravating situations.

Use the accompanying tracking sheet, “*Tracking and Taming the Anger Monster*,” with the concepts below. Evaluate yourself at the end of each day for at least a month to establish new patterns of awareness and improved responses to stress and anger. It works.

1) Note Triggers:

Notice and write down on the tracking sheet what makes you angry:

- External triggers (what others do)
- Internal triggers (what you say to yourself and how you interpret an event)

2) Note Cues:

Notice and write down your body’s physical response to anger-producing situations:

- Feel flushed or hot
- Pounding heart
- Knot in your throat or stomach
- Grinding teeth
- Sweaty palms
- Clenched fists and/or tense muscles
- Rapid breathing, etc.

3) Use Anger Reducers:

Write down which reducers relieve your tension and anger best for you:

- Calming breaths
- Backwards counting
- Calm, pleasant imaging
- Conscious, methodical, muscle relaxing
- Projecting and reflecting: “What could happen if I don’t control my anger?” “Why am I getting angry?” “Is it worth being angry about?”

4) Use Reminders:

Decide and write down words and phrases to cool your “hot thoughts:”

- Cool thoughts: “Just stay cool.” “It’s not worth it.” “I’m not getting hooked.”
- Problem-solving thoughts: “How can I solve this peacefully?”
- Questioning your motives thoughts: “Why am I getting angry? What’s behind this?”
- Control and escape thoughts: “I can walk away.” “It’s okay to take a time out.”
- Forward-looking thoughts: “What will happen if I let myself get angry?”
- Self-rewarding thoughts: “Good; I’m not yelling, I’m staying calm.”

5) Evaluate Response:

Write your response. Analyze anger out-bursts by answering these questions:

- How did I do? Was I aggressive, passive-aggressive, or assertive?
- Did I react to any faulty assumptions on how I “thought” people should act?
- Were my “grievances” real or imagined?
- Did selfishness or jealousy kindle my anger?
- What “hot thoughts” fed my anger?
- What were the consequences?
- Do I value the power of a peacemaker?
- What can I do different/better next time to get a better outcome?

Tracking and Taming the Anger Monster

b) Track your use of the five key skills to reduce your anger



- Below, write about a past event that triggered your anger and didn't go well. What was the trigger that made you angry? What were the Hot Thoughts you told yourself that made the anger worse? How did your body feel? Did you try a stress reducer? Did you try to calm your angry thoughts? Write a calm response that you could use next time instead of an angry response.
- Next, think of another anger event you might experience during the week and write it down in the "New anger event #1" section. Plan out a new, prosocial response and write it in the space under "Calm Response." During the week, track your progress using the reducers, reminders, and calm responses when you get angry. Write down any other anger events that happen.

	Trigger	Cue	Reducer	Reminder	Response
	What caused your anger? What were your angry thoughts?	What was your body's first sign of anger?	What stress reducer did you use?	What words did you think to calm your angry thoughts?	What did you do? What is a better response for next time?
PAST ANGER EVENT	Trigger:	<input type="checkbox"/> Flushed face <input type="checkbox"/> Tight throat <input type="checkbox"/> Clenched hands <input type="checkbox"/> Clenched teeth <input type="checkbox"/> Sweaty hands <input type="checkbox"/> Tight chest <input type="checkbox"/> Racing heart <input type="checkbox"/> _____	DEEP, CALM BREATH		Angry Response:
	Hot Thoughts:				Calm Response:

NEW ANGER EVENT #1	Trigger:	<input type="checkbox"/> Flushed face <input type="checkbox"/> Tight throat <input type="checkbox"/> Clenched hands <input type="checkbox"/> Clenched teeth <input type="checkbox"/> Sweaty hands <input type="checkbox"/> Tight chest <input type="checkbox"/> Racing heart <input type="checkbox"/> _____	DEEP, CALM BREATH		Angry Response:
	Hot Thoughts:				Calm Response:

NEW ANGER EVENT #2	Trigger:	<input type="checkbox"/> Flushed face <input type="checkbox"/> Tight throat <input type="checkbox"/> Clenched hands <input type="checkbox"/> Clenched teeth <input type="checkbox"/> Sweaty hands <input type="checkbox"/> Tight chest <input type="checkbox"/> Racing heart <input type="checkbox"/> _____	DEEP, CALM BREATH		Angry Response:
	Hot Thoughts:				Calm Response:

NEW ANGER EVENT #3	Trigger:	<input type="checkbox"/> Flushed face <input type="checkbox"/> Tight throat <input type="checkbox"/> Clenched hands <input type="checkbox"/> Clenched teeth <input type="checkbox"/> Sweaty hands <input type="checkbox"/> Tight chest <input type="checkbox"/> Racing heart <input type="checkbox"/> _____	DEEP, CALM BREATH		Angry Response:
	Hot Thoughts:				Calm Response:

Tracking and Taming the Anger Monster

c) Worksheet for kids



DEFINITIONS

Anger trigger: The thing that made you angry

Hot thought: A blaming thought that came into your mind immediately after the anger trigger occurred

Cue: A feeling in your body that lets you know you are starting to get angry, like a hot face or a tight throat

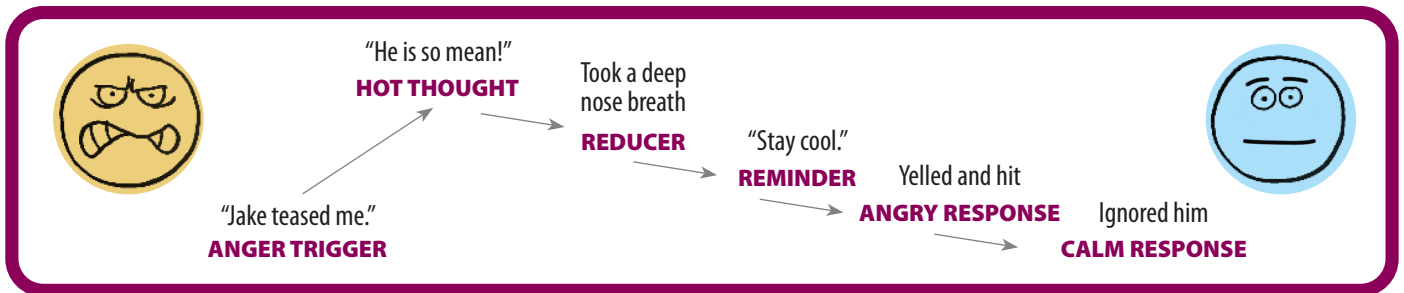
Reducer: Something you do to calm your anger response, like taking a big, deep breath through your nose

Reminder: A word or two that you can say to yourself to stay calm and help cool your hot thought

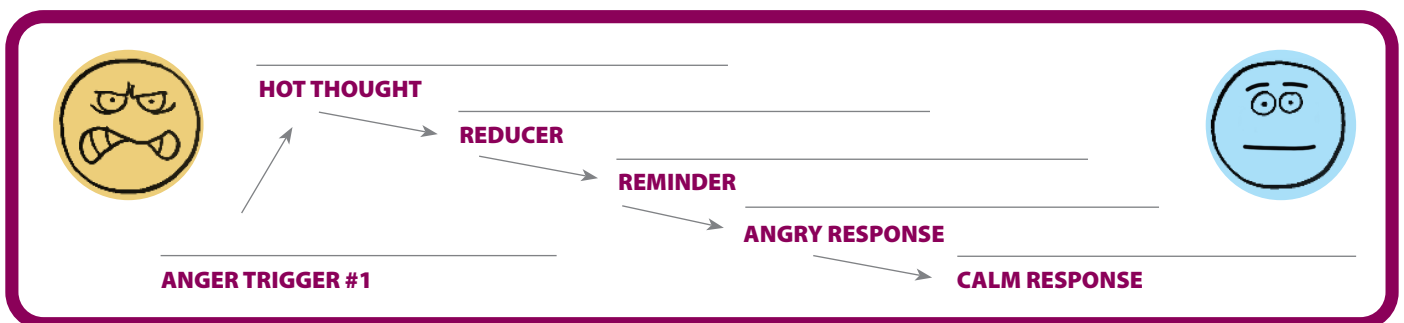
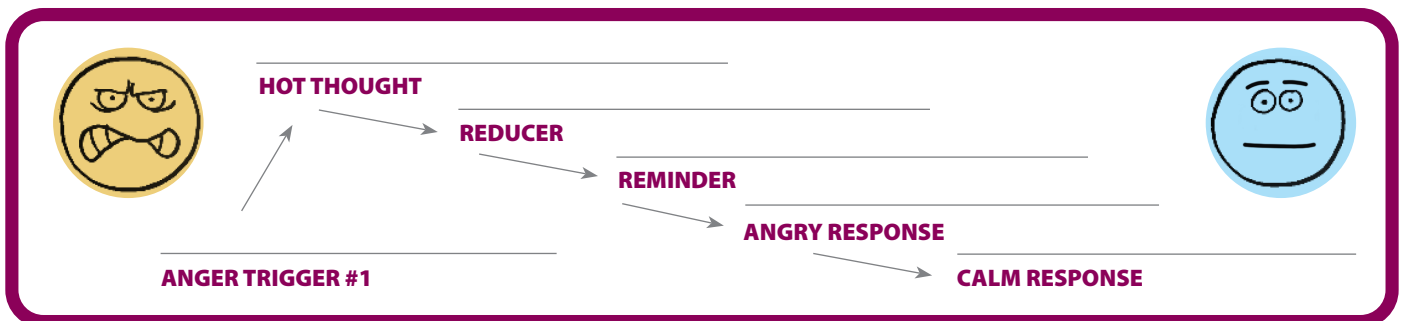
DIRECTIONS

- Using this handout, choose two things that usually make you angry, and work on them this week.
- Write the **anger trigger**, what you thought at that moment (**hot thought**), and how your body felt (**cue**).
- Decide on a "reducer" and a "reminder" and write them here.
- Then write how you would have reacted in the past.
- Decide if it was prosocial or antisocial.
- Decide and write how you could respond calmly the next time.
- Use this skill with other anger triggers to tame them all.

EXAMPLE



YOU TRY IT



Step Out of Anger

Instructions



5 Steps to Prepare

After filling out your “Tracking and Taming the Anger Monster” tracking sheet, choose a reoccurring anger situation to play this “Step Out of Anger” brain-reprogramming game. You will need a pen and the five “footprint” papers that follow this instruction sheet.

1. On paper #1 write the “Trigger”—a one-word description of the thing or grievance that triggered your anger.
2. On paper #2 write the “Cue”—the first body signal you feel when you begin to get angry (flushed cheeks, tight throat, fast heartbeat, etc.).
3. On paper #3 write:
 - a) “Reducer” (a physical act, like a deep nose breath) to calm your body’s anger response
 - b) “Reminder” word to calm “hot thoughts”
4. On paper #4 write one word to describe your “New Planned Response.”
5. On paper #5 write a word that means you are very pleased with yourself—like feeling a big confident win.

Place the papers on the floor about 8 inches apart and begin. As you step on each paper, think of and generate the feelings of each page.

Ready to Begin?

1. **Practice by stepping on paper #3.** Take a deep “Calming Breath” or other “Reducer;” think your “Reminder” word, and feel completely calm. Make a body pose that shows complete calm.
2. **Step on paper #4,** do a body pose that represents your “New Planned Response.” Visualize yourself doing it, and notice how good it feels.
3. **Step on paper #5** and do a body pose that represents feeling very pleased with yourself. Remember each of those body poses and feelings; then begin the “Step Out of Anger” exercise.
4. Begin by **stepping on paper #1** and thinking of the “Trigger.”
5. As soon as you have it in mind, **step on paper #2** “Cue” and let the feeling of anger just barely begin.
6. Immediately **step on paper #3.** Use a “Reducer;” do your calm pose, and think of your “Reminder” word. As soon as you are calm, step on the next paper.
7. **Step on paper #4,** do your pose, and visualize yourself successfully doing your “New Planned Response.”
8. Now **step on paper #5** and feel very pleased that you tamed your anger and used your new response.
9. **Repeat** this process going from paper #1 to paper #5 several times, getting faster each time. Then, do it again, **without the papers,** fluid—like in a dance.
10. Now, standing still, use only mental images and tiny hand motions or small foot movements that you could use if you became angry in a real-life situation. Repeat this micro-version several times daily until you can use your “New Planned Response” automatically in real life.



Step Out of Anger

Step one



1. Trigger

Identify, with a one-word description, the event that triggered your anger.



Write word here.

Step Out of Anger

Step two



2. Cue Identify the first body-signal that indicates you're getting angry.



Write body-signal here.

Step Out of Anger

Step three



3. Reducer, Reminder

Reducer:

Example: Deep calming breath to calm body's anger response

Reminder:

Positive self-talk to calm "hot thoughts"



Choose a Reducer

Write one word of positive self-talk to calm "hot thoughts"

Step Out of Anger

Step four



4. Response

Response:

"New Planned Response" to handle grievance



Write one word to describe your "New Planned Response."

Step Out of Anger

Step five



5. Pleased with Self

Put your body in a position showing that you are pleased with yourself.



Write how you feel here.

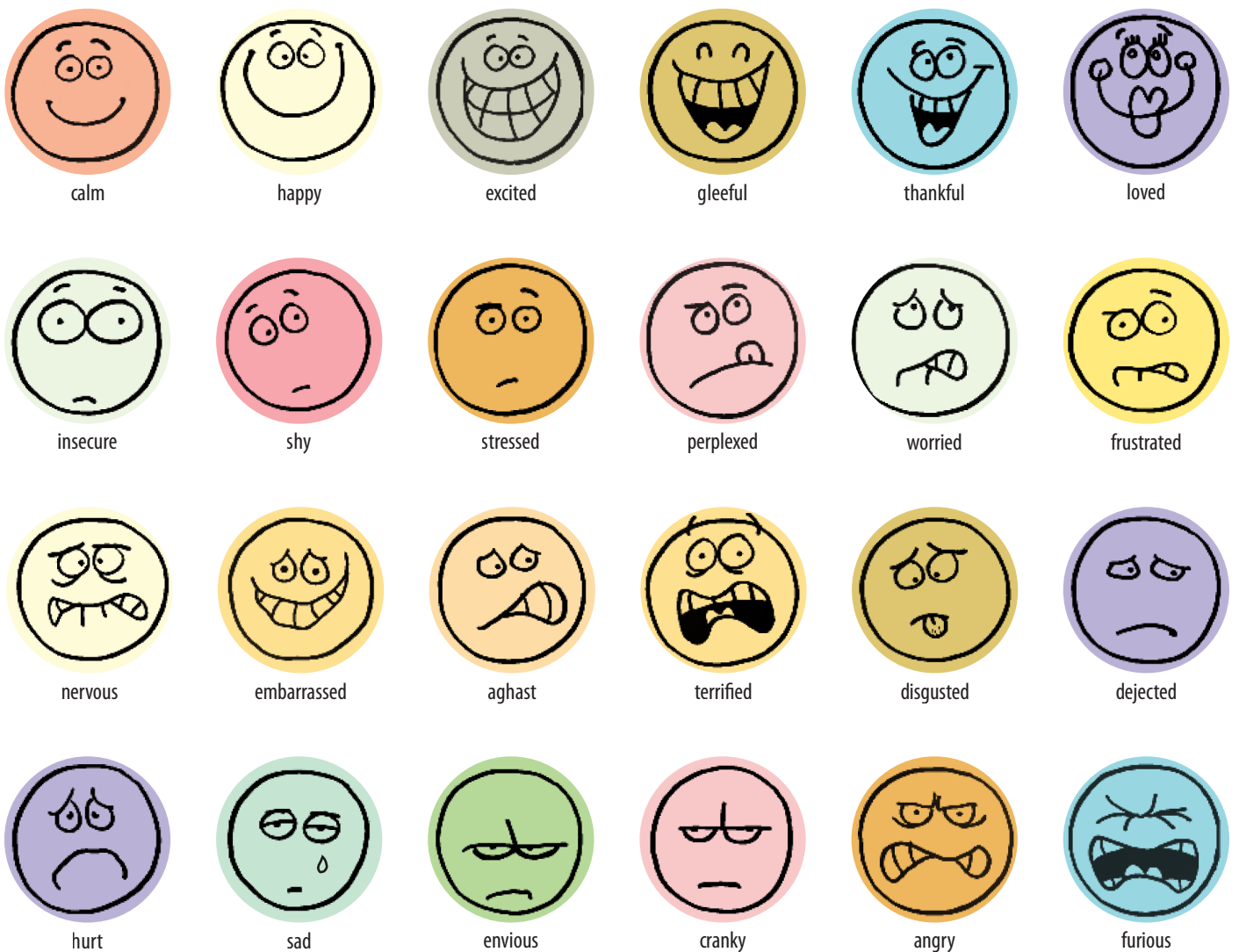
Face Up to Your Feelings

Emotion Coaching: Tips to raise emotionally resilient children



Research shows that when children have parents who regularly use emotion coaching with them, they have better physical health, get better grades in school, have fewer behavior problems, get along better with friends, and are more emotionally resilient and mentally healthy than children whose parents don't use the skill. * Use this handout and the steps below to help your child understand and label their emotions and express them in prosocial ways.

1. Use this handout to help your children identify and label their emotions. Have them repeat the words to describe how they are feeling, and give examples.
2. Help your children decide on prosocial ways to express their emotions; and set behavior limits so they know what is, and is not, acceptable.
3. Be aware and pay mindful attention to your child's feelings and emotions.
4. Take a deep breath and calm yourself when a child exhibits negative emotions, and recognize it as a teaching opportunity.
5. When children react in antisocial ways, privately review this chart with them. Have them describe a prosocial way to express their emotions instead. Have them practice it and compliment them on their progress.
6. Listen kindly and intently; seek to understand by paraphrasing what he/ she appears to be feeling, and validate your child's right to feel that way (even if you disagree). Explain that they need to express emotion in polite ways.



Family Agreement for Dealing with Conflict

How to handle disagreements to reduce conflict



Conflict arises when family members disagree on how things should be done in a family, or are hurt or offended by how they are treated. This worksheet is a tool to handle disagreements without becoming angry or insulting one another. Check the boxes that you, as a family, all agree with. Then sign your names committing to live and use these attitudes, skills, and tools when you disagree.

OUR FAMILY AGREEMENT FOR DEALING WITH CONFLICT

- WE AGREE that what we want most long term for our family is to have warm and loving relationships.**
- WE COMMIT to not say or do anything that would harm our goal of a happy family.**
- WE AGREE that when we have a disagreement or concern and we begin to feel angry or upset over it, we will choose a specific time to sit down together and discuss it.**
- WE AGREE to adopt the Strengthening Families Program attitudes of respect, kindness, generosity, patience, and peace in dealing with one another.**
- WHERE WE WILL GO TO TALK:** _____
- WHAT TOOLS WILL WE USE in our discussion?** (Checking all the SFP handouts below will give you the best chance of success).
 - Problem Solving Worksheet** (Lesson 5-2)
 - Win-Win Negotiation Worksheet** (Lesson 5-3)
 - Safe and Cool Conversations** (Lesson 2-14)
 - Three Easy Communication Skills** (Lesson 2-2, 2-3, 2-4)
 - The Listening Stick** (Lesson 2-5)
 - Banish Communication Boulders** (Lesson 2-7, 2-8, 2-9)
- WE AGREE that if we can't solve the disagreement, we will seek a neutral outside person to help us mediate the problem and not just give up and abandon the relationship.**

SIGNED: _____

Building Emotional Control

Train your mind to be calm and positive



Sometimes when people experience trauma, their brains become dysregulated and stay stuck in a negative, downward spiral. They may experience Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), where their brains overreact to stressors. Or, they may suffer from Attachment Disorder, which includes a faulty belief that no one care deeply about them. People who struggle with these traumas may misbehave to punish, get control, or prove they are unlovable so they won't have to be abandoned again. With brain dysregulation, people's minds can swirl with hot thoughts, self-hate, intense fear or anxiety, or negative stories of how others mistreated them, which they grow to believe.

If this sounds like you or someone in your family, Mindfulness Meditation can help change those attitudes and replace them with the skills below. Practicing these skills every day can help re-regulate the brain, which helps lessen pain, anxiety, and family conflict. Remember: people can only heal in a safe, secure, loving, accepting environment. Do your part to make your home that way.

ACCEPT UNPLEASANT REALITIES

1. Recognize and accept the fact that life is hard and you will always have challenges. Overcoming them helps you become more capable and builds character and compassion.
2. Love (both giving and receiving love) strengthens us and makes a hard life bearable.
3. You have the power to turn hardships and challenges to your good. Look for the positive.
4. If you can't change a reality, accept it as it is. Say, "It is what it is." Don't stress over it. Instead, find a way to deal with it.
5. You do not have to accept mistreatment from people or realities you can't change. Get help to protect yourself. Forgive and let go of the painful past so you can heal and move on.

MANAGE NEGATIVE EMOTIONS

1. Recognize that emotions are created by your thoughts, and sometimes your thoughts lie.
2. Use Mindfulness to dismiss your negative thoughts and act appropriately on correct thoughts.
3. When the first emotional cue surfaces, take a very deep 4-6-8 belly breath (inhale 4 counts; hold 6 counts; exhale 8 counts) to trigger a relaxation response before you speak.
4. Notice and label your emotions. Be curious: ask how to express them and not harm others.
5. If you use anger to get people to do what you want, resolve to stop. It is manipulative, anti-social behavior.

LEARN TO GET ALONG WITH OTHERS

1. View others with a kind, compassionate eye. When you notice their faults, remind yourself that you have faults too. When one of their faults comes to mind, say "And me too" or "Just like me."
2. Recognize that everyone has something good about them. Look for that good and think about it. When a person is unpleasant, it is often a call for help.
3. Tell people what you like about them. Let them feel loved and accepted in your presence.
4. Be flexible. Listen to others' wants and needs. Be generous; don't always demand your way.
5. Do a Loving Kindness Meditation for those with whom you don't get along.

HANDLE STRESS AND ANXIETY

Remind yourself that an extreme response to unpleasant triggers makes things worse. When extreme emotions hit, use this "STOP and TEMP" exercise.

STOP:

S = Stop and breathe deeply

T = Talk back to negative thoughts and encourage yourself

O = Observe the trigger with curiosity, not anxiety

P = Proceed with compassion for others and yourself

TEMP:

T = Take a break and redirect your mind with something else

E = Exercise (jog in place, lift your arms up and down)

M = Muscles (tense and relax all muscles)

P = Press hard with your fingers on your head's pressure points

Pro-Social Skills for a Successful Life

Manage anger appropriately



Identifying and reducing stress is a first step in managing anger—so we added it here as a skill. From there, the “Anger Tracking Sheet” and “Step Out of Anger” game will help you change negative behavior. So will learning a few new skills—such as these. Practice these skills using a wide variety of pretend family situations until they become automatic.

HOW TO

REDUCE NEGATIVE STRESS

1. Trigger a “relaxation response” by taking slow, deep breaths through your nose, holding each for a count of five, then slowly exhaling.
2. Identify sources of stress.
3. Decide best ways to decrease negative stress; write a plan.
4. Put plan(s) into action.
5. Evaluate success.

HOW TO

DISAGREE POLITELY

1. Use a calm, polite tone of voice. (Avoid using any “Communication Boulders.”)
2. First validate their point of view. (“So the way you see it is..”)
3. Use respectful “I-Messages” to share your different view. (“I see it differently...”)
4. Explain any details.
5. Thank them for listening.

HOW TO

MAKE AN ASSERTIVE COMPLAINT

1. Stay calm.
2. Decide on a time to talk.
3. Look the person in the eye.
4. Say how you feel with assertive “I-Messages.”
5. Make your request; ask if they’ll do it.
6. Thank them for listening.

HOW TO

RESOLVE CONFLICTS IN PEACE

1. Identify the specific problem.
2. Identify your feelings and they how impact you.
3. Decide if you want to try and resolve the conflict.
4. Set up a time to address the conflict peacefully using “I-Messages,” “LUV-Listening,” Problem Solving, and “Win-Win Negotiation.”

Pro-Social Skills for a Successful Life

Skills to minimize arguments and fights



These attitudes and skills will help protect your kids from anti-social behaviors and make your life more calm and pleasant.

HOW TO DEVELOP PATIENCE

1. Control your self-talk: remind yourself that not everyone does things the same as you, and that's okay.
2. Remind yourself to be patient.
3. Think of something pleasant.
4. Take several calming breaths.
5. Talk to the person later using "Positive Criticism" if problems continue.

HOW TO BE FAIR

1. Decide that being fair is an important quality you want to develop.
2. Be willing to sacrifice in order to do right by other people.
3. Think of how you would want to be treated.
4. Do the same for the other person as you would want for yourself.
5. Feel pleased that you were fair.

HOW TO STAY COOL IN CONFLICT

1. Notice your triggers and cues.
2. Avoid those who want to pick a fight.
3. Withdraw from arguments until you're both calm.
4. When you feel anger cues rising, use a "Reminder" and a "Reducer" to remind yourself to stay cool in conflict.
5. Congratulate yourself on staying cool.

HOW TO SHOW RESPECT

1. Believe that others have a right to enjoy a happy life the same as you do.
2. Don't bully, threaten, tease, purposely annoy, or make fun of others.
3. Don't use other people's property without asking.
4. Don't vandalize or damage other people's property.
5. Feel pleased that you are a respectful person.

Pro-Social Skills for a Successful Life

Skills to reduce conflict and have a peaceful family life



HOW TO

REDUCE FAMILY CONFLICT

1. Maintain respect for your child, spouse, or partner even during an argument. Bring up problems in a non-blaming way.
2. Stay focused on finding an acceptable solution to the current problem—and don't drag up past issues.
3. Stay calm, and don't let "hot thoughts" cause you to rage. Take a break if you feel yourself getting hostile. Use "I-feel" messages like this one: "I feel angry and upset because of _____ but I still love you. When we're calm, I'd like to work to find a solution."
4. Use Mindfulness Breathing to trigger a "relaxation response."
5. Recover quickly from arguments. Do not let resentments carry on. Negotiate a solution, forgive, and then forget.
6. Don't let anger from an argument spill over into other areas of your life. Separate your conflict from the rest of your relationship by being mindful of the things you do like about your family member.

HOW TO

BECOME A PEACEMAKER

1. Develop deep respect for yourself and equal respect for others. Make a firm decision to never intentionally harm anyone.
2. Examine your motives to be sure they are pure.
3. When you have a problem with someone, pick a good time and place to talk to him or her.
4. Tell the truth about how his or her behavior affected you, and ask for a solution.
5. Take steps to protect yourself from verbal and physical abuse. Get help if necessary.

HOW TO

EMOTION COACH YOUR CHILDREN

1. Become aware of your child's emotions. Often they are expressed in indirect ways such as misbehavior.
2. Recognize negative emotions as a positive teaching opportunity.
3. Validate your child's feelings by paraphrasing what they are feeling, and let your child know you see their point of view. It doesn't mean you agree with it, but you see it.
4. Help your child verbally label their emotions.
5. Discuss and decide on ways to express their emotions in pro-social ways, setting behavior limits and using problem-solving skills.