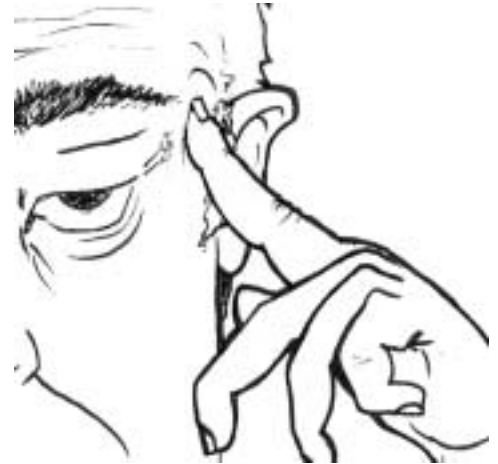


Helping Teachers Express Their Own Anger



It is normal for adults to get angry. Teachers can become angry because of personal or classroom events or situations. It is important to learn to recognize angry feelings and practice positive ways of dealing with them.

1. Teachers need first to learn and practice an anger-management strategy. One strategy developed by the Institute for Mental Health Initiatives to teach adults to handle anger is called **RETHINK**. It involves the following steps.

Step One: RECOGNIZE when you are angry.

Do you recognize when you are angry? What makes you angry and how does your body let you know you are angry? Recognize when anger is a substitute for other emotions, such as fear, stress, shame, or fatigue.

Step Two: EMPATHIZE with the other person's feelings.

Can you empathize and see the other person's point of view? Try to step back in your mind and step into the other person's shoes, so to speak. Try to help the other person understand how you are feeling. Use "I" messages. (I feel angry when you disrespect me by walking out of the room when I am talking to you.)

Step Three: THINK about the situation differently.

Do you know what you think about that makes you angry? Remember, it is only how we think about something that can make us angry. Anger results from how we interpret what someone else says or does. Think about the other person's motive and don't feed into it.

Step Four: HEAR what the other person is saying.

Do you really hear where the other person is coming from? Do you know why they did what they did to make you so angry? Look into the other person's eyes and try to hear what his or her actions

are really saying to you. Let the person know you want to listen to what he or she has to say.

Step Five: INTEGRATE respect and love with what you say.

Let the person know you still care but have angry feelings. Talking about how you feel can clear the air and help the anger subside, and your relationship as friends resume. "I" messages are a way of telling someone how you feel when they behave a certain way and why you feel this way. For example, "I feel angry when you call me a witch because it is so disrespectful."

Step Six: NOTICE your body's reactions when you are angry.

Do you notice your body's reactions as you get angry—increased heart rate, harder and faster breathing, headache, stomach pains, muscle tightness? Learn how to calm yourself down (taking deep breaths, counting to 10, going for a walk, listening to music, drawing, reading, saying "I am calm" over and over), and notice how you calm yourself.

Step Seven: KEEP your attention on the present, not past problems.

Don't bring up old grudges and wounds. Keep personalities out of the picture.

2. Teachers should show by their example how they want children to behave by modeling a calm and nonaggressive response to angry feelings. This means that first you must learn to express your own anger in appropriate ways. You know the negative consequences that can result from a teacher who is out of control and deals with a child in anger. Use a calming strategy such as deep breathing or counting silently to ensure that you are acting thoughtfully rather than reacting impulsively.