

# Anger Management: Working With Individual Children

**Teachers can help individual children who are having difficulty controlling their reactions to strong feelings. Remember that it may not be possible to use the IDEAL model with children under 3 or 4 years of age. You can:**

1. Be calm, under control, and nonthreatening when you intervene with an angry child who is out of control or acting inappropriately.
2. Teach the child that:
  - It is okay to have strong feelings like anger.
  - Everyone gets angry sometimes.
  - It is not okay to hurt anyone when you are angry.
  - There are things to do to calm yourself when you are angry.
  - There are okay ways and not-okay ways to show your anger.
3. Teach the child to recognize when he or she is angry: what they feel like, how their body reacts to angry feelings.
4. Teach the child (around age 4 or 5) to use a self-calming strategy to prevent



tantrums and outbursts. Examples:

- The child can go to a designated spot in the room, and take deep breaths, and let them out slowly to allow time to get under control.
- The child can count very quietly and focus on something else; visualize a calm thing, like a cloud floating across the sky or a happy thing, to defuse the anger or frustration; try to be limp like a rag doll to take away body tension.
- Teach the child how to use self-talk by repeating a mantra quietly (I'm cool; I'm okay; I'm calm) when experiencing a negative emotion like frustration, fear, or anger.

5. When children seem ready, probably around age 7, begin teaching a simple problem-solving model using simple language a child can understand that includes the steps in the **IDEAL** (Identify, Determine, Evaluate, Act, and Learn) problem-solving model. This model teaches the angry child to:

- **STOP**, (don't react or do anything) THINK, and then...
- **I—IDENTIFY** (What is the problem? What can I do to calm down?)
- **D—DETERMINE or DECIDE** (Decide what to do? What can I do that will not hurt me or someone else?)
- **E—EVALUATE** (Choose the best thing to do.)
- **A—ACT** (Try the best thing you know how to do.)
- **L—LEARN** by reviewing (What happened afterwards? Was I calm? Did I keep myself and everyone else safe? Do I feel happy and proud of what I did? Could I do it better next time?)

6. Keep a record of disciplinary interventions. Include key words to describe what occurred and what you did. Note if behavior is escalating or diminishing in either intensity or frequency.
7. Sometimes rewards are effective. Try giving specific praise or a reward, with appropriate privileges (extra time at a favorite center; getting to be a line leader) for any progress a child makes in controlling his or her anger.
8. Communicate with family members and other caregivers about their child's progress in controlling angry feelings by using age-appropriate ways to express anger in socially acceptable ways. Teach them how to help their child work on self-regulation, including anger management, at home.
9. If the angry outbursts are extreme and frequent, creating danger for the child or others, or disrupting learning, inform the appropriate member of the teaching team or school staff, seeking their guidance on next steps to help the child with his or her anger-management problem.

