



Expressing Anger: When, If, and How

Questions to Consider Before Expressing Anger:

- 1. Would it be better to buy some time and cool off?**
"I'm too angry to talk right now. I'll be back when I am calm and able to think."
- 2. Do I express anger infrequently?**
If anger is expressed frequently the child can tune it out. Your anger becomes the normal state of affairs. This can lead to a loss of respect.
- 3. Will it intimidate the child?**
If you are going to display your anger, it should have an emotional impact on the child. When you make such expressions seldom, the child knows that when you are angry you mean business. Over the age of twelve, children today are not easily intimidated. Anger that is not intimidating also leads to loss of respect.
- 4. Can you limit yourself to responsible language?**
To express anger productively you must be specific about the problem and how you feel. *Do not attack the child's character!*

Responsible:

"I am very angry that you used my watch without permission. I planned to use it today, and now I can't wear it because it's broken! I'm so angry I don't know what to do about this right now!"

Damaging:

"You used my watch without permission and broke it! Why are you so irresponsible and careless? Why can't you stay out of my things like I've told you?"

- 5. Is it a problem for you or for the child?**
If the child has damaged your property or ruined your day, expression of anger may make sense. It makes little sense to express anger over the child's problem such as low grades or a late paper.

Since it is difficult in an emotional state to express anger responsibly, since anger is already a habit for many of us, and because it tends to distract children from learning opportunities, we are usually better off using other Raising Responsible People techniques which require thinking on the child's part. In addition to preventing distraction, these techniques also work to strengthen our relationships with our children. Whereas anger can chip away at the foundations of our relationships.