Controlling your anger as a parent

Medicare Mental Health — for advice and to connect to local mental health services, call 1800 595 212. Check the operating times.

Key facts

- It's common to get angry sometimes, but it can be a problem if it happens often or if you express your anger in an unhealthy way.
- As a parent, you might get angry if you are feeling stressed, do not get enough sleep or if your child misbehaves.
- If parents get angry a lot, their children are more likely to develop social and emotional difficulties and may be at a higher risk of mental health problems in the future.
- If you notice yourself getting angry, taking some deep breaths, leaving the room, listening to soft music or going for a walk can help you calm down.
- If you have trouble controlling your anger, it is important to seek support from your doctor or psychologist.

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- Why might I experience anger as a parent?
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What is anger?

Anger is a common human emotion, and many people get angry from time to time.

You might get angry if you believe something unfair has happened or if you feel under threat.

When you get angry, your muscles tighten, your heart rate and blood pressure increase, and your skin may get flushed.

Common triggers for anger include:

- getting frustrated
- feeling underappreciated
- things not going your way
- being treated unfairly
- feeling embarrassed, jealous, sad or scared
- feeling like people are not listening to you

Anger becomes a problem if you get angry often, or if you express it in a way that harms yourself or others.

You may be more likely to have anger problems if you:

- grew up in a home where people got angry a lot
- experienced trauma
- often expect things to always go a certain way
- have a mental health challenge, such as oppositional defiant disorder or a personality disorder

Why might I experience anger as a parent?

It is common to get angry from time to time. As a parent you may be dealing with a lot of demands, such as family, work, looking after the house and social activities. All of these

responsibilities can be overwhelming. It can become especially difficult if your children are not behaving well or if things are not going according to plan.

Common anger triggers

As a parent, common triggers for anger include:

- feeling like your partner isn't helping
- stress about finances or relationships
- lack of sleep

Research shows that parents who have recently given birth and have postnatal depression may also be more prone to anger.

Sometimes, having a baby can trigger negative emotions and memories of trauma from your own childhood. If you experienced trauma or abuse as a child, you can call the Blue Knot Foundation on 1300 657 380 for support and advice.

How does my anger affect my child?

> ⚠ **Never shake a baby. Shaking, hitting, kicking or throwing a baby can result in death, disability or serious injury.**

Everyone gets angry sometimes. What is most important is how you deal with your anger. You can set a good example for your child if you take a few deep breaths and walk away when you feel angry. Losing your temper often can negatively affect your child.

Living in a household where there is a lot of anger puts your child at risk of mental health problems later in life.

Children may react to angry parents in different ways, for example, by:

- becoming quiet and fearful
- becoming rude and aggressive
- developing sleeping problems
- finding it hard to play with other children

You should never physically hurt or punish your child, no matter what they have done or how angry you are. Physically punishing children puts them at risk of:

- injuries
- low self-esteem
- antisocial behaviour
- aggressive behaviour
- mental health challenges
- learning problems
- having abusive relationships in the future

How do I deal with my feelings?

If you are feeling angry, you may also feel other emotions, such as disappointment, worry, embarrassment, frustration, hurt or fear at the same time. Recognising and dealing with these emotions can help you control your anger.

Bottling up your anger is not helpful. It can make it harder to deal with later. It is important to learn to express your anger in a controlled way that does not cause harm to others.

If you can understand the negative thoughts or feelings that trigger your anger, you might be able to avoid these situations, or react differently when they happen. Try to think about what is really making you feel angry.

You may find it helpful to speak with someone you trust. Seek out a friend, relative or a professional counsellor. They can help you work through your feelings.

Talk to your doctor to find a professional counsellor. You can also call Medicare Mental Health for advice and to connect to local mental health services.

How can I learn to control my anger?

Controlling your anger in the moment

To help you control your anger in the moment, it is important to recognise the signs that you're becoming angry, so you can act before it gets out of control.

Some signs that you may be feeling angry include:

- feeling 'hot' and 'heavy' in different parts of your body, including your head and chest

- shaking
- a burning feeling
- gritting your teeth
- clenching your fists

If you notice these signs, here are some tips you can try to calm yourself down:

- Count to 10 before you react.
- Leave the room and go somewhere quiet. Make sure your child is safe before you leave the room.
- Take some slow, deep breaths.
- Go for a walk, take a warm shower or listen to calming music to distract yourself from what's making you angry.
- Think about what happened from someone else's point of view.
- Repeat a calming mantra in your mind, such as 'I can deal with this'.

Avoiding getting angry

If you find yourself getting angry a lot, you can learn to change your thought patterns and react to difficult situations in a healthier way. A psychologist can help you with this.

Here are some strategies that you can explore together:

- Reduce stress with relaxation techniques, get some exercise or take regular breaks.
- Learn how to communicate how you are feeling and really listen to other people.
- Try to make changes in your routine to avoid situations that make you angry.
- Set aside time for hobbies or fun activities.
- Get some help, using cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT).

Read more about anger management.

When should I seek help?

If you're having trouble with anger, talk to your doctor. For advice and to connect to local mental health services, call Medicare Mental Health on 1800 595 212. Check the operating times.

It is important to seek help with managing anger if:

- you get angry a lot
- you have trouble controlling your anger
- you have physically hurt yourself or someone else out of anger
- anger is affecting your work or relationships
- you turn to alcohol or other substances when you're angry
- you drive dangerously when you're angry

Read more about mental health first aid.

Resources and support

- Learn more about anger, how you can manage your anger and where to get support on the headspace website.
- Visit PANDA (Perinatal Anxiety & Depression Australia) for mental health support during pregnancy and during your first year of parenthood.
- Check out MensLine Australia or call 1300 78 99 78, where males can get free counselling over the phone or online.

Languages other than English

- Parent Line is a free telephone counselling and support service for parents and carers. They offer parenting support for parents from culturally diverse backgrounds.
- The Parenting in Australia Multicultural Parent Easy Guide, published by Parenting SA, offers practical parenting advice in a range of community languages in easy-to-read PDF format.
- COPE (The Centre of Perinatal Excellence) supports the mental health of new, hopeful and expectant parents and has translated their website into many community languages.

Information for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples

- Yarning SafeNStrong is a free counselling service for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, supporting individuals, friends and families with wellbeing.
- Visit Birthing on Country for information on projects that support Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander babies and their families.
- Baby Coming You Ready is a culturally safe support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents to be and new parents.



Speak to a maternal child health nurse

Call Pregnancy, Birth and Baby to speak to a maternal child health nurse on **1800 882 436** or video call. Available 7am to midnight (AET), 7 days a week.

Sources

Find out how we develop and review our content.

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Need more information?

These trusted information partners have more on this topic.

10 tips to manage anger - The SANE Blog

Do you struggle to deal with your anger? Anger isn't wrong in itself, the important thing is having healthy strategies to manage it.

SANE We're people like you.

Learn more on SANE Australia website

Understanding and managing anger | Lifeline

Anger is a natural emotional response we all experience. Understand why we feel angry, when it can become a problem, and how learning to manage it in healthy ways can help improve your mental health, wellbeing, and relationships.

Lifeline

Learn more on Lifeline website

Anger - how it affects people | Better Health Channel

Well-managed anger can be a useful emotion that motivates you to make positive changes.

Learn more on Better Health Channel website

Coping with fear, anger and sadness | Triple P

Coping with fear, anxiety and other uncomfortable emotions - a key life skill. Support your child's emotional wellbeing

Learn more on Triple P website

Anger management for men: How to control your anger

Learn more about the signs your anger is an issue, how to manage anger better and anger management techniques.

Anger management toolkit | MensLine Australia

Do you have trouble managing your anger? Use our toolkits as a starting point to develop your anger management skills.

MensLine Australia

Learn more on MensLine Australia website

Managing anger | MensLine Australia

Do you have trouble controlling your temper, or have you ever become so angry you've regretted it later? Visit MensLine Australia for support & tips on managing anger.

MensLine Australia

Learn more on MensLine Australia website

Using 'Time Out' | MensLine Australia

'Time Out' is a process of temporarily removing yourself physically from an anger-provoking situation to calm yourself before returning.

MensLine Australia

Learn more on MensLine Australia website

Pathways – keeping families together | Triple P

Want support for managing stress and anger and help to the parent you want to be? Talk to your Triple P provider about Pathways Triple P.

Learn more on Triple P website

Search our site for

Domestic Violence

Find a health service

Need further advice or guidance from our maternal child health nurses?

1800 882 436

Video call

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Department of Health, Disability and Ageing


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