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HOW ADULTS CAN HELP CHILDREN MANAGE ANGER

THE BEST WAY THAT ADULTS CAN HELP CHILDREN learn how to manage their temper is by role-modeling appropriate behavior. Adults should always be aware that every word they say is making a lasting impression on the children around them. If a mother “loses it” and has a temper fit at the grocery store because the checker closed the line right in front of her, then she has just taught her child how to behave in similar situations. Parents often discipline their children for committing behavior that they are copying from the adults in their lives.

Teaching children peaceful ways to manage anger will have no effect if the children don’t see these methods being used by the adults in their lives. They will think that people only control their tempers in stories and lessons, but not in real life.

There are many adults who have not learned how to handle their own anger without turning to violence. Children who watch TV are constantly barraged with news of people committing road rage, acts of domestic violence or even acts of international anger. Even the cartoon characters, which are supposed to be amusing, are constantly exploding and committing acts of violence on each other. Therefore, another way to help children learn the proper way of handling anger is by limiting the number of violent TV shows, movies and even news programs that they are allowed to watch. If children see an angry outburst on TV, in a movie or in life, adults should be sure to discuss the situation with them so that they can process what they have seen and even learn from it.

Adults should explain to children that there are some people who haven’t learned acceptable ways to handle the powerful emotion of anger, but in “our classroom” or “our family” we will strive not to hurt others out of an act of anger. We will

The story...

Ten-year-old Nadine Watson had a bad temper and it seemed that every day someone or something made her mad. She would wake up and start out calm, but it usually didn't take long for her temper to flare. Her mom and dad were always telling her to cool down, but she thought that they just didn't understand her. She told them that she couldn't help that she was born with a bad temper. And besides, there were so many things to be mad about.

Nadine got mad when her mom made her eat oatmeal when she really wanted cereal from a box. She got mad when she couldn't find her favorite blue shirt. She got mad when her dad made her turn off the TV at bedtime. She got mad when her best friend, Cassandra, didn't play with her at recess. And she got mad when her teacher gave big math assignments. These were just a few of the daily occurrences that made Nadine mad.

What really made her blood boil more than anything else was her little brother, Nathan. Nadine considered Nathan to be a spoiled brat and a pest. He was four years old and he got into everything, especially her room! To make matters worse, her parents did nothing about it.

One day she came home from school and found Nathan playing with her stuffed animals, which had been on her bed. They were scattered on the floor. **Nadine got so mad!** She screamed, "Mom, he's in here again!" She stomped her feet. She moved toward her brother, who became frightened and ran to hide in her closet. Their mom rushed into the room and said, "Cool down! He's just a little boy and he's not hurting anything. Nadine, your temper is going to get you in big trouble one of these days."

Nadine protested, "Mom, that's what you always say! I **can't** cool down! I have a bad temper and Nathan is always in my stuff."

Her mom just sighed and left the room, taking Nathan with her. Nadine felt even angrier than she did before, because now, besides being mad at Nathan, she felt mad at her mom too. It seemed that her mom always took her brother's side. Nadine slammed the door loudly and cried and cried.

The following week while she was at school, her brother got in her room again. This time, he scribbled on some of her papers that she had left out on her desk.

ACTIVITIES

1. Why did Nadine get so angry at her brother?

2. Why did her parents warn her that her temper would get her in trouble?

3. Why did Nadine blame her bad behavior on her bad temper?

Burning Up? Chill Out!

In the story, anger is compared with heat. It is true that some people's faces get red and they do feel hot. That is because the mind triggers the adrenal glands to produce adrenaline. This hormone can make the heart race and blood pressure rise. The resulting physical symptoms can make a person feel hot!