

I'm Not Bad, I'm Just Mad

A Workbook to Help Kids
Control Their Anger

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A Note to Parents

Many children today have problems with anger. In fact, researchers tell us that nearly 50 percent of all children referred for counseling have difficulty controlling their anger. Most often, this difficulty is not an isolated issue. Children with learning disorders, attention deficit disorder, Asperger syndrome, and other problems often also have difficulty managing their anger and expressing it appropriately.

The forty activities in this workbook can help children learn positive ways to manage their anger, using the same techniques they would learn with professional counselors. These techniques are based on the theory of emotional intelligence, which assumes that emotional, behavioral, and social skills can be learned in much the same way as sports, music, or academic skills. Once learned, these skills will not only improve your child's behavior at home, they will also help your child with friends and with the development of habits that lead to school and work success.

Each activity begins by highlighting the primary point. Next, there is a section that introduces a new emotional, behavioral, or social skill, followed by something for children to do, like a puzzle, a maze, a questionnaire to fill out, or a word search. Finally, there are follow-up questions for children to think about. They can answer these questions out loud, but it will be most helpful if they write down their responses (or you can write down their dictated answers).

While most of the activities can be done by children alone, they will be more effective when you or another adult provide guidance. You probably know from your own experience that changing one's behavior is not easy, and your support will definitely help.

You may find that it is difficult for your child to talk about certain issues. Never force a child who doesn't want to talk. The best way to get children to open up is to be a good role model. Talk about your thoughts, feelings, and experiences as they relate to each activity, stressing the positive ways that you cope with problems. Even if your child doesn't say a thing in response, your words will have an impact.

This workbook will provide a guide to help you help your child with anger, but there are other things you will need to do as well:

- Understand the reasons why your child is misbehaving.
- Have consistent rules and age-appropriate expectations for your child.

- Reward good behavior with praise or a point system.
- Be a good role model.
- Provide appropriate discipline for misbehavior, such as time-outs or taking away privileges.

This workbook was designed to help any child with anger problems, but your child may need some extra help as well. There are many reasons why children have difficulty with anger, and a thorough evaluation will help you pinpoint just what needs to be done. If you are concerned about your child's difficulty in controlling anger, we urge you to get help soon. Problems in anger management will affect many areas of your child's development, and you certainly want to act before things get worse. If your child needs professional help—or if you need some guidance—you will find this workbook to be of added benefit. Show it to your counselor, who may have some additional ideas on the best way to use it.

There is no wrong way to use this workbook as long as you remain patient and respectful of your child's feelings. We wish you success in the most important job in the world—being a good parent.

Sincerely,

The Authors

Introduction for Kids

Someone gave you this book because you are mad—a lot! Everyone gets mad some of the time, but some kids get mad more often than others. And everyone gets mad at certain things, but some kids get mad at many things.

But just because you are mad a lot of the time doesn't mean that you are bad. That's what the title of this book means. Kids (and some adults) who get angry a lot just need to learn ways to control their angry feelings and express those feelings in positive ways. Learning these things is like learning to do math or learning to spell or learning to play basketball. Being angry doesn't make you bad; it just means that you have to learn better ways to express your anger. We think this book can help!

There are forty activities in this book that will teach you many things about managing your feelings. You will learn how to ignore the things that bother you, how to cool down when you are feeling "hot," and how to get along better with kids and adults. We hope that you will find these activities fun. There are mazes, and word games, and puzzles to solve. There are stories to read and stories to write. Sometimes the activities and the questions may not seem like that much fun, but you should do them anyway.

The more that you think and talk about your anger, the better you will feel. We guarantee it.

Good luck and have fun!

The Authors

Section I Understanding Your Anger

Lots of kids have trouble managing their anger. Did you know that you can learn to control your anger, just the way you learn other important things like reading, or math, or how to hit a baseball?

The activities in this section will teach you to recognize the things in your life that cause you to be angry and to understand how anger affects your body. You will also learn some important things you can do in your life so that you won't feel so angry. When you reduce your feelings of anger, you will find that it is much easier to enjoy your friends and your family. After all, it's fun being a kid!

There Are Different Kinds of Anger

Activity 1

For You to Know

There are many different kinds of anger. You may feel just a little irritated or you may feel like you have a violent storm inside you. You can learn to handle all kinds of anger and to act in appropriate ways.

Scientists tell us that we have more than three hundred different kinds of emotions. Some of these are “little” emotions. We feel them but they usually don’t have a noticeable effect on our behavior. Can you think of some little emotions?

Other emotions are “big.” When we feel these emotions, we definitely know it, and other people know it too. Can you think of some big emotions? If you need help remembering emotions that people might have, you can look at the list in Activity 6.

You may also feel one emotion, like anger, in different degrees. When you feel angry, you might be irritated, annoyed, or furious. Being irritated is a little emotion. Being furious is a big emotion. Being annoyed is somewhere in between.

There are different ways to react when you feel different types of anger. If you respond the same way to all the things that bother you, then people will just think of you as an angry kid and they will not understand what you need or want. That is what happened to Matthew.

Matthew was a boy who seemed to always be mad about something. He got mad at his mother when she treated him like a baby. He got mad at his father because he worked too hard and was never home. He was mad at his teacher because he thought she had favorites in the class, and he wasn’t one of them. He said, “Mrs. Friedman doesn’t like me, so I don’t like her.”

When Matthew was mad, he would scowl, fold his arms in front of him, and turn his back on the person he was mad at. When someone asked him what was wrong, Matthew wouldn’t even turn around. After a while, people just stopped trying to talk to Matthew when he was mad. Then he was even more mad because it seemed to him like no one cared how he felt.

It is important to remember that there are different kinds of anger and that you can have different ways to react. Complete the sentences below to help you think about this idea.

One thing that irritates me is _____
_____.

The best thing to do when I am irritated is _____
_____.

One thing that really annoys me is _____
_____.

When I'm annoyed, I can _____
_____.

One thing that makes me want to scream is _____
_____.

Instead of screaming, I can _____
_____.

One thing that makes me want to kick the wall is _____
_____.

Instead of kicking the wall, I can _____
_____.

... And More to Do

Can you name five "little" emotions?

How do you express each of these emotions?

Can you name five "big" emotions?

How do you express each of these emotions?

What is one thing people do when they are furious that never helps?

What is one thing you can do when you are furious that almost always helps?

Your Face Shows Your Anger

Activity 2

For You to Know

Feelings come from inside us, but we show them on the outside, particularly in the way our faces look. This is true of all our feelings, including anger. People can see that we are angry before we say even one word.

Take a look at the faces below. Can you see the difference in the angry faces?

