

SECOND EDITION

# WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR TEMPER FLARES

A Kid's Guide to  
Overcoming Problems  
with Anger

A **WORKBOOK**  
for Kids  
from the  
AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION

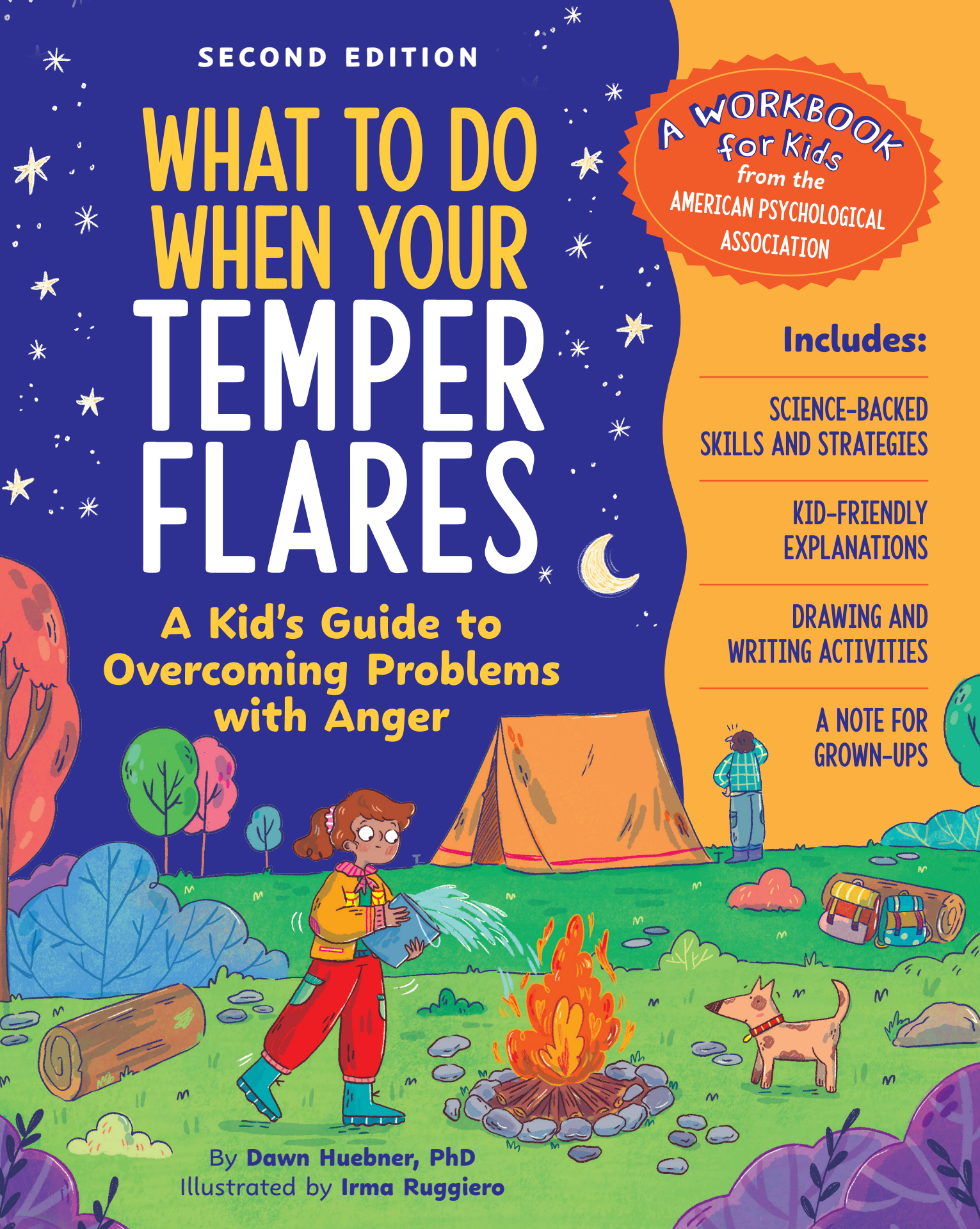
**Includes:**

SCIENCE-BACKED  
SKILLS AND STRATEGIES

KID-FRIENDLY  
EXPLANATIONS

DRAWING AND  
WRITING ACTIVITIES

A NOTE FOR  
GROWN-UPS



By **Dawn Huebner, PhD**  
Illustrated by **Irma Ruggiero**





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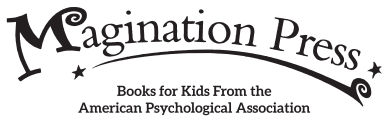
A Kid's Guide to  
OVERCOMING PROBLEMS  
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by **Dawn Huebner, PhD**  
illustrated by **Irma Ruggiero**

Magination Press • Washington, DC  
American Psychological Association

To children learning to manage anger.  
Your efforts make the world a better place—*DH*

To Giuseppe, who showed me how to hug all my emotions—*IR*



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## NOTE TO PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS



Fireworks! We eagerly head out to see them each year. Something about the suddenness—the sharp crack preceding the explosion of light—has us holding our breath, anticipating the next one, and the next one, and the next. We peer up into the darkness. Anticipating. Watching. Waiting. And then comes the dazzling display.

It's one thing to watch fireworks from a patch of grass, craning our necks upward, knowing that the bursts and their fizzling remains are far away. It's quite another to witness them day after day inside our own homes, to get burned by the explosions that take place within our walls. Yet this is the experience of parents whose children have problems with anger.

If you are reading this book, chances are good that you love a child whose anger alarms you. Perhaps your child is easily set off, flaring at the slightest provocation. Perhaps they get aggressive at times, lashing out with fists or with words. Or maybe you imagine your child years from now, still unable to cope with setbacks, making bad situations worse, alienating family and friends.

Your concern is understandable. Elementary school age children with short fuses are unlikely to magically outgrow this problem. The combination of genetics,

temperament, and learning conspire to set behaviors in place, leading to a pattern of explosiveness that can extend over the course of a lifetime.

But there is hope.

As tempting as it might be to try to squelch or erase your child's anger, to punish, bribe, or try to talk them out of it, that is not the approach you will find in these pages. Anger is, after all, a normal, healthy feeling. While not particularly pleasant, it's our body's way of alerting us to problems. Anger fuels us with the energy we need to right wrongs. But there can be a major downside.

Anger can get too big too fast, raging out of control. It can be misdirected or expressed in hurtful ways. So, while we do not want to send the message that anger is bad, we do want to help our children learn to harness this feeling so they can use it in constructive (rather than destructive) ways.

Children often experience anger as something that happens to them. They don't like what someone says or does and—BAM!—they're angry. *What to Do When Your Temper Flares, Second Edition*, teaches a new way to think about anger, along with a set of tools children can use to turn down the heat and respond more appropriately when something goes wrong.

The techniques described in this book are based on cognitive-behavioral principles. The cognitive piece helps children understand and gain control over their thoughts. The behavioral piece teaches a set of constructive skills. The book builds on the knowledge, strength, and motivation children already possess, helping them feel competent right from the start. New concepts are tacked onto familiar ones. New skills are taught step-by-step in ways that are manageable and fun.

You play an important role in helping your child learn and use these new skills. Take the time to preview this book before reading it with your child. While they might be capable of reading alone, it is much more helpful for children to read this book with a parent or other supportive adult. Make working on the book a priority, without distractions pulling you away. Take turns reading paragraphs. Pause for your child to do the drawing and writing activities. Avoid racing through. As eager as you might be for your child to get a handle on their anger, they will benefit most if given the time to absorb new ideas and practice new skills. So, read slowly, just one or two chapters at a time. Between reading sessions, use the language you and your child are learning. Refer to the tools and metaphors often, helping your child link what they are

learning to their actual experiences. Use humor as it is modeled here, gently, with you and your child always on the same side of the joke. Be patient. It takes time to remember new skills and use them smoothly.

You can help your child practice the anger-dousing methods that make up the bulk of this book by having your whole family use them. All of the techniques are as relevant to adults as they are to children. All are useful even to people who do not struggle with anger. Life will be happier and more peaceful if everyone uses the methods described on these pages. If it is difficult for you or anyone in your family to remain calm in the face of your child's anger, please seek the help of a professional to guide you through this program.

Children (and adults) can learn a set of skills to tame anger—to calm down, think clearly, solve problems, and ultimately move on. Teaching these skills is tremendously important, as children who show good self-control tend to be better liked by peers, more successful academically, and easier to live with, not to mention just plain happier. And you will be happier, too. *What to Do When Your Temper Flares, Second Edition*, will help your child move the fireworks back outside, where they belong, as bursts of color in the nighttime sky.

## CHAPTER 1

# Fire! Fire!

People often say that anger is like fire. It's **hot**. It can **rage** out of control. It **burns** anyone who gets too close.

It's a good comparison, so let's talk a bit more about fire.

Have you ever built a campfire?

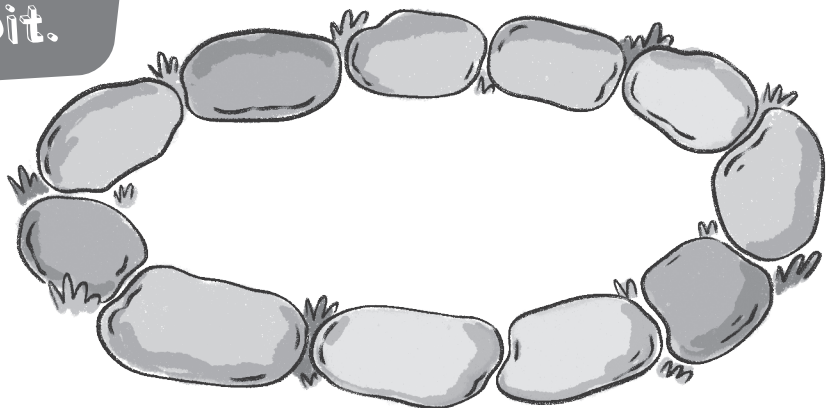
Even if you haven't, you probably know how it is done.

You need some wood, arranged so the air can flow through.

You need tinder. Tinder is the stuff that quickly catches fire, like twigs or crumpled pieces of paper.

And then you need something to get the fire started, maybe a match.

Draw a fire complete with wood, tinder, and a match in this stone pit.





If you wanted your fire to grow,  
what would you need to do?

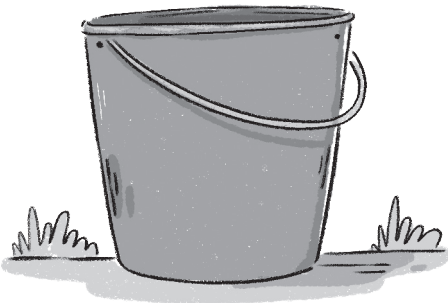
You'd need to **feed** the fire.

Creating a breeze feeds fire. So  
does adding more wood. Feeding a  
fire makes it burn bigger and  
brighter.



But what if you wanted the opposite, to put your fire out?

If you leave the fire alone, it will eventually run out of fuel. With nothing  
left to burn, the fire will go out.



If you want it to go out even faster,  
there's more you can do. You can  
**douse** the fire.

Pouring water on a fire douses it. So  
does covering it with sand. Sand and  
water smother fire, making it go out.

So, those are the basics about fire. But what about anger? Can you **feed** and **douse** anger, too?

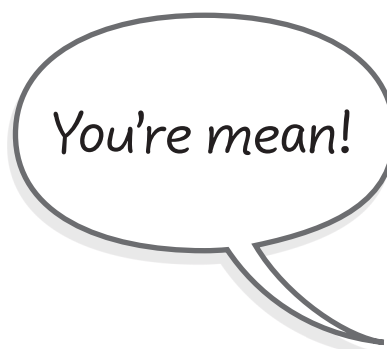
Yes!

Feeding anger is easy.

Angry thoughts,



angry words,



and angry actions

**YELLING** **GROWLING** **PUSHING**  
**breaking** **hitting** **PINCHING**  
**stomping**

all fan the flames of anger, making it grow.

But what about dousing anger? Do water and sand make it go out?



Not exactly.

But there are things that do douse anger. Things you can do to keep it from raging out of control. In fact, that's what this book is about.

*What to Do When Your Temper Flares, Second Edition*, guides children and their parents through the cognitive-behavioral techniques used in the treatment of anger. With engaging examples, lively illustrations, and step-by-step instructions, this updated edition of the award-winning book teaches children a set of “anger-dousing” methods aimed at cooling angry thoughts and controlling angry actions, resulting in calmer, more effective kids. This interactive self-help book remains the complete resource for educating, motivating, and empowering children to work toward change. Includes a Note to Parents and Caregivers by psychologist author Dawn Huebner, PhD.

## WHAT-TO-DO GUIDES FOR KIDS®

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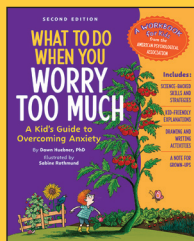
### MORE BOOKS BY DAWN HUEBNER

*What to Do  
When You Dread  
Your Bed*

*What to Do  
When Your Brain  
Gets Stuck*

*What to Do When  
You Grumble Too Much*

*What to Do When Bad Habits  
Take Hold*



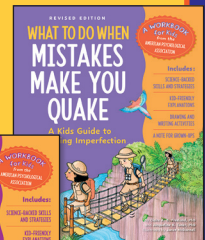
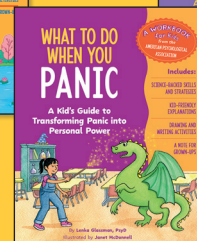
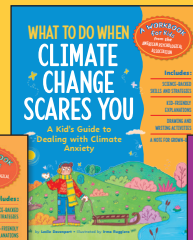
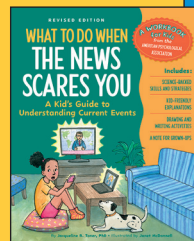
### OTHER BOOKS IN THE SERIES:

*What to Do When You Don't Want to Be Apart*

*What to Do When Fear Interferes*

*What to Do When You Feel Too Shy*

*What to Do When It's Not Fair*



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