

Parents: Stress and Anger Management During the Coronavirus Crisis

Stress is a normal reaction to the changes and challenges brought on by the coronavirus crisis. However, prolonged can be exhausting. It can interfere with your ability to function on a daily basis and damage your ability to deal with frustration. If you find yourself more emotional and angrier than usual, here are a few anger management techniques that can help.



Dealing with anger during the coronavirus crisis

Changes to our daily routine can be very stressful. When you add feelings of uncertainty, health and financial concerns, lack of control and task overload, the result can be exhausting and extremely stressful. When the stress levels rise you might not feel well; you might feel an accelerated heartbeat, headaches, digestive problems or have difficulty sleeping. You're tired, you barely get any time to yourself, and you're dealing with a lot of complex demands from work, house chores and the children's needs. Sometimes it feels like reality is pushing you to the edge, and that you can't deal with the daily routine. In this type of situation, it is easier to lose your patience. A child that isn't cooperating, frustration towards your partner or disagreements about running the house can cause an outbreak of anger.

All parents get mad sometimes. Anger is a natural and human emotion, with a positive function, especially when its energy is routed toward standing on your own or making a change. Coping with anger in a healthy manner allows you to provide a personal example for your children and teach them how to behave when they're angry. Still, anger can be negative when it gets out of control or happens often. Screaming and losing control makes problems worse, causes confrontations, and can even scare the children.

Here are a few steps that can help you control yourselves when you're angry and can help you direct your anger in a positive way:

Step one: Stop before the outburst

The first step in anger management is early detection so that you'll be able to stop and calm down before the outburst; before you say or do something that you'll regret later. Early signs that can act as warning signals for an oncoming outburst of anger can include accelerated breathing, accelerated heartbeat, feeling upset or anxious, sweating, tense shoulders, clenched jaw and fists or an upset stomach. Another important sign is when negative thoughts appear, thoughts that strengthen and deepen the anger. Examples for negative thoughts include "the kids are doing this to me on purpose to annoy me", or "I always need to do everything myself".

If you recognize the early signs, this is the time to stop what you're doing and tell yourself that you're probably very angry.

Step two: Try to calm down

Once you've recognized the anger and stopped the outburst, you can try different things to calm yourself down:

- Distance yourself from the source of the anger. You can say out loud that you're stepping out of the room right now to calm down, since you feel that you're very angry. This way your children will understand that it's ok to be angry, and will learn what they can do to deal with it.
- Take deep and slow breaths, inhale through your nose and exhale slowly through your mouth while releasing a sigh.
- Listen to music, draw, solve a crossword puzzle or look at the view - learn to recognize the things that you can do to calm yourself down.
- Take a shower or take a short walk alone (up to 100 meters...).

Step three: Thinking and talking about the situation

Once you've calmed down, try thinking again about what made you angry: Do you understand why you got so upset? What can you do about it? What can you let go of? If necessary, talk to your partner and your kids about your anger. Tell them how you felt, and what you want to do to deal with it.

What to do when you can't manage your anger well

We can't always succeed in managing our anger. Sometimes you may find yourself losing control, yelling or saying things you later regret. It's natural for these outbursts to happen once in a while. When this happens, you can apologize to your children or partner about losing control - but not about the anger itself. Say "I'm sorry I yelled, I should have stepped away and calmed down before we spoke". This way you'll send your kids the message that it's okay to get mad, but that you need to look for healthy and positive ways to deal with the anger. If you have difficulty dealing with anger and controlling your reaction often, you should turn to a professional that can help you build a personal plan for anger management.

Situations of risk

If losing control comes to a verbal or physical outburst of rage - your child is at risk, even if this isn't your intention.

If you are parents to a baby, and you feel emotionally flooded or that you're about to lose control, put your child down in a safe place, even if they are crying, and leave the room to calm down. Ask another adult to replace you.

If you are parents to a young child and feel the rage taking over, immediately perform the following actions:

- Stop.
- Move away from your child and take a deep breath.
- Call someone who can help you to calm down.

Important: Never hurt a child. Every child has the right to be safe and protected.

If you're so angry that you're scared you might hurt your child, or if you have hurt them, it's important that you ask for help immediately. You must take steps to ensure that the situation doesn't occur again. Call the national emergency hotline for domestic violence and for children at risk at 1-800-220-000 that is available 24/7. or contact a parent hotline. If your child is in need of medical assistance, contact your Health Medical Organization's (Kupat Cholim) medical hotline.

Asking for help requires courage. But it shows that you love your child and want the best for him/her, that you're taking responsibility for the situation and want to change it for your family.