

ANGER MANAGEMENT IN THE PRIMARY CLASSROOM

AN INTERVENTION COURSE FOR 7-12 YEAR OLDS

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WHY TEACH ANGER MANAGEMENT?

Positive social behaviour and skills are perhaps the most important skills that children need to learn to lead a successful and happy life. These skills include such things as; conversation skills, turn taking, friendship skills, developing confidence and self esteem, learning adequate self control over emotions and behaviours, being able to consider other points of view, cooperative skills, compromise and problem solving skills, etc. Having these skills not only helps a child to get on well at home and at school but also is likely to lead to a child having more friends, leading a satisfying, productive life and being a much nicer person to know. As children learn these positive behaviours and skills they also tend to develop the positive attitudes and respect towards others that go with these behaviours and skills.

The younger the child the easier it is to teach these skills and conversely the older the child and the more entrenched their antisocial patterns of behaviour the harder it is to teach positive behaviours and attitudes. This is particularly true if the child has been getting what they want through their unacceptable behaviours.

One of the very best things we can do for children is to teach them the positive skills and behaviours they need to get on well in life. We use as much teaching, guidance, reinforcement and discipline as needed to bring this about. If we do this we give children a great start towards leading a satisfying, successful life; If we don't do this then these children are at risk of a whole host of negative outcomes both at school and at home and in later life.

There is a wealth of research showing that children as young as 4 - 6 years of age with antisocial patterns of behaviour and poor self control typically do not grow out of these problems - they just develop into young adults with more serious patterns of antisocial behaviour and anger problems.

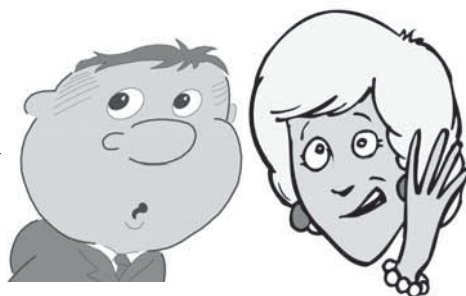
What could be more important than doing our very best to overcome these children's behaviour problems and prevent these children from continuing down a destructive path which leads to them damaging their own lives and hurting those around them?

One of the best things you can do for a child is to teach them the social skills, behaviour and self control they need to lead a successful, satisfying life.

This is sometimes very difficult if they have been practising these bad habits for a number of years.

Um. Well maybe I should take some time to teach this. I guess if I don't nobody else will.

And it might just make my retirement a bit more pleasant if I don't have to read about as much domestic violence, abuse murder, bashings, revenge attacks, etc, etc. - most of which are due to people not learning the skills of how to get on with others, problem solving, expressing themselves and managing their anger.



AIMS OF THE PROGRAMME

The aims of this programme are:

- To teach positive social behaviour and skills the child needs to get on well at school and with others.
- To help the child understand and manage their anger in appropriate ways.
- To provide the follow up strategies required to translate the 'head knowledge' the child has gained in the early part of the programme into changed patterns of behaviour in everyday situations.
- To encourage the development of positive attitudes towards others.

Achieving these aims is not an easy task with children whose antisocial behaviour patterns have become quite entrenched and whose antisocial behaviours have been reinforced in the past - but persevere, remain positive and with a bit of luck you will eventually succeed.

Features of The Programme that contribute to success:

- 1) Increased attention from the teacher in 1:1 or small group situation.
- 2) A positive friendly relationship with the target child is usually developed.
- 3) The positive problem solving approach taken - we work to get over problems, we learn from when things go wrong, we can change, we can succeed.
- 4) Directly teaches children positive social behaviours and why they should engage in these.
- 5) Reinforces positive behaviours.
- 6) Incorporates modelling and role plays.
- 7) Gives the child simple "mental pictures" to help them understand things like anger.
- 8) Involves an incentive to increase the child's motivation.
- 9) Raises self esteem of child by providing reinforcement for positive behaviours and by helping them to get on better at school and with others.
- 10) Follow up strategies including monitoring and feedback to the child regarding their behaviour are built into the programme.
- 11) Encourages self evaluation.
- 12) Stresses that each individual is responsible for their own behaviour. We each choose how we behave.
- 13) An adult actively supporting the child at the end of the programme somewhat like a coach or mentor.

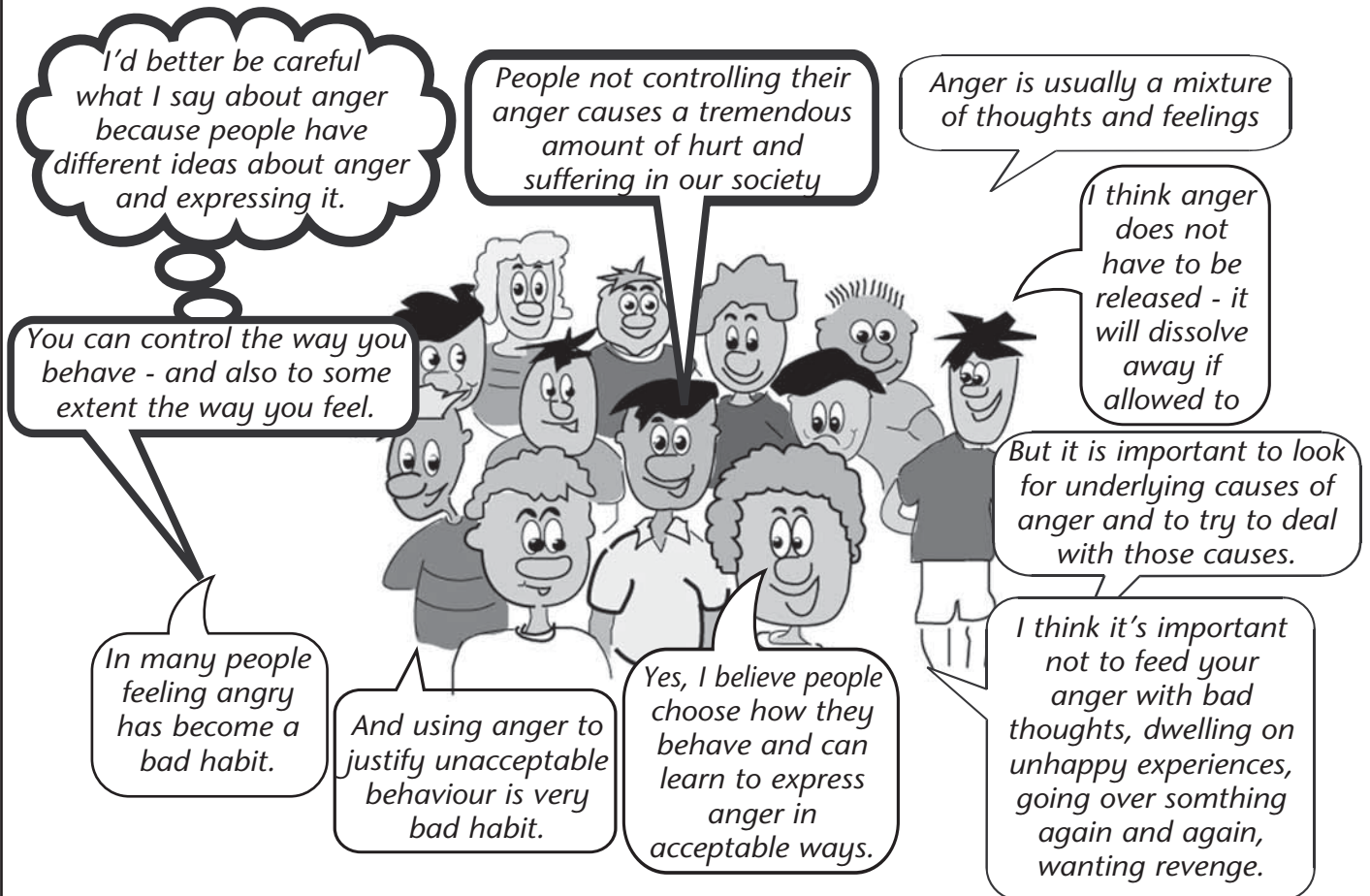
Think carefully about these points and remember them as you go through the programme



ANGER MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL SKILLS PROGRAMME - OVERVIEW

- This programme is designed to use with individual children or small groups up to a maximum of 4-6. Although it is all sound material that everyone will benefit from knowing, there is not the same close collaborative relationship built up when used with larger groups or the whole class, as when the programme is used with larger groups. The programme is likely to be most powerful when used with individuals.
- The programme typically runs over ten half hour sessions (usually daily for two weeks) with follow up for the next four weeks or so.
- The preferred option is for the classroom teacher to be released to work through this programme with the child in a 1:1 situation. Alternatively, another teacher with a special interest in this area, or a deputy principal with release time or the principal could run the programme provided that person will ensure that the follow up takes place and that progress is monitored.
- During the withdrawal sessions the child builds up a folder of notes and pictures which are stapled in an A4 folder when the 1:1 sessions end. After going through the folder with the class teacher, then the principal and then the parent the child is given the folder to take home. This builds in repetition of the material covered and will hopefully lead to these people reinforcing the ideas and strategies learned.
- Each session typically involves discussion, drawing a picture, writing a few main points and sometimes a role play or puppet role play.
- It is important that the teacher running the programme makes a big effort to develop a positive relationship with the child. This is enhanced by being positive, friendly, showing an interest in the child, adopting a helpful problem solving approach and giving lots of encouragement and positive feedback for good behaviours, answers and co-operation. It is also appropriate and necessary to matter of factly confront and discuss any incidents of unacceptable behaviour stating why the behaviour was unacceptable, the effect it has on others and what a better alternative would be.
- After the two week programme is completed it is essential that the follow up part of the programme takes place to ensure that the "head knowledge" the child has acquired is translated into changed behaviour in everyday situations. The follow-up part of the programme generally consists of:
 - The teacher regularly reviewing and reinforcing the ideas and behaviours taught.
 - Setting two or three behavioural goals for the child and monitoring these several times per day on a progress chart for two weeks. Then encouraging the child to evaluate their own behaviour on the progress chart for the next two weeks discussing their evaluation at least once a day with the teacher.
 - Using any incidents that arise as opportunities to teach and reinforce the positive ideas and strategies covered in the programme.
 - Consistently using consequences for unacceptable behaviours including unacceptable expressions of anger.

IMPORTANT IDEAS ABOUT ANGER



- It's normal and okay for people to feel angry at times.
- Anger is no excuse for unacceptable behaviour and should not be used to justify it.
- Anger is often a mixture of feelings (emotions) and thoughts.
- Part of feeling angry is physiological - increased heart rate, adrenaline pumped around body, a heightened state of arousal.
- We can all control our behaviour - we each choose how we are going to behave and are responsible for our own behaviour.
- Part of growing up is learning to control one's anger.
- Expressing anger in unacceptable ways often becomes a bad habit.
- Children can learn to express anger in acceptable ways.
- Children often don't grow out of anger problems after the pre-school years - the problem just becomes more serious.
- Children may react with anger to feelings of fear, frustration, anxiety, nervousness, etc, because they haven't learnt (or been taught) to differentiate between these feelings or how to respond to them.
- A child who has learned positive social skills (including managing their anger) is likely to be better adjusted, have more friends and be a happier person than a child who has not.

NORMAL SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND ANGER

Feeling angry is a natural human emotion and it is quite common for young children to react with anger to various frustrations including not getting their own way. Some children have quicker temper reactions or more intense anger reactions than others.

Tantrum behaviour from children aged 18 months to 3 years is a common anger response to frustration and can be regarded as normal. However, with consistent management on the part of the parent, children should have grown out of tantrum behaviour by the age of 4 with perhaps just the occasional relapse. The strategies parents are likely to have used to deal with the tantrum behaviour are likely to be some combination of the following:

- Ignoring the tantrum so the child receives no attention for the unacceptable tantrum behaviour
- Not giving in at all to the demands that led to the tantrum behaviour
- Helping children to verbally express their feelings and helping them to deal with their problems and frustrations
- Talking to the child about why they are upset and trying to help the child cope with their feelings - this should be done either before the tantrum begins or after it is over, definitely not during the tantrum
- Recognising when a child is agitated and intervening to prevent a tantrum
- Being a good role model - that is someone who controls their anger and expresses it in acceptable ways
- Teaching children some useful strategies to deal with their anger or upset - eg talking to an adult, going somewhere to cool off, doing some physical activity, counting to ten.
- Consistently using strategies such as ignoring, or a negative consequence such as a timeout, or physical restraint if the child is behaving violently, for unacceptable tantrum behaviour
- Reinforcing positive behaviours particularly examples of when the child has controlled their anger and behaviours that are the opposite of being angry including speaking pleasantly, remaining calm, smiling.

It is vital that the child does not get his/her own way when they have a tantrum.

As children develop mentally and emotionally they are more able to understand anger and emotions, learn to cope with some frustration and learn to control their anger. This is an important part of social development and some children will need more teaching and management than others to learn this self control.

THIS ANGER MANAGEMENT PROGRAMMES INCLUDES:

1. Discussion With The Child

- what makes you angry?
- what are the consequences of people behaving in an angry way? - hurt, fighting, unhappiness.
- what else could you do when you get angry?
- How do you know when you are getting angry?
- Considering a range of acceptable and unacceptable responses to feeling angry.

Acceptable Responses to Anger	Unacceptable Responses to Anger
<i>Walking away from person making you angry</i> <i>Cooling off for five minutes</i> <i>Thinking about something you like doing</i> <i>Telling yourself to "keep calm, stay cool"</i> <i>Talking to someone and telling them how you feel</i>	<i>Shouting/swearing/abusing</i> <i>Hitting/kicking/throwing</i> <i>Threatening</i> <i>Pushing</i> <i>Damaging furniture or buildings</i>

2. Practising and Reinforcing Acceptable Ways of Dealing With Anger

Get the child to choose (with your guidance) one or two of the acceptable responses to anger and practice them. Praise and encourage the child as they do this.

3. Reinforcing Behaviours the Opposite of Being Angry

The behaviours to encourage are those that are the opposite of being angry and also, dealing with anger in an acceptable way. These include:

Smiling, speaking pleasantly, remaining calm, not interfering with/annoying others, dealing with my anger the right way.

Choose two or three of these behaviours and put them on a tick chart to use with the child.

4. Arranging a Consequence for Unacceptable Expressions of Anger

This could be saying sorry, repairing damage or mess, making up time of outburst in the classroom, missing out on half an hour of play time, etc.

5. Using Angry Outbursts as Opportunities to Teach

When the child has calmed down:

- State the behaviour that was unacceptable or inappropriate.
- Why it was wrong - usually the effect it has on other people.
- That the behaviour prevents him/her getting on with others.
- What would have been a more appropriate thing to do.

Focus on the behaviour and its effect. You can put the above statements in the form of questions to the child. If the child doesn't or won't answer just say the correct answer, perhaps get the child to repeat it and go onto the next question:

Eg: **The Behaviour** - "What did you do wrong Jamie?"
The Effect - "How do you think that made Carl feel?"
The Alternative - "What else could you have done?"

This teaches the child to think about their behaviour and the effect it has - and what would have been a better behaviour for them to do instead.

We all have to learn to control our temper as we grow up. If we don't we end up losing our friends and not being happy people.

