

Discipline without Anger

Tips for Parents

When children act up, parents get angry. Here are eight tips from Nancy Samalin, author of "Love and Anger" (Penguin U.S.A.), for staying in control:

1. Leave the room or call "time out". A short breather will give you time to regain composure.
2. Use "I-messages" to express how you feel. Accusatory "You" statements send the message that the child, not the action, is unacceptable. "I'm mad!" is better than "You're bad!"
3. Stay in the present. Don't bring up past incidents of wrong-doing or predict a dire future for the child.
4. Avoid physical force and threat. "If spanking worked", according to Samalin, "we'd only have to do it once."
5. Be brief and to the point about what you want the child to do.
6. Put your feelings down on paper. "A written message can be an effective and calming way to express your feelings in a manner others can understand."
7. Decide what's important for your family, and don't lose sight of it.
8. Restore good feelings. "Parents and children want and need good feelings to prevail, even when battles become fierce. Time and distance heal many wounds, and a simple apology can diminish resentment.

Source: Stephanie McKinnon, "Anger is a Part of Scolding", interview with Nancy Samalin, Gannett News Service, April 27, 1992.