



# ANGER MANAGEMENT FOR PARENTS: A GUIDE





We know anger isn't helpful; caring and thoughtful action is helpful. Being cool, calm-headed, and working together is what can move us forward as families. How we deal with the anger your precious, adorable children bring out in you when they don't obey, won't listen, when they argue with you or when they fight with each other is our goal here. Your kids manage to push your buttons so easily when you're tired or in a rush, right? Some days you're the epitome of amazing parenting and then the next day you're driven to your knees with anger and frustration at your kids. It's exhausting!

## **THE PROBLEM: ANGER AND IT'S COMPLICATIONS**

I want to talk about how anger and threats create certain complications in our homes that we might not be expecting - an atmosphere of fear and children who become followers or rebels.

### **1. Anger Creates an Atmosphere of Fear**

When someone yells at you, how does it make you feel? Calm? Respected? Of course not! When we use anger with our kids it makes them want to turn away from us, to fear us. They

might stay and take our anger. They might comply with our “requests” because we’re bigger than they are but the reason they comply isn’t because in their hearts they know they should or it’s the right decision. They comply because they are scared not to. I’m mostly talking about parents who yell but there are parents don’t yell but they show their anger in other ways that create an atmosphere of fear.

When talking about parenting types the Helicopter is the nagger, but the Drill Sergeant is the yellerteller type. They tell their kids what to do and expect immediate obedience, if there isn’t compliance, then there are consequences and most of them use fear and intimidation. Don’t get me wrong, I firmly believe in consequences, but they need to be delivered in a fashion that will be impactful for the long term.

Listen to Podcast #10 for help on setting up meaningful consequences if you need help in that area.

## **2. Anger Creates Kids Who Can Become Followers Instead of Leaders**

Why do we yell and get angry? You do it because anger works! Certainly, it does. Intimidation and being more powerful than your child works in your favor especially in the early years when you are physically bigger than they are and they are completely dependent on you. But, how do you feel when someone yells at you? Ever had a boss yell at you? Did it make you feel good? Did it make you want to be around that person?

When I was working in hi-tech, I was in a meeting with a top VP who totally blasted one of his direct reports in front of 15 other people. It made me cringe. I was shocked and appalled. If this happened to you, most likely, you would feel small and stupid. You might want to hide. I know when my dad would yell, we would all want to scam as fast as we could. He wouldn’t listen to us even if we had a defense. He shut down our feelings and minds just like that VP did.

Some of us fall into Drill Sergeant mode when we get angry and frustrated. This is when we want to yell and tell our kids what to do and we will yell louder and longer if our message isn’t being heard. When I talk to live audiences about Drill Sergeants, I ask them who wants to raise a child who is a follower. How about you? Are you wanting to raise a follower? Of course not! Our society is always telling us to raise leaders. We need leaders. We need GOOD leaders. And here you are, raising a follower without even realizing it.





As you yell or firmly tell your child what to do and how to do it, you shut down communication and their brains. They aren't encouraged to think for themselves, just to obey you. They will FOLLOW you out of fear. That's not what we want. We want them to THINK with their brains and know how to use their brains to fix things when stuff happens that isn't right. We need to communicate with them and allow them to problem solve and brainstorm with us, not go sit in a corner pouting or crying by themselves because we're mean and yelled at them. If you want to raise a leader let's take anger out of the equation for raising your kids.

## THE SOLUTION: A FAMILY SAFETY TEAM

There are three key parts to creating a Family Safety Team to getting anger under control in our homes.

1. You
2. Your spouse or Significant Other
3. Your Kids

### SAFTEY TEAM #1: YOU

When we are angry, our brain is in “fight and flight” mode. I’ve talked about brain science in a few of my podcasts, Episode #2 on the teen brain probably has the most details. This is true for our kids’ brains when they are upset and emotional but also for our own brain when we are angry.

If we are to guide our families, we need to use the thinking part of our brains, our prefrontal cortex. First, acknowledge that you get angry. Come up with ways to recognize how you feel when your emotions are starting to get out of control. Do you tense up? Does your heart race? Do you start sweating? This is often called the feeling that you’re going up “anger mountain”. Spend some time getting to know the triggers that you’re going up anger mountain.

Then what? You come up with some concrete ways to back yourself off that mountain! Write a list of ideas so you have them handy if you need to:

- do a mindfulness meditation
- do some deep breathing
- leave the room
- seek outside professional help

### SAFTEY TEAM #2: YOUR SPOUSE OR SIGNIFICANT OTHER

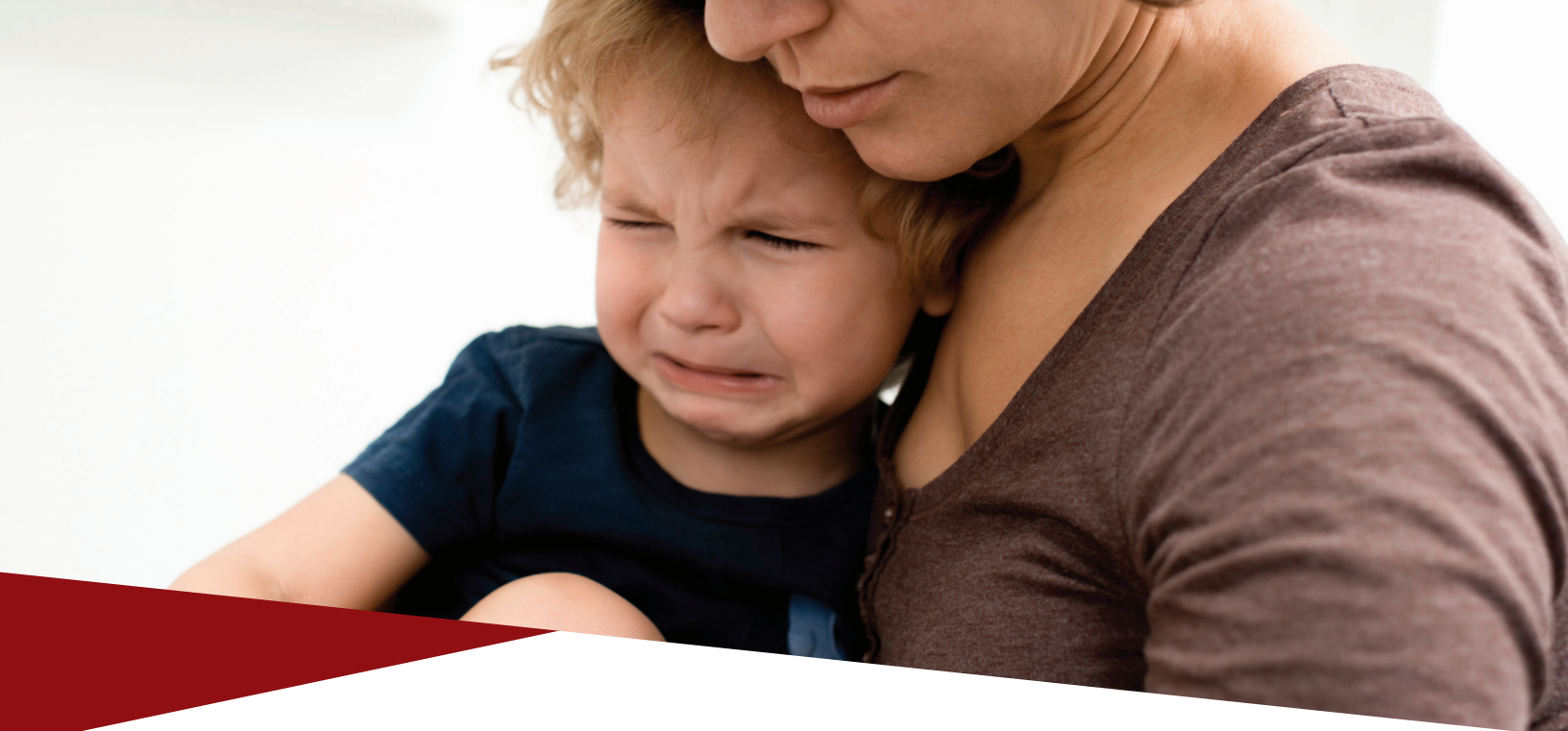
Enlisting the help of your spouse or SO can be a huge help to getting anger under control. Set up a system of verbal or non-verbal signals that you and your spouse can use when anger is starting to creep into your home.



How do you do that? When things are calm and your kids aren't around, set aside time with your spouse to work out a signaling system. It's really important to discuss this system ahead of time, not in the moment when anger has already crept into your home about a particular subject.

Here's what you do: If one of you sees or hears the other getting angry or yelling, use the agreed upon signal to help them recognize they are losing it. Choose a signal that doesn't sound like: "Hey, quit yelling. You're upset, go outside and cool off." While that may sound helpful even if it's in a nice tone of voice, you need to choose a phrase that signals -- "Hey, honey, I can tell your getting upset. I'll take over. You go calm down." -- without saying all those words. In my house we tried a verbal signal: "Gee, honey, I think the cat's water dish needs new water." You can try any crazy phrase you want! "Your earring is on backwards." "I just saw a bird fly over the chimney." But you can choose a physically signal instead of a verbal signal like pulling on your ear or patting your head. The point whichever signal you and your spouse/SO decide is that it will convey the message about needing to calm down without further irritating the situation by saying all those words that can often make things escalate faster.





I love signals like this. My husband and I developed one many years ago to help deal with my getting really nervous when we are driving and my husband tailgates, especially at high speed. Now, he's a good driver, and it doesn't happen that often but when he used to do it I would verbally say "Honey, slow down! You're not using the 3 second rule!" Or, "It's not a 1 second rule, it's a 3 second rule." When I used to do that, he'd get defensive and snap back at me for nagging him again, wanting me to chill out. Both of us would be angry and annoyed, not understanding each other's point of view. Not a win-win situation at all and we didn't even have kids creating this tension!

Well, we had a heart-to-heart one day while not in the car when both of our brains were calm. I explained my point of view and how it really scared me, and he explained how it kept sounding like he was a bad driver. We both agreed to use a signal and no words in the future. I gently tap him on the knee when I feel uncomfortable. This non-verbal signal lets him know I love him; I'm scared and could help please slow down a bit. It allows him to process my feelings without getting defensive. It's been amazing. I know it's not a parenting situation, but I think you get the drift -- communication can lead to real progress in relationships!

You and your spouse need to come up with something like a knee tap. I really think a "no word" option is better than even the cat water bowl example I gave earlier. I'd suggest maybe even having a teddy bear or a blue card or a pack of gum that you just hand each other that says all those words without saying anything verbally. It's an "I got your back" secret signal.

On other idea is to set up a way that your spouse/SO can have some calm down time when they are at the end of their rope with the kids. Have a signal that says it's time to take a walk, take a bath or go for a run, that your spouse/SO will cover things until you get back.



### **SAFTEY TEAM #3: YOUR KIDS**

To enlist your kids in helping get your temper under control, have a Family Meeting to brainstorm how to make it happen. Have the meeting at a time when everyone is calm, maybe a Sunday afternoon or Friday night before a movie. Talk about why you need help from them in getting your anger under control and how you need love and support to make it happen.

Set up a way that ANYONE in the family can signal “warning, anger erupting!” without using words. Some families might use a card – red, blue, one with a bird or a dog on it. Other families might use a teddy bear or stuffed rabbit as a signal. The point is that everyone in a family needs to agree on what the signal is and what it means - the person who receives the signal needs to have some calm down time. It’s not a punishment but a loving encouragement.

Talk about where a person would go for Calm Down. Having a kid run after you and bang on your bedroom door while you’re trying to calm down needs to be talked about. Setting safe boundaries for you to know you can get calm somewhere is helpful when done ahead of time so that people know why you’re going to some other room, and they aren’t to follow you.



This type of family support can model for your kids that everyone needs help in life, even parents, in dealing with emotions. It's nice to include in the Family Meeting an option that mom and dad can also hand the calm down signal to a child who might be angry and in need of some calm down time. It's healthy for a family to know that everyone can have the same love and support to improve emotional skills.

If it doesn't work at first, have more Family Meetings until everyone can get on the same page with empathy and love. You might need to switch up signals or create new calm down spaces for people to go to. Also use Family Meetings to discuss topics that make you angry and what everyone can do to brainstorm how to alleviate the issue from your home. The more meetings, the more communication that can help keep your family calm!

Set up your Family Safety Team today!

## MORE HELP FOR YOU!

See the YouTube Seminar: [Anger Management for Parents](#)

Listen to Podcast Resources to Help:

[Episode 2 - Teens: Respect, Emotions and Brains](#)

[Episode 10 - Punishment vs. Consequences: What's the most effective discipline?](#)

[Episode 17 - Calming the Chaos with Family Meetings](#)

[Episode 27 - Anger Management for Parents SEMINAR](#) – a full hour of content!





To help calm down your home look for more practical parenting solutions by visiting Mary's PARENTING DECODED® podcast for all sorts of ideas like:

**Tantrums**

**Punishment vs. Consequences**

**Food Battles**

**Night Time Battles**

**Setting Boundaries**

**Screen Time Battles**

**Creating Calm with Family Meetings**

**Chores**

Transcripts of these topics are also available on Mary's blog.

[CLICK HERE](#)

You may also send your inquiries to [mary@parentingdecoded.com](mailto:mary@parentingdecoded.com)