



## Parenting & Anger Steve Martinez, LCSW, LSOTP

I've been a parent of twin boys for five years, and the one thing I know for sure is that they can make me angry. Parenting and anger go hand in hand. If you are a parent then chances are you have been angry with your child. We all get stressed, frustrated, and angry with our children. Being angry is a natural human emotion that we all experience. Though we all get angry, we all respond differently to anger. Sadly in some cases parents take out their anger on their children. When that happens, children get hurt; children get abused. It is important that parents not allow themselves to lose control once they become angry.

In order to make sure I never lose control of my anger, I have taken a several steps to help stay in control. The first thing that I have done is to know what behaviors my children do that make me angry. For some, it can be when your child fights, or talks back, or doesn't listen. For me, it is when my children start to whine. Nothing gets under my skin faster than when they start to whine. The importance of knowing the behaviors that make you angry is that you can prepare yourself for these behaviors. It shouldn't be a surprise when you get angry for a behavior that you know will agitate you.

The second step to controlling my anger is to understand my own body. Our bodies give us cues for when we are becoming angry. We don't go from calm to angry in seconds. There is a build up. Your body may become tense; you may notice your body temperature raising. These are all signs that you are becoming angry. As for me, I tend to get anxious and I start to blank. When our body gives us these cues we need to realize that we are about to get angry. Once you know you are about to get angry, then you can start to do something that can calm you down.

The one technique that I use that calms me down is taking a break. I remove myself from the situation and regain my composure. Some parents give their children time-outs, well, parents also need time-outs. I'm also honest with my children when I take a self time-out. I will tell them that they have made me angry and that I need a few minutes to calm down. This tells my boys that I am angry and that they have done something wrong. Once I am calm, I return to the situation and then I am ready to give a consequence that fits the crime. When an angry parent consequences or disciplines their child when they are angry, it often becomes something that will make the parent feel good as opposed to a punishment that actually fits the crime. When a parent is calm, they are able to think clearly and are prepared to handle a situation appropriately.

The last technique that I use to calm myself down is to talk to my spouse. I am blessed to have someone by my side to share in the parenting duties. So, I communicate with her and let her know that I am angry. By talking to her about the problem, I am able to calm down. In most cases I usually end up laughing about the whole issue. For times when my wife isn't around, I call a friend. It is important to have someone you can talk to. You can talk about your anger or you can just talk about anything. This process will calm you down. Once you are calm, then it is time to deal with your children.

These techniques work for me, but they may not work for everyone. Find something that will calm you down when you are angry. It is hard enough to be a parent, but it is very hard to parent when you are angry, and in some cases it can be dangerous. The most important thing about all of this is what you are able to teach your children about anger. When you are able to deal with your anger appropriately, you will model that behavior to you children.