Helping Hand

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Coping With Anger

Anger is a completely normal, usually healthy, human emotion. We've all felt anger - perhaps as a fleeting annoyance or as a full-fledged rage. But when it gets out of control and turns destructive in children, it can lead to problems at school and at home. It can make them feel as though they're at the mercy of something unpredictable and powerful.

Unexpressed anger can create other problems. It can lead to passive-aggressive behavior (getting back at people indirectly, without telling them why, rather than confronting them head-on) or a personality that seems cynical and hostile. Children who are constantly putting others down, criticizing everything, and making rude comments may not have learned how to constructively express their anger.

How can we help children successfully cope with anger? The three main approaches are expressing, suppressing and calming.

Expressing anger. Expressing angry feelings in an assertive - not aggressive - manner is the healthiest way to express anger. To do this, children have to learn how to make clear what their needs are, and how to get them met, without hurting others.

Suppressing anger and redirecting it. This happens when kids hold in their anger, stop thinking about it and focus on something positive. The aim is to convert the anger into constructive behavior.

Calming down inside. This means not just controlling outward behavior but also controlling your internal response. Here are some calming tips to teach your student:

- Breathe deeply, from your gut.
- Slowly repeat a word or phrase such as "relax," or "take it easy" while breathing deeply.
- Visualize a relaxing experience either from memory or from your imagination.

Teens and Bipolar Disorder

It is common for teens to be "moody," not just because of their efforts to be individuals, but also because of the volatile mix of hormones their bodies are producing. However, if a teen's behavior is especially erratic, and you do not suspect that they may be experimenting with drugs or other intoxicating substances, it may be that they should be evaluated for bipolar disorder.

Teenagers with bipolar disorder typically have an ongoing combination of extremely high (manic) and low (depressed) moods that seem unrelated to particular life events or stresses in their social contexts.

Bipolar mood disorder usually starts in adult life, before the age of 35. Although rare in young children, it does occur in teenagers. This illness can affect anyone.

The manic symptoms include:

- Severe changes in mood compared to others of the same age and background
- Unrealistic highs in self-esteem
- Great energy increase and the ability to go with little or no sleep for days without feeling tired
- Increased talking—the adolescent talks too much, too fast, changes topics too quickly and cannot be interrupted
- Distractibility—the teen's attention moves constantly from one thing to the next
- High risk-taking behavior, such as jumping off a roof with the belief that this will not cause injury

The depressive symptoms include:

- Persistent sadness, frequent crying, depression
- Loss of enjoyment in favorite activities
- Frequent complaints of physical illnesses such as headaches or stomach aches low energy level, poor concentration or complaints of boredom
- Major change in eating or sleeping patterns, such as oversleeping or overeating

Some of these signs are similar to those that occur in teenagers with other problems such as drug abuse, delinquency, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, or even schizophrenia. The diagnosis can only be made with careful observation over an extended period of time by a mental health professional. A thorough evaluation by a behavioral health professional can be necessary to identify the problems, bipolar or other, and starting specific treatment.

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Create Your Own Summer Field Trips

Summer is a great time to take a family field trip and incorporate learning. Many common locations about town will let you tour their facilities to learn how they work. Here are some ideas to help kick-start your planning:

- Farmers Market
- Senior Center
- Petting Zoo
- Local stream, lake or pond
- Local television station
- Farm or ranch
- Post Office
- Plant nursery
- Grocery store
- Fast food restaurant

Teaching Responsibility with Chores

We all want to help teach children more responsibility and chores; it's a great way to show them how they can help. Here are some tips to start you on your way:

- Start at a young age with age-appropriate tasks.
- Demonstrate how to do the job well and supervise until he or she has proven they understand how to complete the chore on their own.
- Allow a child to learn from their mistakes.
- Try matching personality to the task at hand and offering choices. Perhaps make a list of tasks such as, "vacuum", "take out the trash", or "clean bathroom counter" and let them choose.
- Make chores fun. By working together as a family, you can complete tasks more quickly. Turn up the music and dance while you work!

Teens and Their First Job

Summer vacation is a great time for a teen to start his or her first job. A part-time job will undoubtedly teach them responsibility and put some spending money in their pocket. A part-time job can also teach valuable lessons they can apply to the real world post-graduation. Studies have also shown jobs can help kids who are struggling in school by helping them feel confident and successful. Laws regarding the age kids are allowed to work vary by state, but the typical age is between 14 and 16. Here are some tips to help your teen be successful:

- Dress appropriately even when requesting an application. A good rule of thumb is to wear something just a bit dressier than you might if you worked there.
- When returning an application, ask if the manager is available so it can be returned to them directly. Be ready in case he or she would like to interview you on the spot.
- Include a cover letter with the application.
- If you've had previous job experiences, such as babysitting or cutting lawns, make certain you point those out.
- Follow up after you've returned your application even if you haven't heard from the prospective employer.

Some Facts about Hallucinogens

Hallucinogens are mood-changing substances that have the ability to cause changes in a person's perception of reality. These include sight, sound, and feeling. According to the 2008 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), approximately 36 million Americans aged 12 or older reported trying hallucinogens at least once during their lifetimes. It's important to know the facts and what symptoms to look for.

Symptoms and Risks:

- Distorted sense of sight, hearing, and touch
- Dilated pupils
- Anxiety or paranoia
- Mood swings
- Faintness
- Irrational behavior
- Increased heart rate and blood pressure
- Delusions/hallucinations
- Coma
- Heart and lung failure
- Depression
- Lack of muscle coordination
- Seizure

Common Hallucinogens and their street names:

- PCP (Phencyclidine): ozone, angel dust, wack, boat
- LSD (D-lysergic acid diethylamide): acid, mellow yellow, cubes, blotter, window pane, dots
- MDMA (Methylenedioxymethamphetamine): Ecstasy, E, XTC, X
- Peyote: buttons, cactus
- Psilocybin: magic mushrooms, shrooms
- DMT (Dimethyltryptamine): businessman's trip, fantasia

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