

What Triggers Your Anger?

Elizabeth Pantley, author of The No-Cry Discipline Solution (used with permission)

Family life is complicated and unpredictable. Day-to-day expectations and responsibilities can create angry emotions in both parents and children. No matter how skilled you are at parenting, no matter how wonderful your children are, you cannot eliminate or avoid the unpleasant situations that occur in all families. However, once you understand where the anger comes from you can modify the situation and learn ways to control your reactions, so that anger can occupy a smaller place in your home.

Our children bring us incredible joy. Yet, there are times that they can bring out the anger in us. It is helpful to identify the things that provoke your anger so you can make positive changes in your household.

What sets you off?

Most parents get angry over issues that are insignificant in the grand scheme of life, yet happen on such a regular basis that they become blown out of proportion. Some of the most common parenting issues that trigger anger are whining, temper tantrums, sibling bickering, and non-cooperation. Determine which behaviors most bother you and set about making a plan to correct each problem that sets off your anger.

Notice your hot spots

In addition to triggers, there are “hot spots” in the day when anger more easily rises to the surface. These are typically times when family members are tired, hungry or stressed. These emotions leave us more vulnerable to anger. This can happen in the early morning, before naptime, before meals, or at bedtime. You may also encounter situations when misbehavior increases, and so does your anger: grocery shopping, play dates, or family visits, for example.

Set a plan

Determine if there are things you can do differently to ward off some of the issues that spark your anger. For example, if the morning rush brings stress, you can prepare things the night before: set out clothing, pack lunches, collect shoes. Then create a “morning poster” that outlines the daily routine step-by-step.

If you find that tempers are shorter in the hour before dinner, set out healthy appetizers, enlist the kids’ help in preparing dinner, get the kids involved in a craft activity, or plan an earlier meal time.

Doing things the way you’ve always done them and expecting different results only leaves you frustrated and angry. Instead, identify your anger triggers and take action to change things for the better.

Learn something new

Once you’ve identified a problem, consider several options for solving it. Jot down possible alternatives on paper, or talk it over with another adult. Read through a few parenting books and check the indexes for your topic. Visit an online parenting chat group or posting board. There’s no reason for you to make decisions in a vacuum – I guarantee that the problems you are dealing with are common and there are lots of sources for solutions.

Be flexible

Anger is not something that can be dealt with once and then will go away. Your children grow and change, and new issues appear. From time to time take a fresh look at the issues that create negative emotions in your family and take action to change things for the better.

Let love help

And, finally, at times of anger, hold on to the feeling of love that is the foundation of your relationship with your child. Take time every day to bask in the joy of being a parent. Take time to play, talk and listen. Hug, kiss and cuddle your child often. When you build up this foundation of positive love and emotions you will find yourself less likely to experience intense anger.

Excerpted with permission by McGraw-Hill Publishing from *The No-Cry Discipline Solution* (McGraw-Hill 2007)

www.pantley.com/elizabeth