

# Helping the Child Who is Expressing Anger



(NAPSA)—When you hear about children killing other children, you may think, “I don’t know a single child who could do such a thing.”

Too often the daily news confirms that children and teens can be violent, even deadly. As parents, families, teachers and members of the community, what can we do to help children cope with angry feelings—from frustration to rage?

Some young people turn to violence, because they do not see other ways to endure what they are feeling at that moment. They may not anticipate the repercussions of their violence.

These tips may help when you recognize a child who is withdrawing or exploding over everyday frustrations:

- **Listen to what the child is saying about his or her feelings and be willing to talk about any subject.** Young people today are dealing with adult problems such as love, sex, relationships, failure and rejection. Unfortunately, their minds and bodies simply are not ready for these stresses.

- **Provide comfort and assurance.** Tell the child that you care about his or her problems. Show confidence in his or her ability to tackle life’s ups and downs.

- **Tell the child that everyone experiences anger.** Tell him or her about the last time you felt really angry and how you dealt with that anger in a positive way.

- **Encourage the child to shift gears—to spend some time doing things he or she really likes to do—playing sports, walking someone’s dog or reading a book.** A different activity can refocus thoughts and help alleviate some of the angry feelings.

- **Teach basic problem-solving skills.** When upsetting situations arise, the child who has practiced these skills will be more likely to think through the consequences of different actions



and will, ultimately, make a better choice than violence.

- **Look at how you handle your own anger.** Are you setting a good example? Would you want to be imitated by a child who admires you?

- **Acknowledge good behavior.** When a child deals with his or her anger in a positive way, praise the positive choice. Take every opportunity to reinforce strengths. Build the child’s awareness of his or her own talents and abilities.

If none of these approaches seems to work, and the child stays angry or withdrawn for a long time, seek help. Talk to your family doctor or pediatrician. Together, you may decide that your child and family need help from someone with more mental health training.

*The Caring for Every Child’s Mental Health Campaign*, part of The Comprehensive Community Mental Health Services for Children and Their Families Program of the federal Center for Mental Health Services, wants parents and caregivers to know that the physical *and* mental well-being of every child is important. To learn more about children’s mental health, please call 1-800-789-2647 (toll-free) or visit the Web site at [www.mentalhealth.org/child](http://www.mentalhealth.org/child) to download a free publications catalog (CA-0000). The Federal Center for Mental Health Services is an agency of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.