



A GUIDE TO HELPING CHILDREN MANAGE ANGER (AGES 3-12)

Presented by Military & Family Life Counselors

OBJECTIVES

- Overview of Topic
- Defining Anger
- The Fight or Flight Response
- Stopping the Cycle of Anger
- Recognizing Physical Queues
- Belly Breathing – A Skill Builder
- Describing Emotions
- Teaching “Breathe Down to Cool”
- Practicing “Breathe Down to Cool”
- Helping Children Teach Others



BACKGROUND

After school and summer program class management is complicated:

- Lots of personalities, family dynamics, cultures and temperaments in one room
- Culturally, people may express emotions differently than you do
- Plenty of action and activity
- Demands of needy or disruptive children
- It's stressful making sure everyone is safe, ratios are maintained, and keeping activities organized and progressing



WHAT'S THE STORY ON ANGER?

- Anger is a normal emotion, a response to stressors in our environment
- Angry children are communicating:
 - Lack of skill in managing strong emotions
 - Overwhelming life stressors at home or school
 - They want something and have used anger successfully in the past e.g. want someone to stop bugging me, want that toy, want help but nobody notices...



ANGER

- Anger is our oldest emotion and helped human beings survive the ages
- Feeling angry is inevitable for children as they develop skills to communicate their thoughts & feelings



FIGHT OR FLIGHT

The Fight or Flight Response is dependent on continuous messages from the **BRAIN**

The strongest muscle for managing anger. Change or interrupt negative messages and the response will change.



FIGHT OR FLIGHT

CONTINUED

Hormone receptor sites in the brain and body receive danger signals from brain and flood the body with “RUN!” and “fight the threat!” hormones

- Nutrients rush to major muscle groups to power them up
- The digestive system shuts down
- Heart and lungs work harder and faster
- Pupils dilate
- Brain stops thinking things through



WHAT CAN I DO?

- **Teach even the youngest children anger management skills:**
 - Children thrive when they live with structure and rules;
 - Acting out anger by breaking things, endangering or hurting others breaks the rules.



THE KEY TO UNLOCKING ANGER...

**Belly Breaths help us...
Breathe Down to Cool**



CAN WE STOP ANGER EXPLOSIONS?

When hormones are in full flood there is a point at which it is almost impossible to stop angry explosions...

It is much easier to stop the cycle of anger *before* someone gets out of control!



WHAT CAN I DO?

- Observe your own anger responses. What happens when you get angry?
- Unless you **first** manage *your* anger or frustration, you will not be able to teach children to manage theirs
- Model good anger management skills and children will take their cues from you.



WHAT ARE YOUR PHYSICAL CUES?

Learn to recognize your own and other's physical cues by observing:

- Breathing, is it faster and more shallow than usual?
- Hands and fingers, are they moving rapidly or making fists?
- Eyes, are they darting around?
- Shoulders, are they raising up near the ears?
- Eyes and face, are they scrunching up tight?
- Teeth, are they clenching together?



BEING SO ANGRY...

- ...that the fight or flight response kicks in can make your brain take a walk...
- ...and not much thinking goes on when the brain is walking out of town...
- BUT! When the hormone flood stops, the brain can begin to work again.
- Thinking and reason will complete breaking the cycle of anger.



ACTIVITY: BELLY BREATH

- Take in a huge amount of air, your belly button needs to move *away* from your spine and your belly should fill up round and your shoulders should rise up with all that air you are breathing in...
- Hold that breath for 3 – 2 – 1
- Release breath slowly to a 5 count-down while pulling your belly button toward your spine until all the air is gone... and then push out a little more
- This is a Belly Breath, use it to **Breathe Down to Cool!**



DESCRIBING EMOTIONS

Emotions have been described by talking about color and temperature:

- “I’m feeling blue”
- “She’s so cold to me”
- “I was seeing red”
- “Don’t get hot under the collar”
- “Chill”
- “Cool off, man”



TEACHING BREATH DOWN TO COOL

- Ask children to draw a picture that looks like they do when they are angry. Are they hot or cold?
- If anger had a color, what color would each person's anger be?
- Have children draw their own faces using their anger colors
- Teach Belly Breaths
- Demonstrate with colleague giving you instructions in front of children (if possible)
- Practice technique two times a day with children



TEACHING BREATH TO COOL DOWN

When teaching Breathe Down to Cool use language such as...

“We’re _____”

- Breathing Down to Blue in 5 – 4 – 3 – 2 – cool

or

- Counting Down to Cool 5 – 4 – 3 – 2 – cool



PRACTICE

- Practice when children are not angry
- Single out children by asking them to Breathe Down to Cool, be sure you ask cool headed children and more hot tempered children equally
- Work to help them recognize their own physical cues to anger and Breathe Down on their own, recognize the child when you see her use a Belly Breath to Breathe Down



USING BREATHE DOWN TO COOL

- Get the angry person's attention – eye to eye
 - Use gentle touch or a slow steady friendly voice
- Take a big breath in while saying
“Lets Breathe Down now” then “Are you cool?”
- When your lungs are full, hold up one hand and count down 3 – 2 – 1, saying “Hold It”
- Begin to breathe out slowly while you count down from 5 – 4 – 3 – 2 – cool...
- Hold eye contact as you move other children away and manage any conflict or source of frustration.
- Model Belly Breath body positions (yes, even though you're talking).



THE END

...don't forget to help the ones who learn how to **Breathe
Down to Cool** teach others...

If we listen, see and do we learn, if we teach we remember
forever.



SUMMARY

- Anger is a normal emotion and a response to stress
- The fight or flight response is dependent on continuous messages from the brain
- Interrupting negative messages to the brain stops the response
- Recognizing our physical queues can help stop the anger cycle
- Belly breathing can calm us down and interrupt the fight or flight response
- Help children practice “breath down to cool” when they are not angry
- Encourage them to teach others





QUESTIONS?



RESOURCES

- Military Community Services
- Chaplain and Local Clergy
- Military OneSource (800) 342-9647
- TRICARE www.Tricare.mil
- Behavioral Health Services





THANK YOU