

How to Take the GRRRR Out of Anger



“Excellent . . . should be in both school
and public libraries.”

–*KLIATT*

How to Take the GRRRR Out of Anger

By Elizabeth Verdick & Marjorie Lisovskis

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Dedication

To Dan, for teaching me that anger
solves nothing, but hope and optimism
can make all the difference.

—E.V.

To George, with thanks for patience and calm.

—M.L.

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Introduction

Why You Need This Book

Everyone gets angry. There isn't one person on the planet who hasn't been angry before. Some people deal with their anger a lot better than others. And some can't seem to cope with their anger at all.

No matter who you are, anger can make you feel like a real monster.



When you're angry, your mind and body may react in these "monstrous" ways:

- * Your brain races with terrible thoughts
- * You want to yell, scream, or shout
- * You grit your teeth
- * You scowl at people
- * Your hands ball up into fists
- * Your heart pounds
- * Your stomach churns
- * Your body temperature heats up
- * Your feet want to kick or stomp



There's some good news and bad news about anger. First the bad news (to get it out of the way): Anger can stay with you for a very, very, *very* long time. This may be hard to believe, but some of the adults you know and talk to every day are still angry about stuff that happened when they were kids. Because they never dealt with their anger, it just stuck around like a bad smell. You probably don't want this to happen to you.

Now for the good news: You have the power to overpower your anger!



**This book is going to help you
take the GRRRR out of anger.**

If you learn to handle your anger, you'll feel calmer and more peaceful. This can make it easier for you to get along at home, at school, and out in the world. Your family and friends will respect how well you handle your feelings. Best of all, you'll feel better about yourself. You'll be a stronger, healthier person—guaranteed.

Chapter 1

How It Feels to Be Angry

How do you know when you're angry? Some kids describe the feeling like this:

"It feels like my stomach is tied up in knots."

"Everything inside me is jumpy, like it has to get out!"

"It's like my heart is beating out of control."

"I feel so mad that my head could explode."

"I want to take it out on somebody."

"I just get so TENSE!"

"I want the world to get away from me."

"My hands start to shake."

"I just want to break something."

If you were to make a sound while angry, it would probably be a **grrrrrowl**.

Do you feel angry a lot of the time? What if you had a special thermometer that could read your anger level all day long? How high would the level go? How often would it reach the hot zones?

THE RAGE GAUGE



Maybe you don't get angry very often. That's great! But you still might want to figure out ways to deal with anger when it happens. Check out pages 32–45, "Five Steps to Taming That Temper."

On the other hand, maybe you're one of those people who practically wakes up angry. Is your mood so bad it could clear a room?



Or maybe it seems like other people are always doing things that make you mad. Then you may find yourself thinking—or saying—some pretty nasty things.

Like...

If your sister leaves the bedroom looking less than perfect:



Or...

If somebody gets a better grade than you:



Or...

If your friend keeps interrupting when you're the one trying to talk:

**Or...**

If someone accidentally bumps into you on the way to your classroom:



Sure, other people may sometimes try to make you mad on purpose. But often they're just being themselves, or kidding around, or making mistakes. They may not even know they're angering you.

How do you feel when you're thinking angry thoughts or saying angry words?

Chances are, you feel . . .



Did you know that even just making an angry face can make you feel mad? Scientists have done studies where people in one group were asked to think about a time when they were angry; in another group, the people were told to make an angry face (like a scowl). Guess what? Both groups showed the same anger response. The scientists knew this because they could measure the people's fast heartbeats and their rising body temperatures. Plus, the people said they just plain *felt* mad.

So...

an angry face,
angry thoughts,
and angry words
often lead to *more* angry feelings. It's that simple.



Is reading this making you mad? Do you want to know what to do right now to make the anger stop building inside you? Read Chapter 2 for some ideas.

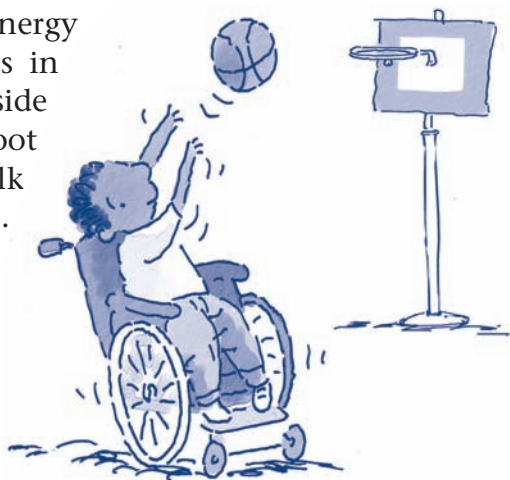
Chapter 2

Emergency! Quick Ways to Get the Grrrr Out

Sometimes, you'll feel that anger boiling up and know you've got to take action fast. What can you do?

Get physical!

Make use of the energy that anger produces in your body. Go outside and run around. Shoot some hoops. Walk the dog. Jump rope. Dribble a soccer ball with your feet. Ride a skateboard, bike, or scooter. Do chin-ups or push-ups.

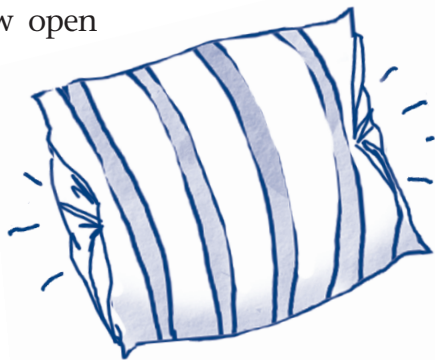


If you want to do something indoors, how about dancing fast to loud music? (Choose music that makes you feel good, not angrier.) Or what about doing 50 jumping jacks? Pick a physical activity that takes a lot of energy and is enjoyable for you. Afterward, you'll feel calmer and more ready to deal with your anger.

Avoid doing violent things like punching a door or kicking the refrigerator. Even aggressive sports like football or boxing may not be good activities for when you're angry. For many people, getting aggressive can actually increase the angry feelings.

Do something with your hands!

It may help to squeeze something with all your might. You can use a pillow, a ball, or a big clump of clay or mud. Another idea is to make two fists, and then throw open your hands—as if you were tossing your angry feelings away. Do this until you feel calmer.



Vent!

Sometimes, you just need someone who will listen to you “vent” your anger. Choose someone who will let you complain for a few minutes without interrupting. (Pick someone you’re **not** mad at. Venting at the person you’re angry with won’t help.)

“I was, like, **so** mad! I couldn’t believe he did that! Can you believe it!? It was **totally** rude! I didn’t deserve to be talked to that way. **As IF!** I mean, who does he think he is? I feel like I should just never speak to him again.”



At times, you may be so angry that you just feel like screaming. So do it! Go outside and give a big yell. Use your voice to help release that anger.

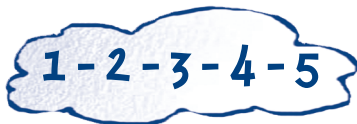
Talk “smart” to yourself!

Use your words to calm yourself down and look at the situation in a different way. Maybe you’re thinking, “I’m so mad I can’t stand it!” Instead, tell yourself, “I can keep my cool,” or “I can get some help here instead of getting angry.” Talking to yourself out loud or inside your head is a way to stay in control—and that’s smart.

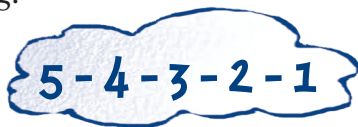


Breathe!

Breathing helps you calm down because it brings oxygen to your brain. Breathe in deeply while counting:



Let the air fill your lungs. Then breathe out slowly while counting:



Do this as many times as you need to, until your body and mind feel more relaxed. You might even try doing a relaxation exercise. You’ll find one starting on the next page.

Relax in 10 Easy Steps

This relaxation exercise is easy to learn. Read through the steps before you give it a try.

1. Find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed. (If possible, go outdoors—to the yard or to the park, for example. The fresh air will feel good.)
2. Lie down on the grass (or on the floor). Get comfortable.
3. Close your eyes, but don't fall asleep.
4. Breathe deeply. Focus on your breath going in and out. Count to five as you breathe in; count backwards from five as you breathe out. Take your time.
5. When you feel calmer, continue the deep breathing, but as you breathe out, say the word **relax** in your mind.



6. In time with your breathing, begin to relax your muscles from head to toe. Start with your forehead. Tense those muscles as you breathe in, then relax them as you breathe out.
7. Continue tensing and relaxing—moving downward to your shoulders, arms, hands, stomach, legs, and feet. Each time, breathe in as you tense the muscles, and breathe out as you relax them.
8. Once you've reached your toes, take a rest. Keep breathing deeply.
9. Slowly open your eyes. You are now relaxed.
10. Enjoy this feeling!



Chapter 3

The Different Faces of Anger



Some kids treat their anger like it's front-page news. They want the *whole world* to know they're mad. They yell and scream. They kick and stomp. They pout and sulk for days.

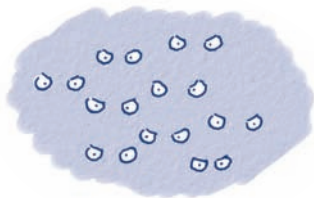
Some kids show their anger by becoming bullies. Bullies like to pick on people who may be younger or smaller. They might tease somebody in a cruel way; they may hit, punch, kick, or pound on the person. Some bullies like to swear and call other people names. Bullies often do these things to act out their angry feelings—it's almost like they want the people that they bully to feel as bad as they do. (For more on bullies, see pages 81–84.)



Hey! Don't be a BULLY!

Some kids have a whole different way of showing their anger—a way that’s more hidden than yelling or fighting. (Often, teachers or parents might not even know it’s happening.) These kids may decide to give the person they’re mad at the “cold shoulder” or the “big freeze.” They may:

- * give the person dirty looks
- * spread nasty rumors
- * roll their eyes whenever the person says or does anything
- * tell the person’s secrets to everybody
- * try to get other people to gang up on the person
- * refuse to speak to him or her (“giving the silent treatment”)



You know what all these are?

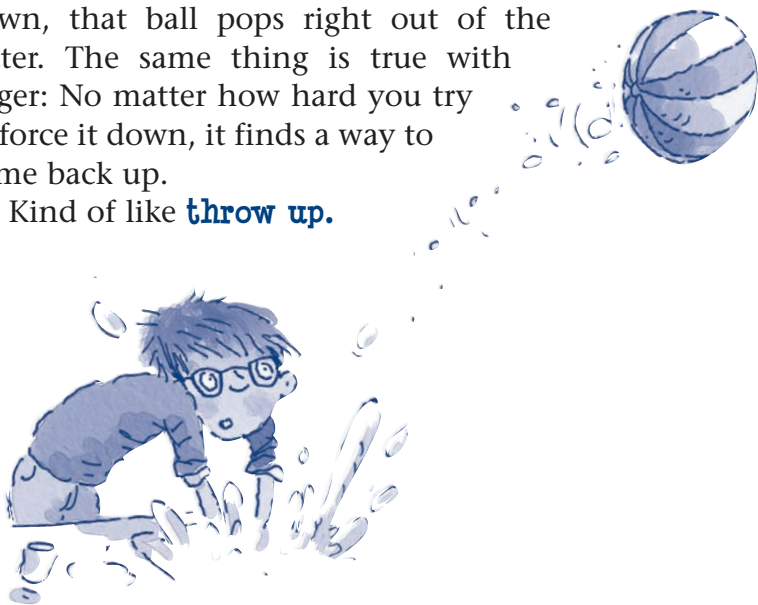
MIND GAMES.

Mind games take a lot of energy to keep up (energy that would be better spent on trying to stay awake in class). Sometimes, the mind games go on for so long that the people involved in them don't even remember what the original fight was about. Duh!

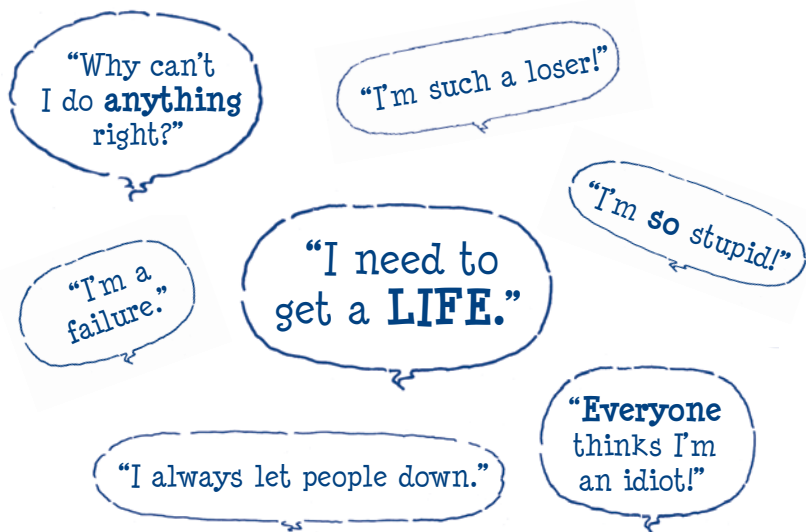
Some kids try to hide their anger. They think stuffing or squashing it inside is a way to deal with it.

But you can't "smoosh" anger. What happens when you do? The anger won't stay down for long. Think of anger as a big fat beach ball. When you push it underwater, the beach ball puts up a fight. No matter how hard you try to force it down, that ball pops right out of the water. The same thing is true with anger: No matter how hard you try to force it down, it finds a way to come back up.

Kind of like **throw up**.



Maybe you get mad at yourself for almost any little thing you do. (For example, if you say something silly, goof up your homework, lose a race, or get the wrong answers on a test.) When things like this happen, does a mean little voice start talking in your head, saying things like . . .



When you tell yourself these things, it's like telling yourself off. The mean words inside your head can make you feel miserable. It's almost like you're punishing yourself. And you know what? You deserve to be treated better than that.

Don't be so hard on yourself. *Everyone* makes mistakes. Beating yourself up doesn't help—and neither does beating up someone else.

It's okay to be angry. Everybody gets angry sometimes. It's part of being human. You might get mad at someone else. You might get mad at yourself. Sometimes, you might even feel mad at the world.


But if you . . .

- * get mad at people super fast,
- * break stuff when you're mad,
- * hurt others because of your anger,
- * feel angry with yourself most of the time,

Or

- * spend your life being cranky or crabby

. . .then you need some help with your anger.



A HOT TEMPER
just isn't COOL.

Help Is Here

Sometimes anger takes over people's lives. What if you feel really angry or depressed all the time? Or are thinking about hurting yourself or someone else? Or are afraid someone else is going to hurt you? Get some help right away. You can:

- * Talk to a grown-up you trust.
- * Look in the Yellow Pages under Crisis Intervention.
- * Look at the back of the White Pages under First Call for Help.
- * Call the toll-free National Youth Crisis Hotline at 1-800-442-4673.



Adults Who Can Help

Here are some adults who might be able to help you talk about anger:

- ➡ a parent
- ➡ a stepparent
- ➡ a foster parent
- ➡ a grandparent
- ➡ an aunt or an uncle
- ➡ your friend's dad or mom
- ➡ a neighbor you know well
- ➡ a teacher
- ➡ a counselor at school
- ➡ a coach
- ➡ the principal
- ➡ a doctor
- ➡ a professional counselor, psychologist, or therapist
- ➡ a leader at your place of worship



- ➡ a social worker
- ➡ a caregiver, like a sitter or child-care provider
- ➡ a scout or club leader
- ➡ an adult friend, like a Big Sister or Big Brother*



*Big Brothers and Big Sisters is an organization of adults who want to spend time with kids. If you'd like to find an adult to connect with, look in the White Pages under Big Brothers and Big Sisters to see if there's a chapter in your area.

In finding an adult, keep these two things in mind:

1. Choose someone you trust.
2. If you don't get the help you need from that person (for whatever reason), talk to someone else. **Don't give up:** keep looking until you find a grown-up who can help.

Chapter 4

The Dopey Things Angry People Do

Here are four true stories about things some kids have done when they were mad. (Their names aren't mentioned for privacy reasons.)

There was a girl who was almost always mad at her parents. She liked to “get even” by doing mean things behind their back. Once, she took the best photo of the whole family and tore it in half before putting it back in the frame. Another time, she threw **grapes** on the carpet and **mashed** them in with her feet. Of course, she got in more and more trouble when she did these things—and ended up angrier and angrier!



A boy and his sister used to get in lots of silly fights. They'd argue about which game to play or who got to sit in the front seat of the car. One time, the boy was so mad that he secretly **stole** his sister's favorite stuffed animal and gave it away to a friend of his. From then on, when he got mad that's what he'd do. The problem was, after he and his sister would make up, he didn't know how to tell her about the belongings he'd secretly given away—even when she went around looking for them. So, he kept quiet about what he'd done and then felt worse than ever.



Another girl had a habit of slamming her bedroom door **really hard** whenever she got mad. After a while, her parents got sick of it. They asked her to stop, but she refused. So the very next time she did it, her parents removed the door from its hinges. They told her she couldn't have it back until she learned a better way to handle her anger.

How do you think she felt when she got dressed every morning with **no door**?



Then there was a boy who was really into sports. He played soccer and football. Even though he loved these games, he'd get angry a lot on the field. He **bossed** his teammates around, and he yelled at them when they made mistakes. When he acted this way, his teammates didn't like him much. He'd get mad at himself, too, and throw the ball down hard or swear if he made a mistake. Finally, his dad took him off the teams until he could be a better sport. His dad wanted to show him that sports weren't an excuse to act tough with everyone.



It's true that anger can really make you mad. But anger is never an excuse for being mean or doing rude things like ...

- * slamming the door so hard the pictures **fall off the walls**
- * calling your teacher **Dog Breath**
- * blaming **everyone in the world** for making you angry
- * holding down your little brother and dribbling a **loogy** on his face



- * secretly putting **salt** in your sister's milkshake



Or

- * writing a nasty note and giving it to the person you're mad at. (Look at it this way: the note is written proof that you're being mean. The person can show it to an adult and get you in trouble.)

What happens when you do stupid stuff when you're mad?



REGRET.



(Regret means you wish you hadn't done it,
but it's too late to take it back.)

Can you think of a time when you were angry and did something you later regretted? Maybe you flew into a rage and felt bad about it afterward. Maybe you told someone off and didn't ever apologize. Maybe you hurt somebody you care about, like your friend or your pet. Maybe you ruined something that belonged to somebody else. Or maybe you ruined things for yourself.

Angry behavior doesn't solve problems. Most times, it makes things worse.

If you recently did something you regret and you feel a need to apologize, go ahead and do it. Just say, "I'm really sorry. Can you forgive me?" You and the other person both may feel better.

P.S. If you feel shy about doing this face-to-face, you could send an "I'm sorry" note instead. Or you could send an email or instant message.



Five Steps to Taming That Temper

If there's one positive thing about anger, it would have to be that it gives you extra energy. But that very same energy can make you feel like you're ready to fight or explode. So, what are you supposed to *do* with all that energy?

You can turn it into **POSITIVE POWER**.
How? The place to start is by

TAMING THAT TEMPER.

You've got the power to cut it down to size.



First, you need to **cool** down so you can **calm** down. Doing this will put you back in control. Check out Chapter 2 for quick tips on cooling down.

Once you're calm, you should be ready to tame your temper. To make it easier, try it in steps, like these:

STEP 1

Know what pushes your “anger buttons.”

You probably could name a few things you've gotten angry about. Maybe the list is pretty long! Think of these as your anger buttons. You get mad when they're pushed.

Here are some things kids often feel angry about:

- * someone taking or breaking their stuff
- * something that doesn't seem fair
- * getting teased or pushed around



- * being told to do something they don't want to do
- * not being allowed to do something they want to do
- * being left out of a game or an activity
- * seeing other kids cheat or tease
- * getting bossed around
- * getting criticized
- * not getting enough attention
- * someone making rude remarks about their race, religion, looks, or other personal stuff



It helps to know what your anger buttons are, so ask yourself about them. You may even want to write them in a list. Then, if your buttons are pushed, you can stop, take a deep breath, and pull yourself together. Just because you've gotten mad in the past doesn't mean you have to react that way now.

STEP 2



Know your body's anger "warning signs."

If you pay close attention, your body will tell you when you're getting mad.

- * You may feel hotter.
- * You may get shaky.
- * You may feel as if your thoughts are spinning out of control.
- * Your head or stomach might start to hurt.
- * You may feel jumpy or helpless or ready to burst.
- * You may want to yell or cry.
- * You may find that you've squeezed your hands into fists.



Next time you're mad, take a moment to notice the ways your body reacts. Those are your warning signs. Think of them as your own personal "heads-up."

STEP 3



Stop and think.

Anger is a tricky emotion. You could even call it a “master of disguise.” That’s because anger is often a mask that hides another feeling.

Anger is sometimes a cover-up for:

- * frustration
- * fear
- * sadness
- * shame
- * disappointment
- * jealousy
- * guilt



Why the **disguise**? It might be because those other feelings are hard to face or talk about. It’s easier to get mad than to admit to yourself that you might be disappointed, jealous of someone, or ashamed of something you did.

That’s French.

Next time you get mad, stop and think about what's going on. Ask yourself:



Here's an example:

Maybe your best friend got voted class president and is getting all sorts of attention because of it. You helped her get votes and you're glad she won, but it doesn't seem like anyone knows how much work you did to help. You feel angry whenever people come up to your friend to say "congratulations." That answers the question **"What happened?"**

Maybe when you found out about your friend's success you felt jealous and left out—even though part of you is happy she won. You might have felt these feelings along with your anger. Or you might have felt them right before you got angry. That answers the question **"What else did I feel when it happened?"**

Here's another example:

Suppose you were mean to your little brother and his friend. Your dad or mom found out and grounded you. That's what happened.

Maybe while you were picking on the younger kids, you felt strong and powerful. Or maybe you felt guilty or unhappy with yourself. (Being mean usually shows anger.) Then, when your parent disciplined you, you may have felt sorry about what you'd done, or disappointed about missing out on something you'd planned to do. So you got angry. Those are all the feelings you had while everything was happening.



Being able to answer those two important questions can help you understand your feelings better and figure out if you need to talk to someone about what's going on. Plus, you'll be *thinking* instead of just letting your anger build.

On the other hand, maybe you're simply
ANGRY.

Who wouldn't be mad if their sister broke their favorite video game on purpose, or if it poured rain on the day of the big soccer tournament and all the games were canceled? Even if anger is the main thing you feel, it's still a good idea to stop and think about those two questions. Doing this might make it easier for you to get to the next step.



Don't stop now!
This stuff is
important.

STEP 4***Cage your rage.***

Anger is a strong emotion. But **YOU** are **stronger**. You have a choice about how to handle yourself. It takes a strong person to make the right choice.

You can do it!

If you start to feel angry, don't lash out. Instead, walk away from whoever or whatever is making you mad, if this is possible. If you're angry with a teacher, a parent, or another adult, you might first say, "I need a few moments to pull myself together" or "I need a minute to calm down."



If you're mad at a friend, you can say the same things. Or, you could just say you need to take a break for a moment. Head to the nearest bathroom and splash your face with cool water. Get a drink of water, too. (Quick ways to cool down.)

Don't forget to BREATHE!

A few deep breaths will help you think more clearly. Remind yourself:

"I have the power to overpower my anger."



If you want to *really* relax, try the exercise on pages 15–16.



STEP 5***Decide what to do.***

Once you've pulled yourself together, it's time to figure out what to do about what's making you mad. Doing something is important because it means you're taking action. The trick is, don't take a negative action, like hurting someone with your fists or your words. You want to make a *good* choice, not a bad one. When you make a good choice, you show your anger that **YOU** are the **boss**.



Here are three positive things you can do:

Talk it out. The important word here is *talk*. When you're angry, you might be tempted to yell or shout. Or you might stop talking altogether. Instead, tell somebody how you feel. You know that talking to adults can help. So can talking to friends, especially ones who are good listeners. Ask for their advice. This isn't about getting friends "on your side" *against someone else*. It's about putting your heads together to solve a problem in a healthy way.



You may decide to talk to someone you're mad at. There are positive ways to do this, too. Chapters 6 and 7 have more ideas and information on talking about anger.

Stand up for yourself. Suppose you're angry because someone insulted you. Tell the person how you feel. You might say: "I don't like what you said. I deserve more respect." Or suppose you've been treated unfairly. You could stand up for yourself like this: "This situation isn't fair. Let me tell you what really happened."

Express your feelings. Lots of people have found that writing down their feelings is one of the best ways to handle them. You could write in a journal or diary. Or you could write a song or a poem. You might write about how you feel and what you do when you're angry, or about what you can do to change any negative "anger habits" you might have.

Maybe you'd rather express your feelings through drawing, painting, or some other kind of art. Go work with some clay or build something with a hammer and nails. You could also play an instrument or sing as a way of expressing what you're feeling.

Page 45 lists the steps for taming your temper. You can photocopy the steps and keep them with you in your pocket or backpack. Make an extra copy to put on your bulletin board or mirror at home. It's a good reminder that you can get hold of your anger before it gets hold of you.



Steps to Taming That Temper

1. Know what pushes your
“anger buttons.”
2. Know your body’s anger
“warning signs.”
3. Stop and think.
4. Cage your rage.
5. Decide what to do.

Chapter 6

The Power of Words

When you want to express your anger, it helps to have words to describe how you're feeling. Here are some words related to anger. You can probably think of others:

Anger Words

mad furious **IRRITATED**
ticked off **hot-headed**
CRABBY resentful mean
riled up indignant
grouchy bitter **ANGRY** out of control
irked cranky ornery
frustrated powerless **ENRAGED**
annoyed **PEEVED** bugged snarly
hostile aggressive grumpy

Here are some words related to **positive power**. These are words that express how you want to feel—and how you *can* feel when you've handled anger in a positive way:



Power Words

confident safe content in control
 clearheaded proud sure
 strong upbeat peaceful
 assertive can-do happy composed
 thoughtful healthy capable
 careful at ease assured
 cool-headed relieved positive



Do you swear or hear a lot of cuss words at school or home? Lots of people swear when they're angry—or even when they're not. Swear words can be hurtful and embarrassing. Plus, they can make you (and others) feel even angrier. Instead, use Anger Words to say how you feel.

Often when you're mad at someone, you need to talk about it. Otherwise, you might get into a "blame game" where both people just get madder and madder.



Sometimes, it seems weird to talk to someone you're angry with. You might even feel that it would be easier to fight, or **freeze** the person out,



or slink away. But doing those things won't solve a problem. Talking face-to-face is a better way to handle the situation.

How to Use I-Messages (and Avoid the Blame Game)

You can talk about what's happening by using "I-messages." **I-messages** are especially helpful when you're angry with someone else. They let you talk about how you feel—without blaming. Maybe inside you'd like to blame the other person. But doing so can make that person want to argue or fight back. I-messages are **positive**. They can help keep the conversation calm and respectful.

Here's how I-messages work. Suppose your brother or sister always digs around in your desk and uses your stuff:

State your **feeling**. Use the word "I" when you do this:



Say **what** it is that led you to feel this way:



Say **why** you feel this way:



State what you want to have happen to **solve** the problem:



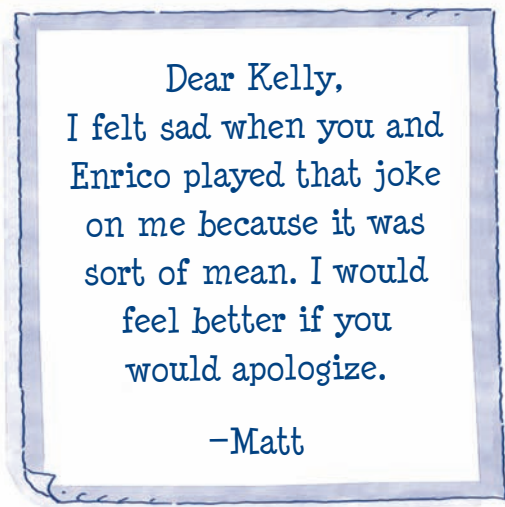
More **I-messages** in action:

"Cara, I felt angry when you made fun of me in gym. It was embarrassing, and I thought you were my friend. I need to know why you did that, and if I can trust you not to do it again."

"I get upset when you hog the telephone all night, Zach. I feel like it's not fair. I need to talk to my friends. I'd like to get some phone time, too."

"Mom, I get frustrated when I always have to stay home and help baby-sit on Saturday afternoons. I can't hang out with my friends. I'd like to talk about a way to have some Saturdays free."

If it's not possible to talk to the person directly, you can make a phone call or write a note using I-messages.



With I-messages, **practice is the key**. Get used to stating your feelings clearly and asking for what you need. See how this works for you. Do you feel stronger and more confident when you use I-messages? Are other people more willing to talk things over?

As you can see, **words are very powerful**: they can hurt or they can help. When you use words in a positive way, you're more likely to get a **positive** result. And that means you're well on your way to solving an anger problem.

Chapter 7

Six Steps to Solving Anger Problems

Have you ever been mad and found yourself in a conversation like this:



"What's your PROBLEM?"

"I don't have a problem.
YOU have a problem."

"Oh yeah?"

"Yeah!"

"You're such a loser."

"I know you are
but what am I?"

"I know you are
but what am I?!"

"Shut up!"

"You shut up!"

"Oh yeah?"

"Yeah!"

"What's your PROBLEM?"

"I don't have a problem.
YOU have a problem."

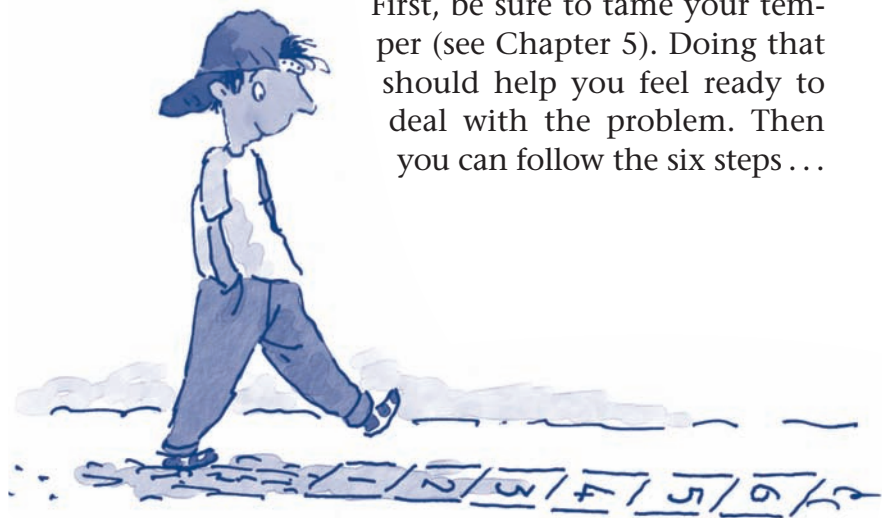


This could go on forever. In the history of the world, a conversation like this **NEVER** solved a problem.



If you want to have a conversation where you *really* get somewhere, you can. In fact, you can learn to resolve conflicts with other people, whether they're other kids or adults. This is another way of turning your anger into **positive power**.

Before you try to resolve a conflict with someone else, you have to make sure you're calm. First, be sure to tame your temper (see Chapter 5). Doing that should help you feel ready to deal with the problem. Then you can follow the six steps...

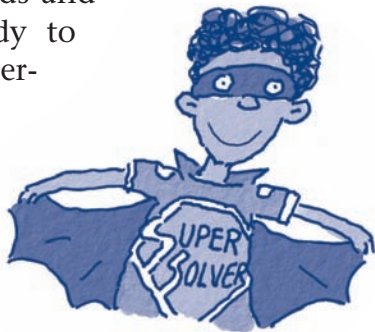


STEP 1



Get yourself ready for a talk.

Clear your mind of angry words and decide if you're REALLY ready to talk things through with the person. Take a few deep breaths if you need to. Do you feel nervous or upset about confronting the person? Keep in mind that talking things over is one of the best ways to **solve problems**. You're doing the right thing!



STEP 2



Say what the problem is.

Suppose a close friend spilled one of your secrets. You're mad and you feel that you can't trust your friend anymore. Be honest as you state the problem, but stay calm and matter-of-fact. Here are some words you can use: "I told you something in private and other people heard about it. Can we talk about that?"

- * **If the person's answer is no,** ask about a better time. Both people have to be willing to talk for problem solving to work. If the person puts you off and won't talk, you can say: "I'm sorry you're not willing to talk about it. I was angry when other people found out about what I told you. I'm not going to tell you private things anymore." Even if you're tempted to use angry words here, don't. You can walk away knowing that you did what you could. You may need to find another friend or an adult to talk to now, especially if you're still angry or hurt.
- * **If the person's answer is yes,** be honest about your feelings. You might start out with: "I know you told my secret. I thought I could trust you. Why did you tell when I asked you not to?" The key here is to speak calmly but honestly. Try not to raise your voice.

STEP 3***Listen to the other person.***

Your friend might try to explain what happened.

Be an active listener:

- * **Look** at your friend and nod when you understand.
- * **Don't interrupt.**
- * **Repeat** in your own words what you think the person means—to make sure you really understand. ("It sounds like you told Sarah because you thought she wouldn't tell anyone else." Or, "So you didn't tell. Sarah overheard us talking." Or, "It was an accident, because you left the note I wrote you on the bus.")
- * **Ask questions** if you don't understand something.

This isn't the time to jump in and judge or comment: just listen. The purpose here is to make sure the other person has a chance to explain or tell his or her side. This is also a time when



the person might apologize. It's up to you to accept the apology, if you want to. And you'll have to decide whether you can trust the person next time.

STEP 4



Explain how you feel.

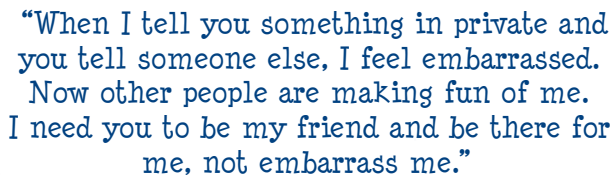
Tell the other person how you felt or feel now, and what you'd like to have happen. Use an **I-message**.

Try this approach:

"I feel angry and hurt when I tell you something private and other people find out, because it seems like you don't care about me or respect me. I need to know I can trust you."

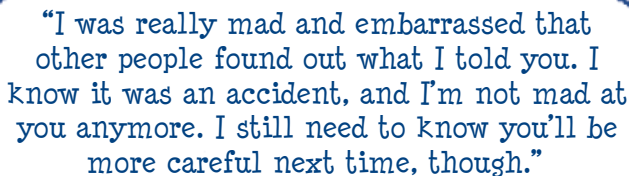


Or, try this:



"When I tell you something in private and you tell someone else, I feel embarrassed. Now other people are making fun of me. I need you to be my friend and be there for me, not embarrass me."

But if it was an accident, you might say:



"I was really mad and embarrassed that other people found out what I told you. I know it was an accident, and I'm not mad at you anymore. I still need to know you'll be more careful next time, though."

STEP 5***Talk about ideas for solving the problem.***

At first, just think of all the ideas you can, even if some of them seem silly. Then talk about which ideas might actually work. For example, maybe your friend promises not to do this again and you decide to give her another chance. Maybe your friend doesn't want you to tell her things that you don't want shared with others. Maybe you won't write personal things in a note. Maybe you'll decide not to share private stuff with your friend again.



STEP 6***Choose an idea to try.***

You might say, “Let’s try that. You’ll tell Sarah that it was a mistake to repeat something private and that you’d like her to stop teasing me. I’ll tell her I don’t like the teasing, too. I still need time to decide whether to tell you anything so private again.” Also set a time to see how the idea is working.



If it’s not possible to solve problems because the person doesn’t want to cooperate, you’ll have to decide on another approach. It might be:

- * not sharing anything personal with this friend anymore
- * no longer spending time with the person
- * talking to an adult you trust about what to do

This may seem like a lot of things to think about! But once you get used to talking about problems in this way, it will become more and more natural.

If you feel more comfortable trying these ideas out by calling the person on the phone, that's okay, too. Later on, you can work your way up to talking with people face-to-face. You may want to practice first in front of the mirror so you can rehearse what you'll say. You could also ask someone to **role-play** the scene with you first. A parent or a friend could pretend to be the person you're talking to. This will help you be more prepared to talk to the real person when you're ready.



Try this...

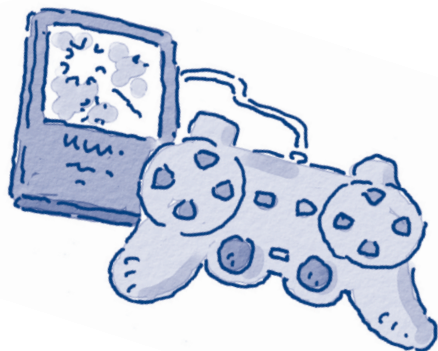
Here's another situation. Read the whole situation through. When you're done, go back and read it again. This time, see if you can find each of the six problem-solving steps. Give yourself a point for each step you find. Give yourself a bonus point every time you recognize I-messages. Give yourself **double bonus points** if you can think of other I-messages the person could use, or other solutions to the problem.

Suppose you got a video game for your birthday. You love to play it. But whenever you start to use it, your older brother arrives on the scene and wants to



get in on the game. Next thing you know, he's shouting and telling you how to play—and that's the last thing you want. You feel like hollering, "Get off my back, okay?"

This is annoying and upsetting. It's like you're minding your own business, and suddenly your brother has to come along and act like the boss. Finally, you can't take it anymore. You turn off the



TV, grab the game (so he can't play it either), and leave. After doing some jumps and wheelies on your bike with your friends for a while, you're calmer and ready to go back home. You think about how you can talk to your brother about your problem.

When you go inside, your brother is eating macaroni and cheese at the kitchen table. No one else is around, so you say: "I need to talk to you about what happens when I'm playing my new video game. Sometimes I just want to play it by myself, but you come in and start telling me what to do. That isn't fun for me. Is this a good time to talk about it?"

Here are some things you and your brother might say next:

Him: "What's the big deal? I'm just watching. You don't even know how to play it right. You need all the help you can get!"



You: "So you're trying to help me?"

Him: "Well, no . . . it's hard to watch you. You play too slow, and you go the wrong way half the time."

You: "It sounds like you get frustrated watching me play."

Him: "No doubt."



You: "I get frustrated, too, when you jump in and start yelling. It seems like you want to take over, and I just want to play it my way by myself."

Him: "It's a cool game, and you play like a dork—I could have such a blast with that game!"

You: "Well, it's my game, and I think I should be able to play it my way. But I might be willing to let you use it sometimes."

Him: "Yeah, whatever."

Now what? Sometimes the person you want to solve the problem with isn't all that willing to cooperate. **Don't give up!** At this point, you might say to your brother:

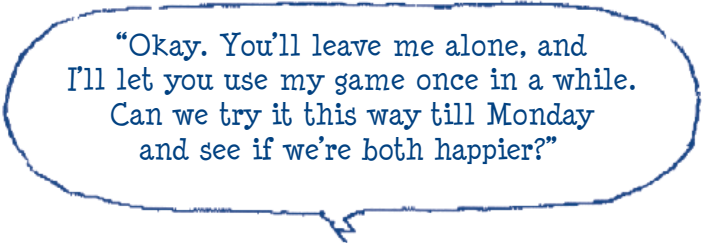
"I'd really like to solve this problem.
Do you have a different idea?"

Or

"It sounds like you think I'm making a big deal of this. But it's important to me. Are you willing to talk about this with me?"



If your brother is willing, you can talk about ideas to fix this situation. Maybe you and he can take turns every other day. Maybe you'll agree to let him play with you some of the time, but not all of the time. Maybe he'll convince you he could give you some pointers for upping your score. Or maybe he'll understand that he's been bugging you and will just agree to stop. When you really start to talk about a problem with someone, you may be surprised at some of the ideas that come up. Once you decide to try something, you might finish up your conversation by saying something like this:

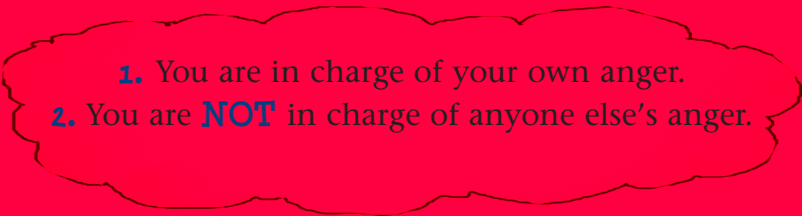


"Okay. You'll leave me alone, and I'll let you use my game once in a while. Can we try it this way till Monday and see if we're both happier?"

Of course, if your brother isn't willing to talk things over, or if he just keeps bugging you and making you angrier, you'll need to find another way to deal with this problem. Maybe your mom or dad could help you figure out what to do. Maybe you can try talking with your brother again later.

Or maybe you'll see that your brother isn't going to change and you'll decide to stand up and get really close to the TV screen while you play, totally blocking his view. That way, you might both laugh and he might not butt in so much. Sometimes humor can really help change an angry situation.

There are **two important things** to keep in mind when it comes to solving anger problems:

- 
1. You are in charge of your own anger.
 2. You are **NOT** in charge of anyone else's anger.

So don't blame yourself if the other person stays mad or won't talk things through.

When you work to solve a problem, even if the other person decides not to cooperate, you're taking charge of your anger. Give yourself an extra two points for turning your anger into **positive power!**

Page 70 lists the steps for solving anger problems. You can photocopy that page and keep it in your pocket or backpack. Make an extra copy to put on your bulletin board or mirror at home. Then you'll have a handy reference when you want to figure out how to talk through a problem with someone.



Steps to Solving Anger Problems

1. Get yourself ready for a talk.

You want to be calm.

2. Say what the problem is.

Say this in a firm but respectful way.

3. Listen to the other person.

Nod; don't interrupt. Repeat back what you think the person means. Ask questions if you don't understand.

4. Explain how you feel.

Use I-messages to do this.

5. Talk about ideas for solving the problem.

Try to think of lots of good ideas.

6. Choose an idea to try.

Also set a time to see how it's going.

Chapter 8

Anger Radar



Now that you know a lot about anger, you can learn to turn on your anger radar. This means you'll be able to pick up the angry "vibe" around you anytime.

It's pretty easy to tell when certain people are angry. All you have to do is look at the expression on their face. But sometimes, people try to hide their anger. They may get quiet or even have a blank look on their face. You can turn on your radar and notice some other clues about whether they might be angry.

Maybe the person:

- * stops talking or gives the “silent treatment”
- * swears a lot
- * wants to be alone all the time
- * thinks of ways to hurt other people or get revenge
- * plays mean tricks or jokes on others
- * thinks, talks, or writes about running away
- * tries “secret” ways of showing negative feelings, like doing graffiti, damaging other people’s stuff, or stealing
- * tries out dangerous behaviors like smoking cigarettes or sniffing aerosol cans
- * starts eating all the time or hardly eats anything at all

Sometimes, angry people get involved in behaviors that are pretty risky. Instead of dealing with their feelings, they may try to “numb” or block them by using alcohol or other drugs. Kids who get

drunk or high to cope with their problems may feel different for a little while—not necessarily better, though. And later on, they usually end up feeling just as bad, or worse.

Sometimes, kids who are angry will try to take out these feelings on someone who's smaller or more helpless than they are. Hitting a little kid or an animal never solves a problem.

If you see someone acting in these ways, or if you've done some of these behaviors yourself, you can get some adult help. Getting help is a way to use your **positive power**. (For more on positive power, see Chapters 5 and 7.)

Someone who is angry may even use a weapon like a knife or a gun to get back at people or to show everyone they're mad. But weapons aren't a solution. If you're this angry, or if you see someone else who is, get some help fast. Go to an adult you trust *right away*. (Run, and you'll get there faster!) Talking to someone about your feelings or your fears can really help. Even if you only *think* that someone has a gun but you don't know for sure, tell a grown-up. A grown-up can help keep you and everyone else safe.



Anger radar is useful in other ways, too. When it's turned on, you'll probably notice angry behaviors in lots of different places—places you might not have suspected. Like on TV. Or in video games. Or on the Internet.

It's like this: There you are sitting at home quietly watching TV. You're not angry—you're calm, you're cool, you're perfectly fine. But wait! According to experts, you may be witnessing more than 20 violent acts every hour. Things like people yelling, screaming, hitting, pushing, kicking, or even killing each other. By the time you're 18, you may have seen around 200,000 acts of violence on TV.

YIKES!

Even if you know that what you see on TV isn't real (like cartoons and action movies), you may get more aggressive. You may feel the urge to get rough with someone. After all, you see the "good guys" roughing up the "bad guys" all the time and being called heroes for it.

While watching violent TV shows or hearing scary stories on the news, you might have a different reaction: fear. You may start to think the world is a bad place full of bad people. And then, if you see

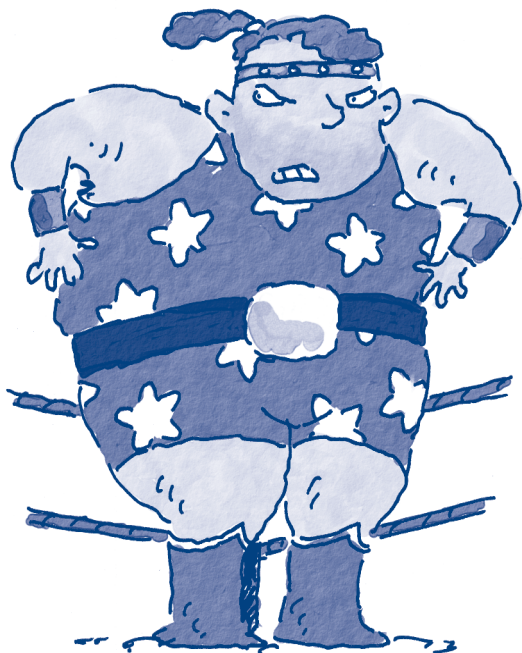


something violent in the real world, you might get the idea that it's "normal" or "okay." You might think violence is just a part of life. And you may think you can't do anything about it. **But you can.**

To confuse matters, you may see real people—adults you admire—acting in angry ways. For example, people at home may be angry and upset a lot of the time. (You can read more about this in Chapter 9.) This may lead you to believe that angry people are "supposed" to be loud, mean, and scary—or that it's okay to act in these ways. **But it's not.**

And sometimes, the people you see acting angry are your heroes. You may watch popular athletes, for example, yelling at each other or pushing each other around during games. You may hear stories

about how their behavior isn't all that different on and off the playing field. So, they may do aggressive things like drive fast, carry guns or other weapons, or hurt someone they love. Because you admire how these athletes play sports, you may think you should admire the other ways they act. **But don't.**





Here's where your anger radar can help you. Turn on your radar to be aware of when you're seeing violent stuff on TV, in movies, on the news, or even in video games. Think about how you feel when you're exposed to angry or aggressive behavior. Remember those anger warning signs (page 35)? Tune in to yourself for a moment to see whether your body is sending you some signals. Feel that anger rising? Keep in mind that **you** are the one in control. With the touch of a finger, you can turn off the TV, VCR, computer, or video game player.

Then what?



Take a break.



Let yourself chill out.



Find a better activity instead.

And if you're upset or confused about adults you see who act angry, talk to someone about it. Let the person you're talking to know how you're feeling. Ask for some help if you need it.

You can also use your radar for one more important thing: finding a role model you can really look up to. Is there someone you admire who treats people well and shows respect for others? Someone who knows how to stay cool and calm? Someone who speaks up for herself or himself? Someone who stands for peace? Let this person be your guide for how to act and how to live.

Chapter 9

Anger “What Ifs”

So, maybe you want to become the boss of your anger. But there are some “what if” questions that are getting in your way. Questions like this one:

“What if my parent or teacher won’t help me with my anger?”


Sometimes adults aren’t comfortable around anger. Maybe your dad says to you, “Don’t get mad like that.” Maybe your teacher says, “I don’t want to hear angry words in our classroom.”



When adults tell you things like this, it can seem like the adults expect you to just stop being angry. They may even make you feel like there's something wrong about feeling angry. **(There's not.)**

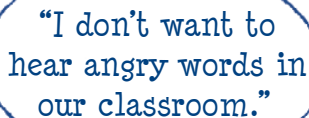
It could be that these grown-ups just aren't saying what they really mean.

When an adult says:




"Don't get
mad like
that."

Or




"I don't want to
hear angry words in
our classroom."

It might really mean:



"I feel bad
when you are
angry."

Or



"We need to talk
respectfully to
each other."

Try talking to your dad or teacher privately about this. You might say, "When I get angry, it seems like you think that's a bad thing. Everybody gets mad sometimes. I'd like some help figuring out what to do when this happens to me."



Your dad or teacher may be glad to talk with you when you let them know you need help. If not, though, don't give up on finding a way to talk about your feelings. Talk to another adult you trust.

"What if I have a problem with a bully?"

Usually people who bully are angry. They think picking on other people makes them powerful. Here are some "don'ts and do's" you can keep in mind if someone is bullying you with words . . .

You **don't** want to ignore the bully. Often, ignoring bullying makes it worse, because the bully wants

you to react. He or she may just keep on teasing you or calling you names.

You **do** want to stand up for yourself. The bully probably doesn't expect you to do this. Keep your voice calm, firm, and strong. You could say, "Stop that. I don't like it." Or, "I'll report you if you don't leave me alone."

"See that teacher? I'm going to tell her what you did."



Or if someone is threatening to hurt you physically . . .

You **don't** want to fight back. Someone could get hurt—and besides, fighting only makes anger worse.

You **do** want to stay safe. Keep your cool and walk away. Head toward a place where there are plenty of other people. Bullies don't want to be outnumbered.

A group of bullies is called a gang. If a gang of kids is chasing you, or if any number of bullies is threatening you with a weapon of some kind . . .





And, remember, no matter who's bullying you, or in what way . . .

- * It's **not your fault**.
- * Yelling or fighting back won't help.
- * Adults need to know what's happening so they can help you be safe. They might also be able to help the bully stop the angry or dangerous behavior.

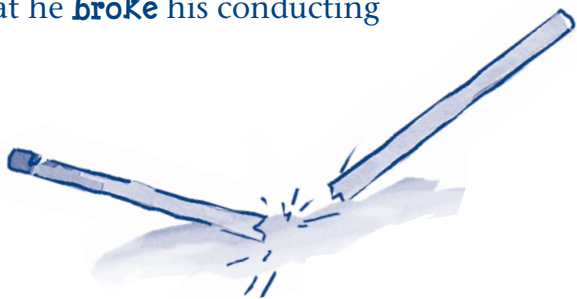
“What if an adult is angry?”

Everyone gets angry. Girls, boys, friends, brothers, sisters, cousins—even babies get angry. And, yes, adults get angry, too. This is actually very normal. Teachers, parents, coaches, club advisors, religious leaders, police officers, bus drivers, and lunch ladies get angry.

Here’s another thing that’s **no different** for adults than it is for kids: some adults handle their anger better than others.

Maybe you’ve seen adults act like these two people:

The teacher who led the sixth-grade orchestra had a temper. The students in his class didn’t know what to do. This teacher yelled at the top of his lungs whenever he was mad. When his students’ music didn’t sound as nice as it was supposed to, he sometimes hit the podium so hard that he **broke** his conducting baton.



Once, he even threw all the music off the podium during class. This made it hard for the kids he taught to feel comfortable playing their instruments or asking questions. They never knew when he might blow up.



When an adult yells, breaks stuff, or throws things, threatens, or actually hits, it isn't a healthy situation. If something like this happens to you or your friends, tell another adult about it. You might tell your mom or dad, or the principal or counselor

at your school. You will be making things better for yourself. And the person you talk to might also be able to help the adult who needs to learn to handle anger in positive ways.

A boy and his mom often had good times together. When they walked the dog, or washed the dishes, or played cards, or ran errands, they would laugh and joke around. But at times the boy's mom would get *furious*. The boy was never sure when this would happen. Sometimes she would come home from work and start hollering and storming around the room. Once when they were riding in the car, she got so mad at another driver that she drove the car faster and faster, shouting at the top of her lungs. The boy was really scared. He didn't know what to do.



When family grown-ups lose control, it can be pretty frightening. It's hard to feel safe when the adults who make the rules and are in charge of you act in ways like this.

If something like this happens to you, you need an adult's help. Ask another grown-up—someone

you trust—to help you figure out what to do. Together, you may decide to find a quiet, calm time to talk with the person who gets so angry.

You could say, “I really like when we get along, but I get scared when you yell and pound the table. I wish you would be more calm when you feel angry.”

Remember, if someone is hitting you or hurting you, it’s not okay. You can get help by talking to a trusted adult. See the list of adults you can go to on page 24–25.

“What if I don’t feel safe?”

Safety is the most important thing of all. For you, it’s **Job #1**. So, if you don’t feel safe—if you worry that saying something now could mean an adult gets even more angry with you later—get help.

If there’s yelling or fighting in your home, you can help keep yourself safe. You can:

- * **Plan ahead.** Think about a safe place you can go to when the yelling or fighting starts. Go to that place and do something calming. You might read, or write in a notebook, or play a game, or listen quietly to music. If you have a cell phone, you might call a relative (like your grandpa or your aunt), or a good friend, and talk quietly.

- * **Call 911.** If you don't feel safe anywhere at home, call 911. Explain to the person who answers the phone that there is a fight in your home and you don't feel safe.
- * **Talk to a trusted grown-up.** Find an adult who can figure out how to help you be safe at home. Talk to that person about what's going on.

Page 23 has more information about how to get some help.



Chapter 10

Grrreat Ways to Keep Your Cool

Congratulations! You've learned lots of ways to become the boss of your own anger! There are also things you can do every day to take care of yourself and handle your feelings in positive ways.



Be good to your body.

Get some exercise every day so you feel healthy and strong. Physical activity improves your mood and is a good way to use the energy you feel when you're angry.



Eat right.

It's important to eat nutritious foods like fruits and vegetables throughout the day. Avoid too many junk foods like candy and chips, which can give you the "blahs." (They're tasty when you're eating them, but they make you feel not-so-good afterward.)



Don't skip meals.

Have you ever noticed that you get a short temper if you're hungry? It's hard to feel balanced when you skip breakfast or go to practice on an empty stomach. Eating regular meals and snacks will help keep bad moods at bay.

Cut down on caffeine.

Drinking a lot of sugary, caffeinated soda can leave you feeling jumpy and jittery. And when you feel that way, it's easier to get mad at little things. Try water or fruit juice instead.

Don't skimp on sleep.

Staying up to watch the late-late-late show may seem like fun, but you might be a real grump the next day. Get a good night's rest every night, and even take naps if you need to.



Learn to relax.

Relaxation isn't about lying around or spacing out in front of the TV. Actually, relaxation takes some skill and concentration. It's a way to clear your mind and relax your muscles from head to toe. There's a relaxation exercise on pages 15–16 that you can learn to do. Once you know the steps by heart, you can relax anywhere, anytime.

Know your feelings.

Try to figure out if you're actually angry, or if you might be feeling jealous, sad, frustrated, or some other emotion. When you know how you feel and why, you can better figure out how to cope.

Talk with somebody.

Whenever something's bothering you, get it off your chest. Find someone to talk to. Tell the person what you're feeling and why. That person can be an adult you trust or a good friend. If you and your friends aren't used to sharing your feelings, you may need to be the first one to try it. Chances are, your friends will be glad you opened up to them and will feel more comfortable talking about their problems, too.

Write about your feelings.

Keep a private journal for storing all your thoughts. Write in it whether you're angry or happy. It's fun and helpful to record your words on paper. Lock up your journal if you're afraid someone will peek.



Find a quiet place.

This place can be your own bedroom or a private area of a bedroom you share with someone else. Your quiet place could be your bed or a closet—wherever you can go to feel safe and peaceful. Use this as your thinking and feeling place. Anytime you feel strong emotions and you want to be alone, go to this place to feel better.

Find fun distractions.

What's your favorite hobby or activity? Don't have one? Then get one! Maybe you could start a collection, learn a new skill, or join a club. If you already have a hobby or an activity you love, turn to it when you're having a bad day. It helps to get your mind off your problems.



Get into music or art.



There are two great things about music: When it's fast, it can help you release pent-up energy. When it's slow and soothing, it can help you feel more calm. Use music to help you with your emotions. You can use art to do that, too. When you're upset, it feels good to scribble, get your hands in some paint, or mold a big hunk of clay.



Make good decisions about what you see and hear.

There's a lot of violent stuff on TV, in movies, and in video games—even ones that are specially made for kids. Watching and hearing violent, angry stuff might leave you feeling violent and angry yourself. You can make good choices about the shows, Web sites, and games you view.

Help start an anger-management group.

Talk to your teacher, school counselor, scout or club leader, or someone at your place of worship about starting a group for people who want to learn to handle anger in **positive** ways.

Choose friends who help you feel good.

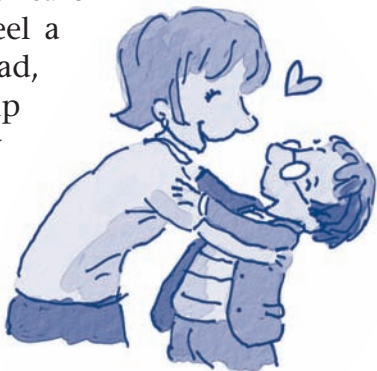
Are you hanging around kids who act angry and tough? Do your friends tease you or do other things that leave you feeling bad about yourself? Real friends care about you. They want you to feel good about who you are and the things you do.



Look for **real friends**—ones who can help you feel happy and peaceful.

Get and give hugs.

Hugs from people you love or care about are a great way to feel a little better when you're sad, upset, or angry. You can help someone else feel better by giving that person a hug, too. (Just be sure the person wants the hug.) Hugs aren't only for times when you feel bad, either. They're a nice way to show when you're happy!



Learn to forgive and forget.

You probably know that holding a grudge against someone doesn't make life easier. And it never feels good to have a lot of fights at home or lose a friend because you argue too much. Learn to say you're sorry, and don't wait forever to get the words out. Never give an apology like this: "I'm sorry—but you sure acted like a jerk!" (The person won't feel better.) Just say you're sorry for your part in things: "I apologize for how I acted. It was disrespectful."

The other side of apologizing is forgiving. If you feel like you can do it, forgive someone who's angered you—whether that person has said sorry or not. This is a **great** way to put an angry moment behind you.

If you learn now how to tame your temper and use your anger in a positive way, you'll have a much easier time getting along with people. It's true! Plus, you'll grow up to be a happier, healthier adult. Someday, you just might thank yourself for learning to show your anger who's the boss.

(That would be you.)



On the next page is a pledge to help you work on dealing with your anger. You can photocopy the page and take the pledge. Sign your name and write down the date. Ask a trusted adult to watch you take this pledge and to help you keep it. Any time you start to have trouble with your anger, look at the promises you've made to yourself. You may be inspired to keep them!

Anger Pledge

I promise to work on handling
my anger in positive ways.

I promise to treat others with
kindness and respect.

I promise to treat myself with
kindness and respect, too.



Name: _____

Date: _____

A Message to Parents and Teachers

Anger is part of the human condition. It's as normal as joy, sorrow, excitement, fear, or contentment. Yet, as a parent or teacher, it's hard not to be concerned about the aggressive and sometimes violent ways children—and adults—express anger.

For most people, anger is an especially difficult emotion to deal with. It's a complex feeling, closely linked to other emotions including guilt, jealousy, grief, frustration, worry, and fear. Further complicating anger is the way many of us learned to handle it ourselves. We may have understood from an early age that anger was unacceptable. We may have learned only negative ways to express and cope with it: perhaps by ignoring it (or those who make us angry), keeping an unsettled or stormy mood, lashing out with words, yelling, or hitting. Taking their cues from the adults in their lives, our children may be learning to handle anger in similar ways.

Psychologists tell us that it can be helpful to think about anger as a kind of survival emotion. If a child is angry, it's a signal. The signal might alert us that the child needs to overcome something developmentally (such as being accepted by peers, learning to compete, or mastering skills in school). It might let us know that the child needs to deal with stresses that occur in relationships (such as teasing, unfair treatment, or feeling pressured). Or it could be a sign that she or he

is struggling with self-doubt, low self-esteem, or feelings of powerlessness.

Many times, children get messages from parents and teachers—often unintentional messages—that anger is bad. It can be almost an automatic response to say, “Don’t get angry” or “Quit being so mad.” Yet children do get angry, and so this message doesn’t help them understand or work through the anger that they’re experiencing. Often, too, adults tell kids, “It’s okay to be angry, but it’s not okay to yell (hit, kick, throw things).” This is a positive message, as far as it goes. But children need more than this. They need to:

- * have ways to release angry feelings when they want to explode or strike out
- * understand why they are angry
- * be able to express their angry feelings, share them with others, and talk about them
- * learn how to deal with the situations that lead to anger
- * find ways that they can manage angry feelings

Besides handling their own anger, kids need to know what to do when other people are angry. Seeing adults or other young people seethe with anger, lose control, or shut people out is frightening for children.

We wrote this book to give kids practical strategies for dealing with angry feelings in healthy ways. You might want to read the book yourself before sharing it with your child. If you like, read it with your child

or class. Talk about the ideas in it. Ask “what if” questions about some of the situations the book depicts and about situations your child or students experience. Help children plan how to avoid conflict, calm down when angry, release and express angry feelings, resolve problems with other people, and get help from trusted adults when needed. Planning ahead puts children in control and gives them positive power over anger.

Ideas for Helping Kids Deal with Anger

Here are some other suggestions for supporting children as they learn to manage anger.

Make it a point to deal with your own anger in positive ways. If you're in a power struggle with your child, exit the scene until you can calm down. Then talk about what happened in a nonblaming way. Notice your own anger buttons, warning signs, and responses. You might want to ask a partner or friend to give you some feedback about what the person observes regarding how you respond to anger. If you find that you're struggling with managing your anger, get professional help.

Model appropriate ways to handle anger. Tell your child what you're doing: “I’m feeling angry right now, so I’m going to take a walk and calm myself down.” “I’m mad about something that happened at work today. I’m going to call my friend and tell him about it. Talking things through helps me figure out what to do.”

Make it a goal not to argue heatedly with your partner in front of your children. Children are very sensitive to how their parents or caregivers treat each other during arguments. They feel torn when the people they love most are fighting—especially when loud arguments or other angry behaviors are taking place. If you yell and shout at each other in front of your children, they may become angry, frightened, and upset. They may feel as if they are to blame or must somehow act as mediators. Avoid putting a child in this difficult situation by doing all that you can not to argue this way in your home. Choose a time when you can talk with your partner, calmly, behind closed doors. The point isn't for you and your partner to try to be super-human here, but to minimize the negative or intense adult situations your kids see and hear at home.

Set reasonable rules at home. Think of the goal of discipline as self-discipline; set clear and logical consequences that help children control themselves and get along with others. If you typically use spanking as a form of discipline, think about the message it sends to kids: that hitting is a way to solve problems. Decide whether this is the message you're really trying to send and what other methods might work better. (See pages 109–112, for helpful books on discipline.)

Know the signs that a child needs help with anger. These include:

- * recurring behavior problems or misbehavior that isn't typical

- * sleep problems
- * changes in eating habits
- * unhappiness the child can't explain
- * physical outbursts like slamming doors, kicking furniture, or intentionally breaking things
- * ongoing irritability
- * harming other people or animals
- * fighting at home or at school

When children are angry, try to discover the reason.

Invite conversation when everyone is calm. Listen carefully. Avoid shaming your child for being or acting angry—even when the actions aren't acceptable. Once you know the reason for the anger, find ways to help solve the problem.

Help children learn anger-management skills.

Many kids yell, fight, swear, or throw tantrums because they simply don't know another way to show how they're feeling. Teach them words for strong emotions, so they can understand and clearly express powerful feelings. Help them find ways to calm down and gain control of themselves, and to talk things through with you and others. It can be helpful to role-play situations where anger and conflicts might occur, and have kids enact different approaches to the problems.

Let children know you expect them to manage conflicts in respectful, constructive ways. Give them a chance to handle an angry situation on their own. If they need help, ask for their ideas about what to do. Suggest some solutions if necessary. You might also talk to the principal or guidance counselor about starting an anger-management group for kids at school.

Keep the lines of communication open between home and school. If you're a parent, talk with the teacher about concerns you have and about how you're helping your child manage anger at home. If you're a teacher, tell parents what issues are arising for children at school. Let parents know that you are teaching kids positive ways to deal with anger, and enlist their support at home. When parents and teachers work together to help kids handle anger, children get consistent messages and guidance.

Monitor children's TV, movie, computer, and video consumption. Talk about violence in the media and how it can contribute to angry feelings and make people feel that violence and cruelty are normal or fun. Make an effort to spend "media-free" time with children playing board games, riding bikes, going to the park, or fixing meals together.

Get outside help if it's needed. If the suggestions in this book and in the other resources on pages 106–113 don't seem to be helping, seek professional help for your child. You might ask the school guidance

counselor, psychologist, or social worker for help or for recommendations of therapists, child behavior specialists, or family counselors. You might also ask a trusted doctor or member of the clergy, or check the Yellow Pages under Mental Health Services or Child Care Resources and Referral. If cost is a concern, let the counselor or agency know. Low-cost, graduated-scale, and free services are often available.

Unpleasant as it is, anger can actually be a positive force, helping kids to stand up for themselves when things don't seem right or fair. Giving children the confidence and skills they need to cope with anger is empowering. It offers kids hope, security, and self-confidence—a chance to end the cycle of unresolved anger and lead more peaceful and constructive lives.

Resources for Kids



Books

Bullies Are a Pain in the Brain by Trevor Romain (Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, 1997). If someone's bullying you, this book has practical tips and suggestions for becoming "Bully-Proof." It can also help you if you're the one who's doing the bullying.

Don't Be a Menace on Sundays! The Children's Anti-Violence Book by Adolph Moser, Ed.D. (Kansas City, MO: Landmark Editions, 2002). Here's a book that talks about all the violence you see and hear about on TV, in movies, in video games, and in your own school and community. You'll find helpful ideas for tuning out and turning away from violence and for staying safe and out of trouble.

Don't Rant and Rave on Wednesdays! by Adolph Moser, Ed.D. (Kansas City, MO: Landmark Editions, 1994). This colorful book offers ideas to help you feel mad less often. It also has tips for calming down, expressing your emotions, and controlling angry feelings.

Sometimes I Like to Fight, But I Don't Do It Much Anymore by Lawrence E. Shapiro (Plainview, NY: Childswork/Childsplay, 1995). Douglas has always liked to fight, but fighting gets him in trouble with his friends and the principal. He learns to control his fighting with help from a counselor and a friendship group at school. If your library doesn't have this book, your parent or school can order it by calling 1-800-962-1141.

Stick Up for Yourself! Every Kid's Guide to Personal Power and Positive Self-Esteem by Gershen Kaufman, Ph.D., Lev Raphael, Ph.D., and Pamela Espeland (Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, 1999). Simple words and real-life examples show how you can stick up for yourself with other kids (including bullies and teasers), big sisters and brothers, and grown-ups, too. This book also has ideas to help you manage anger, grow a "feelings vocabulary," and solve problems.



Web Site

KidsHealth

www.kidshealth.org

This site has great information on all kinds of issues related to being and feeling healthy. Enter the kids' section and click on "Feelings" to find links to information about school concerns, getting along with your family and friends, understanding emotions and behaviors, and dealing with thoughts and feelings. To learn more about handling angry situations and feelings, check out "Taking Charge of Anger," "Dealing with Bullies," "Talking About Your Feelings," and "What Should I Do If My Family Fights?"

Resources for Parents and Teachers



Books and Activities

The Anger Solution Game. This therapeutic game helps elementary-aged children learn to control their behavioral responses to anger. As players move around the board, they face various decisions and learn to make constructive choices. For two to six players. Available from ChildsworK/Childsplay, 1-800-962-1141.

The Angry Child: Regaining Control When Your Child Is Out of Control by Dr. Tim Murphy and Loriann Hoff Oberlin (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 2001). When is angry too angry? This text covers the ten characteristics of an angry child, the four stages of anger and how to cope with each, the family types most likely to produce angry children, the five “Cs” of successful parenting, commonsense strategies, and the causes and impact of Attention Deficit Disorder.

The Bully Free Classroom: Over 100 Tips and Strategies for Teachers K–8 by Allan L. Beane, Ph.D. (Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, 2005). A comprehensive resource for creating a peaceful, caring classroom that promotes a sense of belonging in all students and

stops bullying in its tracks. Beane's prevention and intervention strategies focus on classroom attitudes, thinking, and behavior; on students who are or could become victims of bullies; and on bullies themselves. Positive and practical, the book is reinforced with true stories and enhanced by reproducible forms, checklists, and resources.

How I Learned to Control My Temper by Debbie Pincus (Plainview, NY: Childsworld/Childsplay, 1995). This is a storybook/workbook about Michael, who flies into a rage at the slightest provocation. Michael learns a variety of ways to control his temper and finds out how much better he is treated by both adults and other children when he talks things out. The activity section includes reproducible exercises that teach children to control their anger. If your library or bookstore doesn't have this book, order it from the publisher at 1-800-962-1141.

How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish (New York: Avon Books, 1999). This is the 20th anniversary edition of a classic parenting book. The authors discuss how parents can cope with children's anger and express their own without being hurtful, set firm limits and find alternatives to punishment, and resolve family conflicts peacefully.

The Parent's Handbook: Systematic Training for Effective Parenting by Don Dinkmeyer Sr., Gary D. McKay, and

Don Dinkmeyer Jr. (Circle Pines, MN: American Guidance Service, 1997). This book teaches parents positive ways to handle power struggles with kids, a host of ways to discipline using logical consequences instead of punishment, and communication skills such as encouragement, reflective listening, and I-messages. The authors promote the idea of family meetings as a forum for talking about problems and building strong family relationships.

Taming the Dragon in Your Child: Solutions to Breaking the Cycle of Family Anger by Meg Eastman, Ph.D., with Sydney Craft Rozen (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1994). Written for parents of kids from toddlers to teenagers, this book gives realistic, healthy, and positive ways to understand and defuse situations that trigger their children's tantrums, flare-ups, sarcasm, and arguments. It also shows parents how to recognize and break their own anger patterns, which children may be imitating. Each chapter combines specific information and advice with realistic examples of what to do in a variety of typical situations.

Temper Tamers: An Eight-Session Anger Management Pull-Out Program by Kathryn Pearson, M.S. (Verona, WI: IEP Resources, 2002). This step-by-step anger-management program is intended for use with small groups of elementary-aged children. Groups use stories as the focal point for learning to recognize anger and other feelings and to think about and implement solutions for dealing with anger.

A Volcano in My Tummy: Helping Children to Handle Anger by Elaine Whitehouse and Warwick Pudney (Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers, 1998). Readily available through online bookstores or the library, this book for parents, teachers, and counselors provides a series of 25 lessons to help kids ages 6–15 handle anger through stories, games, worksheets, and interactive exercises with lots of real-world applications. Includes information on building kids' self-esteem, developing an anger-management program, and handling angry outbursts.

When Kids Are Mad, Not Bad: A Guide to Recognizing and Handling Your Child's Anger by Henry A. Paul, M.D. (New York: Berkley Books, 1999). This book sensitively and thoroughly addresses what makes children angry; how age, gender, and background can affect their expression of anger; the right and wrong ways to respond to angry behavior; and how to understand anger, foster healthy development, and strengthen bonds between parents and children. The book gives detailed information related to every age group from infancy to the teen years. The author also explains how a variety of behavior problems from depression and rebellion to addiction and aggression can be rooted in hidden or repressed anger.



Organizations

Committee for Children

568 First Avenue South, Suite 600
Seattle, WA 98104-2804
1-800-634-4449

www.cfchildren.org

Offers information, curricula, and videos addressing violence prevention, impulse control, and conflict resolution for use in K–8 classrooms. You can also visit the Web site for links to fiction for children, arranged by age and grade, on topics including impulse control, anger buttons, identifying feelings, problem solving, keeping out of a fight, and more. Call or write for a list of products and services, including the revised third edition of the *Second Step Violence Prevention Curriculum*.

Parents Anonymous®

675 West Foothill Boulevard, Suite 220
Claremont, CA 91711
(909) 621-6184

www.parentsanonymous.org

Parents Anonymous is a well-established family strengthening program designed to help all parents find ways to manage their own anger and create a safe, nurturing home environment for their kids. Parents Anonymous groups, co-led by parents, meet in communities throughout the United States. Anyone in a parenting role can join at any time and can attend for as long as she or he wishes to. Check the Web site or look in the White Pages for a local 24-hour hotline.

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(The Place to Go for Things You Want to Know)

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Elizabeth Verdick is the coauthor (with Pamela Espeland) of *See You Later, Procrastinator!; Dude, That's Rude!;* and the Adding Assets Series for Kids and (with Trevor Romain) of *Stress Can Really Get on Your Nerves!* and *True or False? Tests Stink!* She lives in Minnesota with her husband and two children.

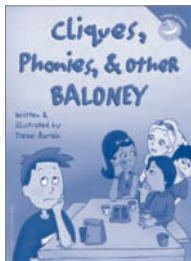
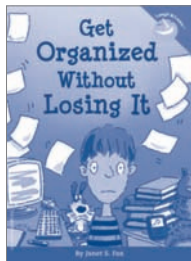
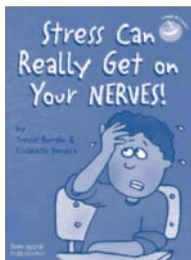
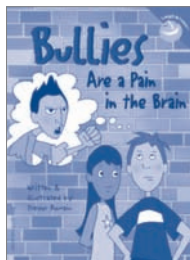
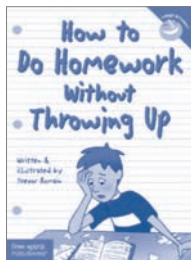
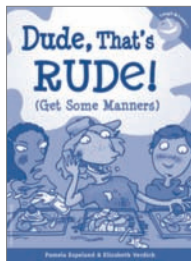
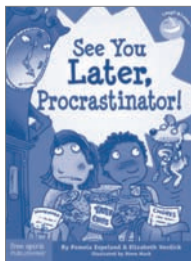
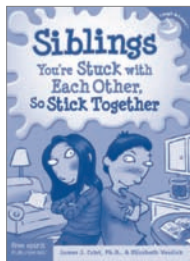
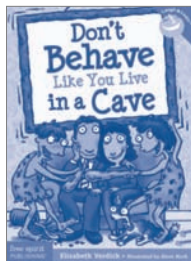
Marjorie Lisovskis has been editing books for kids, parents, and teachers for over 30 years. She has also written stories, songs, and school activities for kids of all ages. Marjorie has two grown children and three grandchildren. She and her husband live in Minneapolis.





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