



Helping Children and Adolescents Succeed Socially!

The Social Skills Groups

Social Skills Groups are held at:
The Social Skills Place, Inc.
464 Central Avenue Suite 6
Northfield, Illinois 60093

Date and times:

Elementary School

Monday's 4:30PM-5:30PM
Thursday's 4:30PM-5:30PM

Middle School/Jr.High

Wednesday's 5:30PM-6:30PM

High School Group

Tuesday's 5:30PM-6:30PM

Parent Group

Wednesday's 1:00PM-2:30PM
Wednesday's 7:00PM-8:30PM

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Visit us at:

www.socialskillsplace.com

Please Note:

We begin new groups as soon as we have enough children or adolescents to form a new group.

Dates and times of the groups are flexible.

Help children overcome anger so they are FREE... and successful in making and keeping friends.

Anger is a fact of life. Unfortunately, our world is filled with violence, hatred, war, and aggression. According to French psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan, we grow up with anger right from the beginning of life. The brilliant French psychoanalyst taught that aggression results as a psychological defense against threats of the self's fragmentation. He taught us that is, as infants, we are just a jumble of diverse biological processes over which we have no control, and our first task in life is to develop a coherent identity which "pulls together" this fragmented confusion. The quickest, easiest, and most common defense available — to hide the truth of our weakness and to give the illusion that we possess some sort of power — is aggression. Anger. So it is inherent and more so in some more than others.

Anger can be used constructively at times. It can give us energy we need to fight back if threatened physically. We are wired to use anger to protect ourselves. However, for most situations it merely clouds our judgment and creates extra stress. Anger can prompt aggressive behavior toward other people. It then may permanently harm relationships-- especially with those we love. Prolonged or frequent anger has been shown to be a significant cause of cardiovascular problems and heart attacks.

There are three components of anger. They are:

1. The emotion state itself is the first component of anger. That emotion creates a stress response; a reaction. Anger is defined as an affective arousal state, or a feeling that a goal is blocked or needs are frustrated. Some examples of why we get stressed are threats to: our autonomy, self esteem, safety, fear of loss, and fear of rejection. These examples may provoke anger in us and others. The stressors are different for everyone. But children cannot often escape the stressor.
2. Anger is the second emotion, and component. The

expression of anger.

3. The third component is the understanding of anger. We understand there is first a stressor, an emotion. And again, this emotion creates the stress response. A reaction and a reactive expression of feeling. A reaction. We want to promote calm for our children and ourselves. We want to teach them to express how they feel with words if possible, but the arts are also a helpful way to express our feelings.

Note that depression in children and young people can look like anxiety or anger. It may present as irritability — There is an edge to it, but it presents like, "Leave me alone" or "Why bother trying", "I don't care", in a huffy way.

Helpful interventions for parents and adults who work with children to help assist and guide our children's expression of anger (And perhaps our own anger.):

- **Children need a narrative, words to express how they feel.** Instead of pushing that child off the slide, help them tell you how they feel! Help the children to know what is happening. Talk to them. There is a stimulus triggering an emotion, the first stage of anger. Tension builds as does the heart rate, blood pressure and our respiration. Then comes the full flight or fight response to relieve tension. Thus anger.
- **Create the calm and safe environment** at home or school where a child or young person **can talk and be heard**. Help children to acknowledge all feelings, both pleasant and unpleasant. Tolerate their feelings, so they will learn to tolerate their feelings. Listen well to them. They need to be heard! Do not shame their anger; it is a human emotion. Healthy homes and classrooms should be clear and fair, sensitive and upfront about rules and consequences.
- **Take 10.** Help the child take ten deep breaths. In through the nose to the count of two, and out through the mouth to the count of first two, then four, then six, then eight then ten. Always in for two. And have them focus in the here and now. This WILL calm them down and stimulate brain connectedness.
- **What makes us "Pop" our Cork and Stress Relief Ladder Skill.** Help the children to create (A picture with paper and crayons or pens.) a bottle with a cork, and make lines in it as if a piece of lined school paper. Have them fill in the stressors that precipitate the anger. What makes them "pop" their cork? Then after they identify what upsets them, have them draw a ladder. I call this the Stress Relief Ladder. Help them

write distressors on the steps of the ladder, things they can do to calm down. Examples: Telling someone how they feel; taking some deep calming breaths; getting a drink of water, walking around the school blacktop and so on...

- **Talk** about what the child can do instead of "blowing up". Help them to create a plan, before they blow up and get angry, or hurt someone or themselves.
- **Model calm intentional ways to resolve conflict AT HOME or school.** Do not be reactive at home or school. Children will model your conflict resolutions.
- **Teach the steps to express their feelings of anger. D.E.S.K. Skill.** Describe other's behavior. Express how you feel about the behavior (stressor) and its effect on you. State what you want from the other person to fix it. Know what you will do if they do not respond to you.
- **Skills exercise**, for keeping anger at a minimum. Help the children to keep their brain calm and flexible. Activities reduce the chances for anger to present: singing, dance, move in rhythm, play a musical instrument, practice telling a good joke a day, exercise (that gets the heart rate up), praise/compliment one person a day, smile on purpose and often.
- **Stop and walk away.** Time and distance do help us to calm and resolve conflict.
- **Enhance the life for all children each and every day:** laughter, fun and DOWN TIME (not an organized activity), exercise, focusing on their strengths (everyone has them), positive self talk (and express gratitude twice a day, morning and night) and social support (could be a Social Skills Group if needed).

References:

Lewis, M., & Michalson, L. (1983). CHILDREN'S EMOTIONS AND MOODS. New York: Plenum.

Dr. Margaret Wehrenberg's seminar on Anxiety, Depression and Anger, April 2013

Susan Stern, LCSW is the founder of The Social Skills Place, Inc.

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