

Anger Management: Parent Module

Parenting a teenager is never easy, but when your teen has challenges with anger or is engaging in other reckless behaviors, it can seem overwhelming. You may feel exhausted from lying awake at night worrying about where your child is, who he or she is with, and what they're doing. You may despair over failed attempts to communicate, the endless fights, and the open defiance. Or you may live in fear of your teen's violent mood swings and explosive anger. While parenting a teen struggling with anger can often seem like an impossible task, there are steps you can take to ease the stress you and your teen feel. This can significantly reduce the chaos at home and help your teen transition into a happier, more successful young adult.

Understanding Teen Development

As teenagers begin to assert their independence and find their own identity, many experience behavioral changes that can seem bizarre and unpredictable to parents. Your sweet, obedient child who once couldn't bear to be separated from you now won't be seen within 20 yards of you, and greets everything you say with a roll of the eyes or the slam of a door.

A troubled teen, on the other hand, exhibits behavioral, emotional, or learning problems beyond typical teenage issues. While any negative behavior repeated over and over can be a sign of underlying trouble, it's important for parents to understand which behaviors are normal during adolescent development, and which can point to more serious problems.

Brain Function in Teens

No, your teen is not an alien being from a distant planet, but he or she *is* wired differently. A teenager's brain is still actively developing, processing information differently than a mature adult's brain. The frontal cortex—the part of the brain used to manage emotions, make decisions, reason, and control inhibitions—is restructured during the teenage years, forming new synapses at an incredible rate, while the whole brain does not reach full maturity until about the mid-20's.

Your teen may be taller than you and seem mature in some respects, but often they are simply unable to think things through at an adult level. Hormones produced during the physical changes of adolescence can further complicate things. Now, these biological differences don't excuse teens' poor behavior or absolve them from accountability for

their actions, but they may help explain why teens behave so impulsively or frustrate parents and teachers with their poor decisions, social anxiety, and rebelliousness. Understanding adolescent development can help you find ways to stay connected to your teen and overcome problems together.

Dealing with angry teens

Anger can be a challenging emotion for many teens as it often masks other underlying emotions such as frustration, embarrassment, sadness, hurt, fear, shame, or vulnerability. When teens can't cope with these feelings, they may lash out, putting themselves and others at risk. In their teens, many boys have difficulty recognizing their feelings, let alone being able to express them or ask for help.

The challenge for parents is to help your teen cope with emotions and [deal with anger](#) in a more constructive way:

Establish boundaries, rules and consequences. At a time when both you and your teen are calm, explain that there's nothing wrong with feeling anger, but there are unacceptable ways of expressing it. If your teen lashes out, for example, he or she will have to face the consequences—loss of privileges or even police involvement. Teens need boundaries and rules, now more than ever.

Try to understand what's behind the anger. Is your child sad or depressed? For example, does your teen have feelings of inadequacy because his or her peers have things that your child doesn't? Does your teen just need someone to listen to him or her without judgment?

Be aware of anger warning signs and triggers. Does your teen get headaches or start to pace before exploding with rage? Or does a certain class at school always trigger anger? When teens can identify the warning signs that their temper is starting to boil, it allows them to take steps to defuse the anger before it gets out of control.

Help your teen find healthy ways to relieve anger. Exercise is especially effective: running, biking, climbing or team sports. Even simply hitting a punch bag or a pillow can help relieve tension and anger. Dancing or playing along to loud, angry music can also provide relief. Some teens also use art or writing to creatively express their anger.

Give your teen space to retreat. When your teen is angry, allow him or her to retreat to a place where it's safe to cool off. Don't follow your teen and demand apologies or

explanations while he or she is still raging; this will only prolong or escalate the anger, or even provoke a physical response.

Take steps to manage your own anger. You can't help your teen if you lose your temper as well. As difficult as it sounds, you have to remain calm and balanced no matter how much your child provokes you. If you or other members of your family scream, hit each other, or throw things, your teen will naturally assume that these are appropriate ways to express his or her anger as well.

Website: <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/parenting-family/helping-troubled-teens.htm>