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# **Communi- cating when you are angry**

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❖ **INSIGHTS FOR FAMILIES** is provided by your child's school in recognition of your role as a partner in education. Written by Judy McDaniel, communications consultant.

Family members work long hours, answer the needs of their family, and often are involved with many activities outside the home. In addition to these stresses, sometimes families are disappointed in their children's behavior. These things may cause family members to lash out in anger at their children.

When you are angry with your children, follow these tips.

- ❖ Don't attempt to communicate until you regain your cool. You cannot be objective until you stop and settle down.
- ❖ Don't tower over your child. Physically get down to the child's level, then talk.
- ❖ Focus full attention on the child. Eliminate distractions by turning off the TV and your cell phone, and discourage other children from interrupting.
- ❖ Listen, without interrupting, to what the child says, even if you disagree. If you are very tired, you will have to make an extra effort to be an active listener. Genuine active listening is hard work and is very difficult when you are already tired.
- ❖ Unless other people are specifically meant to be included, hold conversations in privacy. Embarrassing the child or putting him or her on the spot in front of others will lead only to resentment and hostility, not good communication.
- ❖ Hold your response. Stop and ask yourself, "What is my child really trying to tell me?"
- ❖ Restate what you have heard by repeating what you hear the child say.
- ❖ Don't be a wipe-out artist, unraveling minor threads of a story and never allowing the child's own theme to develop. This is the parent who reacts to the incidentals of a message while missing the main idea.
- ❖ Don't ask why, but do ask what happened.
- ❖ If you have knowledge of the situation, confront the child with the information that you know or have been told.
- ❖ Keep adult talking ("You'll talk when I'm finished." "I know what's best for you." "Just do what I say, and that will solve the problem."), preaching and moralizing to a minimum because this is not helpful in getting communication open and keeping it open.
- ❖ Don't use put-down words or statements: dumb, stupid, lazy: "Stupid, that makes no sense at all" or "What do you know, you're just a child."
- ❖ Tell your child that you still love him or her, but that his or her behavior is not acceptable. See if together you can arrive at a solution.
- ❖ Let the child know that you are interested and involved and that you will help when needed.