

INSIGHTS

Turn your anger around without yelling



We've all had those days. You know the ones... the days where your child has refused to get ready for school, thrown food at their brother and is in a right mood. Your teenager slams the door when you ask them to clean up their bedroom. You ask and ask again. And again. And the kids just won't listen. That, or if they listen, they won't do as they're told!

When days like this happen – and they do – you can get so angry that you lash out only to regret your actions later on. With smacking now widely regarded as less acceptable, the lashing out often takes the form of yelling. It's probably fair to say that yelling is the new smacking.

Yelling is harmful

Researchers believe that yelling at kids can be just as bad as smacking. Yelling has also been linked to lower self-esteem in children and young people. Children who are raised in a home where yelling is common have a higher risk of developing psychological issues. When parents use yelling as a discipline measure, kids have an increased risk of developing behavioural problems, anxiety, stress and depression.

Understand, don't reprimand

When your kids are really getting under your skin, instead of getting furious, be curious. You need to connect before you correct. Children don't wake up in the morning and think, 'How can I make life horrible for my parents?' They might be having a hard time. Work out what needs aren't being met and help meet them.

Use humour

Humour is one of the best ways to take away anger and reduce stress. A good friend of mine was teaching his daughter to drive. The whole family was in the car while the daughter was driving when she missed a corner and ended up crashing into a petrol station sign. My friend looked at his daughter and at his family and said, "Well, while we're here, does anyone need to use the bathroom?" By using humour, my friend released the tension in the situation. Then they could calmly talk about what had happened and how to resolve it. What a wonderful way to turn away from anger!

Stay calm and kind

Self-talk is now recognised as a great way to regulate your emotions and change your behaviour. When you're starting to get upset there's a mantra that you can use: 'I'm going to be calm and kind.' When you repeat this phrase, it reminds you of what you want, and helps you to better regulate your own emotions. Calmness is something of a superpower that can have such a positive impact on those around you.

Create psychological distance

All parents seem to have just a bit more patience with someone else's child or young person. Pretend that you're 'a favourite aunt who rarely never gets cranky at the kids. She always finds a way to be kind, even with the challenging child or teenager. If that doesn't work for you, pretend your child is a neighbour's kid!

In closing

Yelling turns children and young people away. Speak softly. Speaking softly forces them to listen closely, and it make everyone feel better.

Most parents hate yelling (as do their kids). When you are calm and kind, and look to understand, not reprimand, you will be able to keep anger and yelling out of your home. That's better for your kids and for you.



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Dr Justin Coulson helps families be happier. His Goalcast and TEDx positive parenting videos have been viewed by more than 100 million people. He is the author of 6 books about creating flourishing families and raising resilient children. Justin and his wife, Kylie, are the parents of 6 daughters. Find the Dr Justin Coulson's Happy Families podcast on Apple Podcasts and Spotify. For further details visit www.happyfamilies.com.au