



## Angry teens

Based on *How to Really Love Your Teenager* by Dr Ross Campbell

The feeling of anger is not bad or good in itself. Anger is normal and occurs in every human being. The problem is not the anger but in managing it.

Passive-aggressive anger is the opposite of an open, honest, direct and verbal expression of anger. It's the expression of anger that gets back at the person indirectly eg procrastination, dawdling, stubbornness, intentional inefficiency and forgetfulness. It is a refusal to take responsibility for ones own behaviour. Unfortunately people who use this approach may not be aware they're doing this to upset or get back at others. It needs to be handled quite differently to other behaviours.

Firstly it is not logical eg the student who is capable of and has achieved good marks in the past gets poor marks. Secondly it doesn't respond to usual tactics because the motivation is to upset parents or teachers. As long as we are getting upset the teen is getting what they want. We don't want this kind of behaviour to become entrenched so that it affects all future relationships. Deal with it calmly, get them talking about what they're angry about and work out solutions together.

Don't try to suppress your teen's expression of anger or use humour inappropriately as a way to shut it down. We need to learn how to manage our anger appropriately. Encourage teens to express anger directly and verbally. Acknowledge and thank them when they manage this. Be careful not to confuse anger with disrespect. Assess whether their attitude to you is respectful most of the time. Choose the best time to talk about any inappropriate expressions and what they could do differently next time. Be patient with the process – no teen will be good at this after one attempt. There will be times when they can't resolve the anger because the person concerned isn't present so they need to learn how to use other ways.

Strategies for managing anger are:

- Work out what annoys us eg disrespect, nagging, criticism, too much pressure, unhelpful beliefs eg 'my way's the right way', 'if they insult me I'm entitled to get back at them'.
- Identify what are the warning signs are eg heart pounding, breathing speeding up, fidgety, headache?
- Are we in control enough to respond now or do we need to cool off first and come back to it later?
- What are the best ways for us to cool down? Go for a walk or run, take some calm breaths, listen to music or give yourself time and space.
- Find out what's underneath the anger eg hurt, sad, embarrassment? Find solutions for the underlying feeling eg reassurance, an apology, letting someone know how the situation affected us.



### **Other resources**

*The Anger Toolbox* from [www.skylight.org.nz](http://www.skylight.org.nz)

*Adolescent Volcanoes* by Eliane Whitehouse and Warwick Pudney

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