

Mrs Dowdell's Parenting Pointers

Handling Anger as Parents – Part 2



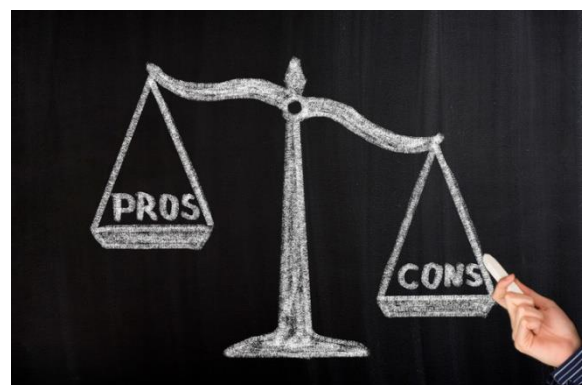
In the second week of the “Handling Anger in the Family” course, we continued to look at how parents express anger. In weeks 3 and 4 we will use that learning to help our children manage their anger. Here’s what we learned in week 2 ...

We began by reminding ourselves that **it’s OK to feel angry** (everyone does so at times), **but it’s not OK to express those angry feelings in a way that hurts others or ourselves.** When we say “hurts” we mean physically but also mentally i.e., saying unkind words or hurting people’s feelings. Psychologists tell us that the key to making any real changes to the way we think or act is to first become aware of what we’re already doing and saying. The parents in the group found that they’ve been more aware of

when they are getting angry and what their trigger points are. Sometimes the anger that we direct at our children is triggered by other things that might be going on in our lives. It reminds me of a saying that I learned (and my girls experienced!) “Don’t let Mum brush your hair when she’s mad at your Dad!”

How we were parented and how anger was modelled to us, has a huge impact on the way we express anger in our families. Most of us will either repeat patterns of behaviour learned from our childhood, or if we feel our parents didn’t do a great job, we’ll move towards the opposite way of showing our anger. We talked about the concept of “personal beliefs” that we may have developed which can fuel our anger. If I have developed the personal belief that “children should do as they are told immediately”, I’m likely to be frequently irritated by my children’s failure to comply with my instructions. (In fact, studies have shown that it is normal for children to ignore direction about one third of the time.) I can choose to change my personal belief to “sometimes children can be distracted when told to do something. They may need to be told again”. This is a far more realistic expectation and will hopefully help us to have a bit more patience and perspective. Parents went away from the session with the task of identifying any personal beliefs they may have unintentionally developed that they could modify to help them find some middle ground.

Next we discussed weighing up the consequences of losing our temper versus the results of staying calm. We were able to see that although losing our temper can sometimes get us what we want in the short term, the long term consequences can be really damaging to relationships and can often lead to the situation escalating. We recognised that staying calm can be really hard work but is a better way of modelling anger to our children.



We also learned about “the broken record strategy”, which is a way of calmly standing our ground without losing our temper and how to use “I messages”, which help us to express our feelings in a clear and respectful way. Both these strategies are really powerful and effective but learning new ways to handle anger is complex and takes more than a weekly article to unpack. If you need help, get in touch, we can chat some more and go through the ideas in detail to find ways of applying them in your family. You can email me at parenting@foundrylaneprimary.co.uk