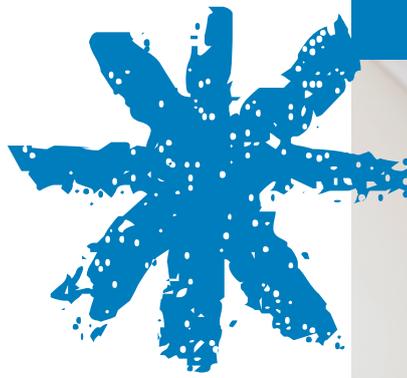


parenting *ideas insights



When you lose your temper

By Michael Grose

Ever blown your top to your children, only to regret it ten minutes later?

Silly question, it happens to us all no matter how well behaved our kids are, or placid and patient we are. At times the general strains and stresses of life wear us down so our emotional responses don't match children's behaviours. Or rather, their less than perfect behaviour doesn't warrant the 'screaming banshee' response that you have provided.

So what do you do if you have blown your top and given your children an absolute verbal blast with steam coming out of both your ears?

First, check that your rare outburst of anger is just that – rare. If you are always angry or over-reacting then this is a fair sign that all is not right with you. I don't want to state the obvious, but constant sudden outbursts of anger are a sign that all is not right with the world.

It may mean taking a break, getting some additional help with your kids or even getting some professional counselling to sort out internal or relationship issues.

If your outburst is rare rather than pathological then the best response is to show your children that you are human and apologise.

Put a little time between your outburst and your apology and consider giving an explanation. "Sorry about yelling at you guys. I have been working so hard lately. I guess I need a break."

No need to grovel, just reveal your human side to your family. Your children will take their cues from you and will more than likely talk on an emotional level if they see you go to the same space. Revealing your vulnerability gives children permission to reveal theirs.

Check your anger levels

It is a good anger management practice to check your own anger levels from time to time. When you know you are under stress and feel yourself about to blow your top take a break, phone someone up (and vent your spleen, if possible), or just count to 20 (or 100) before you blow your stack unnecessarily with your kids.

The place of controlled anger in discipline

There is a place for parent anger in the discipline process – as long as it is controlled. There are the times when children really need to know they have crossed a line and your whole voice and attitude needs to convey that their behaviour is unacceptable.

Most parents will know the type of response I am referring to. The voice goes steely and the words come out purposefully. Eye contact is strong and body language is direct.

The kids aren't frightened. They just know that their mum or dad means what they say! Gulp!

It is the type of response that should be saved for times when children put each other down mercilessly, or when they show gross disrespect to themselves, others or their environment.

We all want to steer clear from angry responses when we interact with those we love. But being human means that our behaviour doesn't always reach the lofty heights that we would like, and at times we lose our cool.

So recognise the signs of pending anger and take steps to manage it, and if you do lose the plot, reveal your vulnerability and apologise. Nothing wrong with that!

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