



**CENTRE COUNTY PREVENTION COALITION**  
*A SAMHSA Supported Drug-Free Community Coalition*  
*Led By Centre County Drug and Alcohol*



**December 12, 2008 – Helping Children Deal with Anger**

Rosemary V. Demer is Elementary Counselor for the Bald Eagle Area School District. This weekly column, published on Wednesdays, is a collaboration of Centre County *Communities That Care* serving Bald Eagle, Bellefonte, Penns Valley, and Philipsburg-Osceola Area School Districts, and Care Partnership: Centre Region *Communities That Care* serving the State College Area School District.

Children's anger presents challenges to both parents and teachers committed to constructive, ethical, and effective child guidance. Handling children's anger can be puzzling, draining, and distressing for adults. However, there are steps parents and teachers can take to help children deal more comfortably, effectively, and adaptively with anger.

Serve as an appropriate model. Remember that children don't always do what we say. They are more likely to do what we do. A key component of teaching anger management is for you, the adult, to manage anger and model effective anger coping strategies.

Be empathic. As you teach children to express anger constructively, place yourself in their shoes. Ask yourself questions such as: "Am I speaking to my children so they will learn from me rather than resent me?" "Would I want anyone to speak with me the way I am speaking with my children?"

Involve your child in the process of dealing effectively with anger. Engage them in discussions that include consideration of what makes us angry, what are options for dealing with anger, what might be consequences of each option, and what option might be most effective. By doing so, we reinforce the belief in children that they can learn to control anger rather than have anger control them.

Remember, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Note if certain situations are especially frustrating for your child and prepare a plan of action in advance. For example, if your child gets frustrated because he or she wants every item in sight at the store, you could say, "You can select one item. You let me know which one you would like to have." If this kind of preparation does not work, it may be a signal that your child is not yet ready to accompany you into the store. Prevention also includes providing clear and realistic expectations and being consistent.

Discipline in a way that lessens frustration and anger and reinforces self-discipline. All parents can become frustrated with their children, but when parents respond to their children's anger by screaming, yelling, or spanking they are unintentionally reinforcing the very behaviors they wish to stop. Parents who remain calm while disciplining, have clear expectations, and use realistic, natural and logical consequences will lessen outbursts of anger in their children, while reinforcing self-control.

Show your children unconditional love and spend “special times” with them. When parents show unconditional love, children are less likely to become frustrated or intensely angry. When parents spend time alone with each of their children, they develop a positive relationship. Such relationships provide the foundation for teaching children self-discipline and assisting them in managing anger constructively.

Even in the best functioning families, both children and parents will get angry at times. The key is how we choose to deal with our angry feelings as parents and teachers and how effective we are at helping children develop strategies to manage anger. One of our most important tasks is helping children become skilled at anger management.

Care Partnership: Centre Region *Communities That Care*  
*Serving State College Area School District*  
Dawn Taylor, Community Mobilizer  
814-861-7424  
dtaylor105@gmail.com  
Web address: [carecentreregion.org](http://carecentreregion.org)

Centre County *Communities That Care*  
*Serving the School Districts of Bald Eagle, Bellefonte, Penns Valley, and*  
*Philipsburg-Osceola*  
Elizabeth Eckley, Community Mobilizer  
814-404-9511  
centrecountyctc@yahoo.com  
Web address: [centrecountyctc.org](http://centrecountyctc.org)