



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



**November 4, 2009 – Help me, I'm angry!**

Rosemary V. Demer is an Elementary Counselor with 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.

"I'm angry!" How many times have we heard children make this comment or exhibit the behaviors that go along with angry feelings? The question is, why are we seeing so much anger in so many young people?

Our children are facing more stresses than most of us ever had to deal with growing up. Not only are they exposed to these things on the daily news, but in their everyday lives, both at home and at school. Bullying is increasing at every grade level.

In my forty years as a teacher, counselor, and day care administrator, the single greatest trend that I have seen with children is the marked increase in anxiety and anger.

What can we do as parents? This question is often asked by the parents I consult with. Teaching children self-control in handling their emotions helps when they are faced with daily frustrations, at home or at school.

In "Building Moral Intelligence," Dr. Michele Borba gives parents five strategies to teach children self-control so they can calm down and learn how to handle their anger:

1. Model coolness
2. Develop a feeling vocabulary
3. Identify anger warning signs
4. Use self-talk to stay in control
5. Teach abdominal breath control

Teaching children to use self-control is critical to their problem-solving efforts in dealing with anger. It is also critical that we, as parents and educators, help build moral strength in our children.

What makes kids angry? You might be surprised. Young children become angry over something as simple as coloring outside the lines to something as life-changing as their parent's divorce.

Big or little, significant or insignificant, the anger is still there and children need to be taught appropriate tools to use in de-escalating their anger to a point where they can talk about their feelings.

Teachers help children learn how to express angry feelings in socially constructive ways. Children develop ideas about how to express their emotions primarily through social interaction in their families. Some children have learned negative, aggressive approaches to expressing anger. A major challenge for teachers is to encourage children to acknowledge angry feelings and to help them to express anger in positive and effective ways. This can be accomplished by:

1. Creating a safe emotional climate
2. Modeling appropriate anger management
3. Assisting children with self-regulatory skills
4. Encouraging children to label their feelings and talk about what made them angry
5. Reading stories about anger
6. Communicating with parents

Children exposed to responsible anger-management techniques are more likely to understand and manage angry feelings nonaggressively. Teachers can be of great assistance to children by adopting positive guidance strategies.

Anger is a feeling that all children experience. Anger is a part of life. Sometimes life hurts and sometimes life is not fair. All children need to learn safe ways to cope with their anger. In today's world, learning to cope with anger and frustration in a positive way may be one of the most important lessons your child will ever learn.

Care Partnership: Centre Region *Communities That Care*  
*Serving State College Area School District*  
Dawn Taylor, Community Mobilizer, 814-237-6191  
dtaylor105@gmail.com  
Web address: 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