

Poipoia te tamaiti

Staying calm
with kids



Your guide to
managing emotions, what can
help, when kids get angry

tākai

Kids learn to manage their emotions by watching you. If you let your anger out in harmful ways, it hurts your kids and damages your relationships with them.

If you regularly yell, lash out or even hit, kids learn that it's OK to do the same when they're angry, especially if they're bigger than someone else. They can grow up to be more aggressive and angry themselves.

Te hinengaro māharo



When you yell at, lash out or hit your kids, it triggers a stress hormone called cortisol in their brains. When this happens they can't think clearly.

So, if you want them to behave better, talk to them when you're both calm.

“I saw my youngest child pointing and yelling at their sister. I realised they were copying my behaviour and that I needed help.”

Staying calm



Staying calm isn't easy when you're getting angry, but you can do it. If you recognise the signs, you can begin to calm yourself down.

Often anger feels like it takes us by surprise. But there are lots of physical signs that anger is building up. Notice your early warning signs – breathing faster, heart pounding, getting hot, tensing up, clenched teeth.

Everyone gets angry – it's part of being human. It's what you do when you feel angry that's important.



What can help

When you feel you're getting angry, tell your child you need a minute to calm down. Reassure them you'll be back.



Move away – somewhere you can still hear your kids are safe.



Breathe – deep breaths slow your heart rate and calm you.



Count to ten, sing, jump – use that energy up in safe ways!

If you've calmed down, give yourself a pat on the back and go back and talk to your child.

Or if that isn't enough, try these:



Exercise – exercise helps reduce stress. Put your child in a stroller and go for a quick walk round the block.



Play a silly game or talk in a funny voice – humour is a great way to release tension and make everyone feel better.



Phone a friend, or a helpline (see the back page for helpful numbers).

Whānau say

**“Counting to ten sounds too simple,
but it really works!”**

If you do lose it

We all have times when we snap or lash out at our kids. When you do, say you're sorry and talk about how you both can do better next time.

This doesn't mean you're weak. It teaches your kids that no one behaves perfectly all the time, not even their parents! It also shows them that we all need to take responsibility for our own behaviour.

“Kids learn more from what you do, than what you say.”



Making changes

Ask yourself 'what am I really getting angry about?'

Think about what has triggered your anger. This can help you to get things into perspective and keep calmer next time.

Everyday life can be very stressful for parents. People often get angry about things that have nothing to do with their kids, but the kids are sometimes on the receiving end.



"It's not their fault that you've had a bad day."

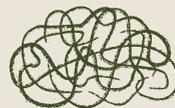
Is there anything that might be making your anger worse?
Is there anything you could change or deal with better?

- **Money problems** – talk to a budgeting service or visit sorted.org.nz
- **Alcohol or other drugs** – Who could help you cut down or cut it out?
- **Job or relationship stresses** – try a helpline for advice
- **Taking on too much** – try to practise saying no
- **Lack of sleep** – try to go to bed early if you can
- **Lack of time to yourself** – think about arranging a kid swap with someone who, like you, might need some time out!

See the back page of this booklet for services that can help you.



Te hinengaro māharo



Counting, singing and jumping engage a different part of your brain from the 'anger reflex', helping you calm down quicker. It may feel silly but singing about your frustration entertains your child, and diffuses tension so you can 'reset' your emotions.

Need more help?

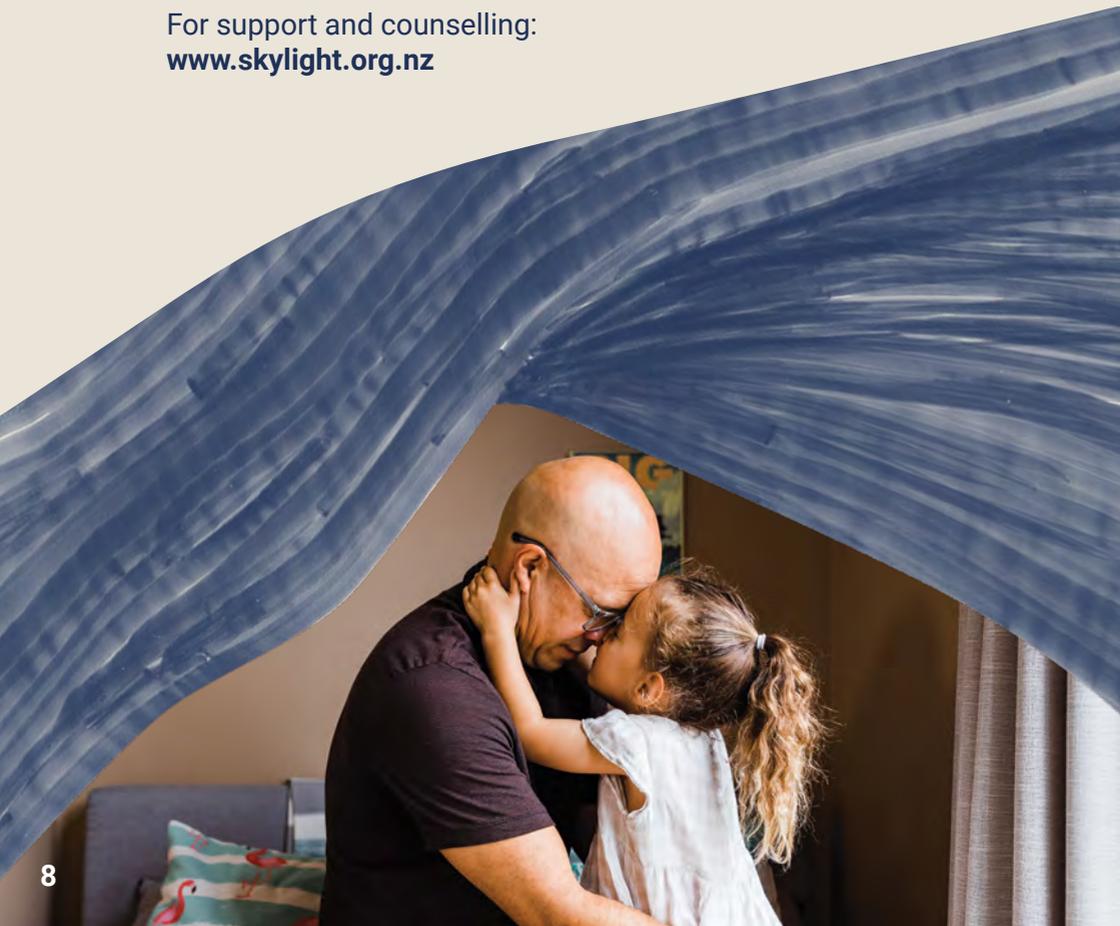


If you're regularly losing it with your kids, it's a sign that you might need some extra support. Yelling and swearing at them every day is not OK – for them or for you. Emotional abuse might not leave bruises but it still damages kids, and can lead to a range of issues in later life.

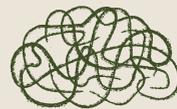
You might feel embarrassed, but remember it is OK to ask for help.

Talk to someone you trust, a family member or friend, your doctor or maybe try a helpline – see the list at the back of this booklet.

For support and counselling:
www.skylight.org.nz



Te hinengaro mīharo



To change a habit, like yelling when you get angry, you need to repeat the new behaviour over and over to make it stick in your brain. Keep doing it – every time you replace the old behaviour with the new one, you're closer to a calmer you and a more positive relationship with your kids.

More useful resources

www.relationshipsaotearoa.org.nz

www.skylight.org.nz



When kids get angry

Angry kids can become angry adults. Help your kids to learn how to handle their feelings, especially the scary or angry ones. Try to:

- always acknowledge their feelings. Start off with something like “I can see you’re feeling (angry/annoyed/frustrated) ...”
- be clear about what behaviour you expect and be consistent with consequences
- remain firm but fair – and stay calm so you won’t feed their anger
- make time to talk about how they feel, and how you feel – for example happy, sad, scared. Help them to understand what they’re feeling
- have some special time with each child every day where you really focus your attention on them, even if it’s just 15 minutes.

A word about teasing

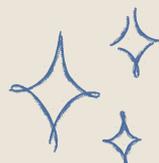
Teasing might seem like fun but kids don’t always see it that way. Embarrassing or shaming kids, or letting them do it to each other, is a form of bullying. It damages their self-esteem, increases anger and makes it more likely that they will bully others.

Make your home a ‘no shaming’ zone.





Who can help



Are You Ok – 0800 456 450

Skylight – 0800 299 100

PlunketLine – 0800 933 922

Parent Help – 0800 568 856

Parent 2 Parent – 0508 236 236
(support for parents of children with special needs)

Depression – 0800 111 757

Citizens Advice Bureau – 0800 367 222

Problem Gambling Foundation – 0800 664 262

Alcohol Drug Helpline – 0800 787 797

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren – 0800 472 637 (ext 1)

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else that could use
this booklet? Pass it on!**



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