

ANGER, MELTDOWNS & RAGE

About the Author

Simon Beal is a Clinical Psychologist and specialises in child and adolescent psychology and has a strong interest in children's behavioural issues and helping parents to manage their children's challenging behaviours. Simon started his career in the Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), but has now worked in the private sector for close to fifteen years. Simon now has three private practices across Adelaide, South Australia, where he receives referrals from General Practitioners, Paediatricians, Psychiatrists, School Counsellors, Teachers, Families SA, and the Federal Magistrates Court and Family Court of Australia. Simon is registered with Families SA to provide support to children and families in foster care, and Simon is also registered with the Independent Schools Board of South Australia as a behavioural consultant. Simon has the title of expert witness in both the Federal Magistrates Court and Family Court of Australia, where he has been regularly called to give evidence in relation to children's issues. Simon is also a parent of two teenagers, so understands all too well the everyday challenges that parents face. As a result of this experience, Simon believes strongly that parents need practical and sensible advice and strategies to manage their child's challenging behaviour. Simon strongly believes that the modern-day parenting approach is letting parents down in this very challenging and stressful area of parenting.

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INTRODUCTION

Anger - Normal but Destructive

Anger is a normal emotion, everyone experiences it. In very young children, it is often called a tantrum, when a child doesn't get their own way, such as the 'terrible twos'. It's usually expected that the child will grow out of it, as the child gradually learns to cope better and manage their emotions. But what happens when a child doesn't grow out of it, and the parent has a five year old, a ten year old, or much worse, a teenager, who still loses control of the anger. The result can be very challenging for everyone in the family, and if left unchecked, at its worst it will destroy relationships and tear families apart. Even when not this extreme, anger can have a very negative impact on family life. It places great stress on parents, who are still expected to be able to 'control' their child, but feel they have no control over the child's anger and rage. Parents often feel at the wits end, with none of the recommended strategies helping, leaving them to 'walk on eggshells' around their angry child to avoid any possible issue. However, this is most definitely not the answer, and inadvertently will often result in further anger issues, as the child becomes increasingly difficult to live with.

This manual is aimed at providing parents with a better understanding of anger in children, why it's there, and most importantly, what parents can do about. This manual will explain why many of the standard approaches to children's anger don't work, but not only this, why these standard

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approaches can seem to make children even angrier. The strategies contained in this manual are not the standard parenting strategies that parents have been endlessly told to use, because if anger is still a problem, then obviously those 'standard' strategies haven't worked. The strategies in this manual are designed to be simple but effective, and something that any parent can implement. Importantly, the strategies are designed to teach children to better control their anger, so that as adults they know how to control themselves. These strategies have been developed from years of trialling different approaches, and they have been 'tested' on thousands of children.

Background

Children have always got angry, but it seems that anger and rage in children has become a much bigger problem for families in recent decades. Often things like violent video games and family conflict, such as parent's separating etc. are blamed for the rise in anger in children, however research suggests that it's not that straight forward. For example, research into violent video games clearly indicates that it's not the games per se that lead to increased anger in the children that play them, rather it's the lack of parental supervision associated with the playing of these games. In other words, it's the lack of appropriate discipline that leads to a child displaying more anger, and this is something that is seen constantly in working with thousands of families. But before parents cop the blame for not adequately supervising their

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children when playing these games, there is far more to it than that. Many factors have contributed to children now being much angrier, and these need to be understood in order to know how to better deal with the anger that children display.

Firstly, in parenting, there has been a general trend away from what was seen as overly harsh parenting, to an approach which encourages children having more rights and more of a say. This has created an environment where children now believe that their rights are equally important as the parents' and their say is also equally important. While sounding very positive, in practice it has created a nightmare for many families, essentially placing children on the same level as the parents, which has resulted in children thinking they should be able to make their own choices and decisions, and get their own way. (Please refer to the Introduction and Rationale Manual for a more detailed discussion.)

Along with this shift toward children having more rights etc, has come the idea that children need to 'choose' how to behave, as this is supposed to develop a child's independence and decision making skills. Hence, a child is now told that it's their choice how they need to behave, which has created in children's minds the notion that everyday decisions are up to them to decide – and how does this go in everyday life? The result is a child who clearly expects to get their own way, and is extremely upset when they don't, and hence they get angry and upset.

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On a more practical level, but also related to the above, is that with the shift away from the old fashioned parenting, parents today have lost all of the strategies that past parents had to control a child's behaviour. The only strategies parents now have are the 'positive' strategies, such as rewarding the good behaviour and ignoring the bad, and spending more time with your child, and these strategies are supposed to create a healthy happy household. The reality is that these modern-day strategies do nothing to deal with a child's anger, and in many cases will only make the situation worse – but more on this later.

Coinciding with the above has been the development of the view that it's healthy for an individual to express all of their feelings and emotions, an idea which has been taken from counselling and therapy ideas and inappropriately applied to children in everyday situations. This has created an environment where parents have been led to believe that in order for a child to be healthy, the child must be allowed to express all of their emotions. So when the child throws a massive tantrum because the child hasn't got their own way, parents are told that it's ok because the child simply has 'big feelings' that need to be let out. Hence, parents have been placed in the unenviable position of being expected to control their child's meltdowns and tantrums, but also let their child express their big feelings, because this is supposed to be healthy. (Please refer to the Introduction and Rationale Manual for a more detailed discussion.)

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The combination of all the above factors, and along with it, the rise in the level of anger in children, has come the apparent need for children to learn 'anger management'. This is not surprising at all, given that anger is normal and children need to 'express their big feelings', and that children are now supposed to be responsible for making their own choices, that they are their 'own boss', and therefore need to control their anger, with these views fitting neatly with the view that children then need counselling and therapy for their 'past trauma'. From all of this comes 'anger management'. Not surprisingly, children are now expected to manage their own anger and make sensible choices with their behaviour when they're getting angry. To understand what is now expected of children, it requires a closer look at anger and what happens to all of us when we get angry.

Hence, it's now not only normal, but healthy and good for a child to express their anger.

Underlying Issues?

Whenever a child displays excessive anger, over and above the 'terrible twos' and normal childhood tantrums, it's now immediately thought that the child must have some underlying issues that's causing the anger. Parents often hear this from well-meaning counselling staff at schools, therapists, and doctors, and so believe that the child is struggling with some underlying issue. This general view has stemmed from both the increased recognition that sometimes counselling is required for people to help deal with trauma, but also from

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research that shows that trauma can lead to later behavioural issues. Sure, while trauma can sometimes be the cause of later emotional issues, such as someone being involved in a near death experience and later suffering anxiety, in most everyday cases it's simply not. Coupled with the view that trauma is the cause of anger in children is the over-dramatization of what now constitutes trauma, where it's now the case that a quick look into any child's history will reveal a 'traumatic' experience, with every bump and scrap now being viewed as traumatic. And by adopting this view, the question then needs to be asked "what needs to be done about it". Immediately, it's recommended the child have counselling, to help 'deal with the trauma', then countless sessions are spent trying to help the child 'deal' with the so-called 'trauma', while those around the child have to sit back and tolerate the child's intolerable behaviour. It must also be remembered that with counselling, behaviour tends to get far worse before it gets better, as counselling typically involves 'reliving' the so-called trauma. Put simply, not every negative experience in a child's past is traumatic - yes it may be stressful at the time, but it's not traumatic. It needs to be remembered that sometimes 'sh%t happens' and we've just got to get over it.

The view that past trauma has 'caused' the current anger issues should not be confused with the possibility that sometimes 'stressful' events can 'trigger' a child's anger issues. A common example is where parents have separated. This situation is obviously very stressful for children, and it's

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very common for a child to start to 'act-out' following their parents separation. However, firstly, it's wrong to view the separation as traumatic – yes, it's very stressful, but in most instances, the child just needs time to adjust. (And in many instances, the child is better off with the parents' having separated – two parents living together who despise each other is far more 'traumatic' than parents separating.) The acting-out that often follows situations like parent's separating is more likely due to the initial stress of the situation, coupled with the fact the parent or parents inadvertently let their guard down and 'allow' the behaviour to escalate. This is often due to the parent feeling guilty or 'sorry' for the child, and they then tend to excuse the child's inappropriate behaviour or anger. Further to this, if the child's anger then results in the parent 'tiptoeing' around the child, and giving in to the child, the anger is quickly reinforced - meaning there will be more of it, because their anger resulted in them getting their own way.

Personality Traits - the Real Underlying Issue

In most instances, when it comes to everyday anger and normal childhood experiences, a child's anger is more likely due to the child's personality traits, where the stress of a situation, or the build-up of stress, can result in the child reacting angrily. This explanation also explains why only some children, when exposed to the same stressful situations, will react angrily. Personality traits also help to explain why some children's anger will only reach a certain point, but another

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child's anger will 'go off the scale'. There are two key personality traits that seem to cause children to be much angrier.

Determination and Strong Will – A child who is determined and strong willed can be a very positive quality, however, it can equally cause major amounts of anger. A strong willed child usually knows what they want and they will fight very hard to get it. Anyone or anything that gets in their way will cause the child to become very frustrated, and this leads immediately to anger. Frustration is often the trigger to a child's anger, meltdowns and rage. While this level of determination can be a good thing – it can certainly help the child succeed later in life - it can also spell trouble for the parent. After all, it's the parent that has to sometimes stand in the way of what the child wants. Take for example the child who demands to have a chocolate bar every time they go to the supermarket. When the parent says no, the parent cops the child's frustration and anger, because the parent didn't let the child get their own way. If the parent gives in to the child, then there's no problem. In most households where the child is displaying inappropriate anger, more often than not it's triggered by a very strong willed child not getting their own way. (For more details about this personality trait, please refer to the Introduction & Rationale Manual.)

Intense and Highly Strung

The second personality trait that seems to underlie a lot of anger issues in children is the 'intensity' of the child's

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personality – in other words, how ‘highly strung’ is the child. Somewhat related to strong-will and determination, some children just seem to be much more intense, in everything they do. Again, this can be very positive, giving the child a ‘real passion’ for everything they do, however, like strong-will, it’s also the cause of intense frustration and anger. Some children by nature are very relaxed and ‘chilled-out’, nothing really seems to bother them too much – if something doesn’t work properly, or they can’t find the special thing they’re searching for, “oh well, never mind” is the usual response. However, when a highly-strung child can’t find what they’re looking for, look out, it’s everyone else’s fault, and everyone else is going to ‘pay for it’. With a highly-strung child it’s very much the case that there is no in-between, it’s either all good or all bad. It is this trait that helps to explain why anger can ‘appear out of no-where’, when everything was completely fine one minute, then the next, the child’s in a rage, often due to the smallest of issues – such as they’re sock didn’t go on right. Parents are left scratching their heads wondering ‘where did that come from’. It is also this type of scenario that prompts parents to sometimes think that there must be something underlying, as what else can explain where so much anger comes from so quickly. In reality, it’s more than likely the child’s intensity that causes these angry outbursts. The child is basically like a tightly coiled spring, just waiting for the smallest of ‘knocks’ to unravel.

Self-Centredness

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All children are born self-centred, however some children never seem to move away from this and remain very self-centred as they get older. Other children however tend to develop more consideration of others, and as a result their behaviour becomes less selfish as they get older. It's this 'self-centred' personality trait that can be the cause of a lot of anger - this is because a self-centred child only thinks of themselves and nothing else matters. This personality trait dictates their outlook in everything they do – and it translates into the common situation where if it's going the child's way, then everything is fine – but as soon as it stops going their way – look out! This self-centredness causes a child to often want something that they're not allowed to, or can't have – they're not interested in the reasons why, the only thing they care about is getting their own way. Couple this with a very strong-willed personality, and the result can be disastrous. (For more details about this personality trait, please refer to the Introduction & Rationale Manual.)

These factors combined help to explain why some children, despite being exposed to the same stresses and difficult circumstances, can react quite calmly and rationally, while other children react like their world is coming to an end. It's also these factors that make anger so hard to control for these children, and why expecting a child to manage their own anger is completely unreasonable.

Anger Management – Why It Doesn't Work

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An adult has a bad day at work, where everything that could go wrong did go wrong. They hop in the car, happy for the day to be over, and head for home. But in the back of their mind are still all the things that went wrong that day. Then some unsuspecting driver in front of them forgets to 'indicate', a seemingly minor error, but all hell breaks loose. Road Rage – we've all seen it, otherwise very sensible and rational adults, completely losing it over the minutest of things, behaving completely irrationally and out of control. What's this got to do with children's anger? The point is that adults have a very difficult time controlling their anger at times – it's therefore completely unreasonable to expect children to manage their own anger as well.

Parents are often told by teachers, day care workers, or other professionals that their child needs to learn anger management, and dutifully, the parents get all the help they can trying to teach the child how to better manage their anger. The child is quickly taught that they need to recognise the warning signs that they are getting angry, often using metaphors like a traffic light, then they're given the steps to deal with their anger, such as screaming into their pillow, punching their mattress, counting to ten, and so on. This all sounds very sensible and positive, however rarely does it work, especially when you have a child with an intense, strong willed, often self-centred personality. The child simply gets too 'caught up' in the situation, their emotions quickly reach the 'irrational' point, where there's usually no turning back, and basically it's all too late. The child has lost it, their anger

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is out of control, and this is when the child will behave irrationally, saying and doing things that they would never normal do, and which they usually regret later – just as the adult driver does with road rage.

Two Missing Links in Anger Management

As explained above, it is essential that we don't expect children to manage and control their anger themselves. What is required are strategies that the parent can use to make the child control their anger, and in repeatedly doing so, the child will learn over time how to control their emotions. Again, it must be remembered that it's NOT healthy for a child to be able to express all of their anger – there's nothing healthy about it – society doesn't tolerate it, and the child nearly always feels bad afterward, so how can it be positive. A child needs to learn how to control their emotions, so they don't behave inappropriately when they don't get their own way.

Fortunately however, not all is lost - anger management strategies can work, but some vital changes needed to be made to the standard strategies. These strategies are based on needing to stop the escalation in emotion, or if the child has already reached the 'irrational point' the strategies then need to contain and put a stop to the situation.

The first missing link is quite simply 'a consequence'. It's the consequence for 'losing control' that forces the child to remain in control, and when forced to keep control enough times, the child gets far better at controlling their emotions.

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Essentially it's the consequence that forces the child to make the decision between 'losing it' or suffering the consequence for 'losing it', and when the consequence is big enough, in other words, when it's unpleasant enough for the child, it's amazing how well a child will control their anger. What once was an 'out-of-control' child who would lose it and then feel bad afterwards, often spoiling the whole day or a special occasion in the process, will be able to control their inappropriate anger, and in the process, feel much better about themselves.

The logic behind this strategy comes from everyday life, and there are many examples that demonstrate that it is the consequence that makes a person control their temper. A good example is on the football field. We regularly see adult players losing control of their temper, and if it weren't for the umpires, games would often end in a giant 'punch-up'. And remember, this is with supposedly, and otherwise sensible adults simply playing a game of 'footy'. So what stops every game from ending like this – it's the umpire that controls the game, and it's the umpire that stops a player from losing their temper. And what gives the umpire the ability to stop a player from losing control – it's the consequence the umpire will give the player, as easy as blowing the whistle. Put simply, when the consequence is big enough, it will stop the person from losing control. To emphasize this point even more, it's not that the players respect the umpire, or think that he's a nice guy and therefore the players will simply do as their told. It's the consequence that gives the umpire the respect of all the

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players – and it's the same for children. It's the consequence the parent can give the child for losing their temper that will stop the child from losing it in the first place. (Please refer to the Introduction & Rationale Manual for a more detailed discussion.)

The second missing link needed to control a child's anger is the need for a strategy to not only be a consequence, but also it needs to act as a circuit breaker. This is due to the fact that once a child reaches a certain level of emotion, they become irrational. In other words, once a child reaches six out of ten on the anger scale, it's basically too late, they've lost all ability to reason, and they become irrational. This then means that anything that is said or done after this usually results in further escalating the child's anger. For example, if the child has already 'lost it', and the parent then tries to punish the child by taking something away, it will more than likely not be effective. This is because the child is already irrational. What is therefore required is a circuit breaker, something that will put an end to the battle straight away, before it gets worse. It must also be remembered that some children, due to their intense personalities, will reach six out of ten very quickly, so it's vital to apply the circuit breaker strategy sooner rather than later.

In summary, children require an adult to contain the child's emotions, and the adult therefore requires a strategy that is both a circuit breaker and a consequence at the same time. It's the circuit breaker that stops the situation from escalating

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any further, and it's the consequence that will teach the child to control their temper in the future.

Strategies that Don't Work

Ignoring the Anger

One seemingly simple strategy that parents are told is to simply ignore the child, as ignoring the child doesn't pay any attention to the behaviour, and if modern parenting ideas are to be believed, then this is supposed to stop the anger. Ignoring a child is fine if the tantrum will only go on for a few minutes. However it's often the case that with intense strong-willed children, ignoring their anger only tends to fuel it even more, and the longer it goes on, the more the anger escalates, with many children simply demanding a response. Put simply, if ignoring the anger hasn't worked in the past, and worse, if it's resulted in the situation getting worse, then clearly it's not the answer.

Holding the Child

When a child has lost control of their temper, which can result in the child being aggressive and violent, parents are often advised that they must 'hold' their child, as the child is obviously now 'distraught' and needs the nurturing support of a 'loved one' to 'help them through their traumatic experience'. The strategy of holding a child has been adopted from research into children that have been neglected and traumatised, and these strategies are now inappropriately

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applied to everyday situations where the child has lost their temper. However, as with the 'ignoring' strategy, the 'holding' strategy typically only causes the child to escalate further. This is because trying to 'hold' an out-of-control child allows the child to keep the parent engaged in the battle, and it therefore continues for much longer. As well as this, there are the practical issues to consider, as many parents will testify too – try holding a child who is in a rage, the parent will almost certainly be kicked, punched, pinched, scratched, spat on, or any other vial behaviour the child can unleash on the poor parent.

The Parent has Time Out

Another strategy that parents are told to use, particularly when the child becomes very aggressive and violent, is for the parent to lock themselves in their own room under the child's anger has subsided. This is possibly the worst strategy of all, as it is leaving an out-of-control child unsupervised and in control of the situation – this is completely the wrong thing to be doing to manage a situation where the child is clearly out of control. In fact, it is psychologically distressing for the child to be left unsupervised when they are out-of-control – this sends the very unhealthy message to the child that the adult that is supposed to be caring for them can't.

Time Out on the Naughty Spot (or the Bedroom)

Possibly the most common strategy given to parents when trying to deal with their child's anger is Time-Out on the

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naughty spot, or the naughty chair, for one minute for every year of age. Another common version is Time Out in the child's bedroom. The child is expected to sit there for the required amount of time, and the child is also expected to sit there and think about what they've done wrong. Unfortunately, there are some major flaws with these versions of Time-Out. Firstly, a child won't be sitting there and thinking about what they've done wrong. Usually children are far too upset or angry to be thinking clearly about anything. This idea is really just a poor attempt at making a consequence sound more like a strategy aimed at helping a child learn to make better decisions and choices. This is an example of 'parenting gone mad'. It's the consequence that stops the behaviour, not the 'thinking about it'. Remember, if sitting there thinking about it was going to be effective, surely it would have worked after a few times of trying this strategy.

One problem with this version of Time-Out is the expectation that a child will sit there for the required time. If you have a strong-willed child, there is every chance that they won't sit there quietly for very long. The usual recommended strategy if the child 'carries on' or leaves Time-Out before the required time is that the parent is supposed to continue placing the child back into Time-Out, as many times as necessary, until the child has done the required amount of time. This may work when parents have the SuperNanny on hand to help, but in everyday life, when a parent has a million things to do, not to mention needing to look after other siblings, often who are

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crying because they've just been the victim of the child in Time-Out, it's just not practical.

The other issue with the child being able to leave the Time-Out spot before their time is up is that by leaving the Time-Out spot, they can keep the parent engaged in the battle. This is the reason why the battle can go on for so long, because the child is able to continually get the parent's attention. This must be avoided at all costs. (For more details, please refer to the Introduction & Rationale Manual.)

THE STRATEGIES

The Strategy That Does Work

Time-Out – But Not the Standard Version

The starting point for an effective strategy, which is both a circuit breaker and a consequence, is Time-Out in the Toilet. The toilet is boring and unpleasant, therefore it's far more likely to be of consequence than the child's bedroom, or the naughty spot (where the child can often still see what's going on etc.) It's also a place where minimal damage can be done, which is important for those children that become aggressive and violent when they have 'lost it'. If the toilet is simply not a practical place for Time Out, another boring and unpleasant place for Time-Out will need to be found – often the laundry or bathroom are suitable alternatives.

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For Time Out to be effective, there are several factors that need to be considered further, especially as it's involving a child that has lost control. As mentioned above, a common problem with the standard Time-Out is that the child won't stay there. The problem with this is that this allows the child to keep the parent engaged in the battle, and this must be avoided at all costs. There are several things that need to be considered if the child won't stay in Time-Out. Basically there are two options. The first option is to have a bigger consequence for the child coming out of Time-Out before the time is up. However this means the parent then needs to come up with a bigger consequence, and typically, for this to be effective, the consequence will need to be major! The principal of having a bigger consequence to make the initial consequence effective comes from everyday life – this is what we all experience, and it is what makes the consequences effective, which in turn makes us follow the rules and not lose our temper. Here, the road rules are a good example – if a driver doesn't pay their speeding fine, the consequence only gets bigger – eventually they will end up in jail. This makes the driver pay the speeding fine, which makes them far more aware of staying under the speed limit. When applied to children, an example of a bigger consequence may be taking away something that the child dearly loves, however taking things away has its limitations (please refer to the Introduction & Rationale Manual), but it may be effective, depending on the child. Whatever is used, it has to be seen as a major consequence.

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The alternative strategy available to a parent is to simply lock the door. While this sounds extreme to some, it is by far the simplest way to make Time-Out effective when the child is out of control and won't stay there. The threat of locking the door itself may be sufficient to make the child stay in Time-Out, however if not, the parent simply needs to fit a lock to the outside of the door (alternatively, the door handle with the lock on the inside can be reversed so the lock is on the outside – the lock is typically only a temporary measure, needed only until the child learns that the parent is in charge). Parents often worry that locking a child into a room constitutes some form of child abuse. This is not the case – it is the toilet for heaven's sake, it's not a dungeon, nor a pit in the back yard. All the parent is doing is going to the level needed too to control a child's behaviour. If the child did as they were told there would be no need to lock the door, nor would they be in Time-Out in the first place.

As this is often seen as a controversial strategy, it also needs to be pointed out that this would not be suggested for a timid and reserved child who gets frightened by an adult raising their voice – locking the door on a child with this type of personality would definitely be 'over the top' and inappropriate. However it also needs to be pointed out that parents would never need to go to these lengths with a placid timid child, because all a parent needs to do is 'raise their voice' and the child does as they're told. So to quote an old saying – its horses for courses - some children simply need much firmer boundaries and consequence.

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It should also be mentioned that the vital message that the child must learn is that it's the parent that's in control, not the child. This is why it's vital that whatever strategy the parent chooses to use, that they remain in control. This is the problem with the standard version of Time-Out where the parent can't keep the child there – the parent isn't in control and the child knows it. Placing a lock on the door, or at least letting the child know that one will be fitted if they don't stay in Time-Out, is by far the most effective and easiest way to get the vital message across to the child that the parent is in control. And as discussed in the Introduction & Rationale, vital to a child's psychological well-being, especially when they are out of control, is the knowledge that the parent is in control.

When Time Out is finished, it's also often suggested that the child should say sorry for whatever they did wrong, but this is usually not a good idea. The problem with this idea is that a strong-willed self-centred child won't usually think that what they did was wrong, and making them say sorry then just starts the battle all over again. Or at best, making them say sorry only teaches the child to say sorry even when they don't mean it. It's far better to not discuss anything, simply let the child come out of Time-Out and treat everything as 'business as usual'. Don't give the child anything to fuel another battle – in other words, 'let the consequence do the talking'. The only exception to this would be if the child has hurt someone or damaged something – it's then appropriate to make them say sorry, because this is what's expected in everyday life. If

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they refuse to say sorry, they can go straight back into Time-Out.

A Small but Important Variation to Time-Out

Time-Out in the Toilet is not only a consequence but also a circuit-breaker, two vital elements that allow the parent to begin teaching a child how to control their emotions. However, it's essential that another element is added to this process, which further helps to teach a child to 'pull it together' after they've 'lost it'. This is done by adding 'the time doesn't start until you're quiet'. This is vital in teaching a child to stop the melt-down, 'pull themselves together' and 'get on with it', in other words, accept when something hasn't gone the child's way and just deal with it. It works because the child quickly works out that they're not coming out of Time Out until they have controlled themselves and remained reasonably quiet for the period of time they're in Time Out. Children from the age of four will understand this concept. In practice, if the child is screaming, kicking, banging on the door, kicking the door, or anything that indicates they haven't 'pulled it together', then their time doesn't start. However, the child doesn't have to be silent, just controlled. If the child calls out "Is it time yet?" this is fine, because they have shown that they are now in control. It is remarkable how well a seemingly out-of-control child, even at the young age of four, can learn to control and contain their emotions when they know they will not come out of Time-Out until they've controlled themselves. However, it's wise to expect that the

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first few Time-Out's with this variation may go on for one to two hours, or more, before the child realises that the parent is serious, but after a few times and with the parent seeing it through until the end, the child very quickly learns. Importantly, this gives parents a much needed and vital strategy to deal with their child's meltdowns that can go on for hours.

A further piece of advice for parents using this strategy initially, when it's likely that the child's 'screaming' and 'carrying on' may go on for hours for the first few occasions, is to let the neighbours know what's happening. As silly as this sounds, it can be quite important, as it's one less thing for the parent to be worrying about when they are following through with this strategy. It must be remembered that it's very hard for a parent to not get engaged and to tolerate a tantrum that can go on for several hours, but it's vital that the parent doesn't give in. Therefore, it's easier for the parent when they don't also have to be worrying that the police may be called because it sounds like a child is being murdered! Having said this, if by chance that some well-meaning, or intrusive, neighbour did call the police, don't worry - the police will more than likely congratulate you on doing your job as a parent and going to the lengths you need too to control your child's behaviour. Don't forget, it's the police that have to deal with out-of-control teenagers that haven't learnt to control their tempers yet.

One More Important Variation

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Due to a child 'losing control', it's not uncommon for the child to become aggressive and violent, and this can lead to things being damaged and broken. While the toilet is about as child-proof as it can get, it's not completely safe from damage being done by an out of control child. In fact, children will often use the strategy of breaking something in order to get the parent's attention which may force the parent to then let the child out of Time Out. Is this a possibility, another important variation to Time Out is explaining to the child that if any damage is done while they're in Time Out, the child will be paying for it. However, it is vital that this is explained very clearly to the child before the strategy is used – the child has to be absolutely clear that they will be paying for any damage that gets done. This usually involves sitting the child down and explaining what it will cost to replace anything that's broken or damaged, including paint for the walls and doors that are kicked, even to the point of taking the child to the hardware store and showing them what it will cost. This is vital in the child realising that the parent is serious. For some children however, the value of money is lost on them, and therefore this strategy alone may not seem like much of a consequence. If this is the case, explain to the child that they'll be doing chores all day Saturday, or the entire weekend if necessary, to earn the money to pay for the damage. When the consequence becomes big enough to the child, it's remarkable how much a child can control their temper.

Battles on the Way to Time Out

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It's also not uncommon for a child who has 'lost it' to battle strongly against going to Time Out, and this can become a real issue for parent's being able to follow through, especially as the child gets older, and bigger. While physically taking a child to Time Out is fine, if it starts to become a wrestling match, it's best avoided, and what is then required is another strategy to make the child go to Time Out. What's required here is a much bigger consequence for the child if they don't go to Time Out. Again, it's important to explain this to the child before it happens, and it's vital that the consequence is major. The principal of having a bigger consequence to make the initial consequence effective comes from everyday life – this is what we all experience, and it's what makes consequences effective, which in turn makes us follow the rules. The road rules are a good example – if a driver doesn't pay their speeding fine, the consequence only gets bigger – eventually they will end up in jail. This makes the driver pay the speeding fine, which in turn makes them far more aware of staying under the speed limit. When applied to children, an example may be taking away something that the child dearly loves, however taking things away has its limitations (please refer to the Introduction & Rationale Manual), but it may be effective, depending on the child. Other possible options are not allowing the child to attend sport practice that week, and making the child ring the coach and explain why, or the child being grounded to their bedroom, with nothing fun to do, for an entire day on the weekend. Whatever is used, for this to be effective, it must be seen as a major consequence.

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Another similar issue to the above is when a child will run away from the parent when the child is told they must go to Time Out. Again, it's vital that the parent doesn't get engaged in the battle, so the parent must not chase the child, as this will certainly cause the situation to escalate and go on for longer. The same as when a child fights a parent on the way to Time Out, in this situation, the parent needs a bigger consequence for when the child runs off. Assuming that the child is safe, it's much better for the parent to not chase the child, but the child is reminded that there will be a bigger consequence waiting for them when they return. The parent can then simply go about their business and wait to apply the bigger consequence. But again, the consequence for 'running off' will need to be major, with the above examples of missing sport practice, or spending all day in the bedroom on the weekend, being reasonable options.

What to Do When You're Out

With an intense, strong willed self-centred child, it's not unlikely that the child can 'lose it' when out in public, however it can be less frequent and less extreme, usually because there is social pressure on the child to control themselves more in public. Nevertheless, for some children, they will still lose it when in public, no matter where or who they're with. If this is the case, some forward planning may be necessary. Unfortunately, when it comes to containing a child's anger, there aren't too many alternatives to Time Out. If at all possible, it's best to use Time Out when you're out, such as at

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a relative's or friends house and it's possible to use their toilet. If it happens in the shops or at a function where it's impossible to use Time Out, this is when some forward planning is required. When first starting to use Time Out to control a child's anger, it's vital that the child knows that they'll end up in Time Out if they 'lose it'.

When it's almost guaranteed that a child will 'lose it' in a particular situation when out, one good strategy is to actually plan for it to happen. For example, one option would be to take two cars, and one parent would immediately leave when the child starts to 'lose it', and the child is immediately taken home and placed into Time Out, with the child's time in Time Out doubled because it happened when they were out. If it's only one parent with the child, simply leaving as soon as the child starts to 'lose it', and doubling the time in Time Out when arriving home, is often sufficient to get the message across to the child. This is particularly effective if the child is enjoying the activity and doesn't want to leave, which is often the reason for 'losing it' in the first place. Whatever is done, it's vital that the consequence is major, as this gets the message across to the child that even when they're out in public, the consequences will still apply. If, for example, leaving straight away was something that the child wanted to happen, because they wanted to be coming home anyway, then the consequence once at home will need to be much bigger. For example, the child would have to go to Time Out in the toilet for double the time, and the child would be made to sit in their

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room for the rest of the day, as punishment for spoiling the outing for everyone else.

A Common Criticism of This Approach

When adopting these strategies, where the emphasis is on consequences etc, parents are sometimes concerned that the household will be a very negative household for the child and everyone else. While this is true, the negative environment is relatively short lived, with the consequences only being present when the child loses their temper. As the child gets better at controlling their emotions, the consequences aren't required, and the household environment will naturally become a much more positive place. It must also be remembered that a child 'losing it' is just as unpleasant, if not more so, as the consequences used to stop the behaviour, so the short-lived negativity is well worth it.

SUMMARY

Anger is normal in all of us, but it can be extreme in a child with an intense personality. It must also be remembered that adults have a hard time controlling their anger at times, so it's wrong to expect a child to be controlling their anger. A child needs an adult to contain the child's anger in a way that will stop it from escalating further, and also teach the child over time to better control it themselves. And while it seems that the child is out of control when they have lost their temper, its remarkable how quickly a child can learn to control it, when the right strategies are in place, and when the child knows it's

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going to happen. Having a consequence that's of consequence to the child is vital, as is being consistent with applying the consequence. And most importantly, it's vital to be able to follow through and not get engaged in the battle.

What if This Doesn't Work?

If following the approaches and strategies in this manual hasn't proved successful, don't give up. There's more that can be done, it's likely the strategies just need to be tailored to your situation. And from following the above strategies, even if they haven't worked, there will be a better understanding of what else can be done. In the first instance, please feel free to contact Simon Beal by email to discuss any issues – simon.beal@bigpond.com.