

ParentZone Pods - Episode 5: How to stop yelling at your kids

[0:09] Laurie Arrowsmith

Welcome to ParentZone Pods at Anglicare Victoria. We've been working with parents to support their experience for over 20 years. Parenting is the toughest and most important job you'll ever have. Hi, I'm Laurie. And with me is Anita.

[0:24] Anita Weber

Hi Laurie

[0:25] Laurie Arrowsmith

And we are parent group facilitators at ParentZone. We're recording at the Pakenham ParentZone Hub. And today we've got lots of birds outside so you might hear them through the episode. This podcast reflects our work with parents and the many conversations we have had over the years.

Parents Zone acknowledge and pay our respect to the traditional custodians of this land we are recording on today, both the Wurundjeri and the Bunwoorong people of the Kulin Nations. We also pay our respects to elder's past, present, and future.

In this episode, we're going to talk about how we can stop yelling at our kids. We'll find out what drives our parental anger, how we can recognize and identify those triggers, and discover strategies to reduce frustration and the friction in our home. So Anita, parents often tell us when they come to our parenting courses, that they want to stop yelling or screaming at their children. They want to be able to control their anger and find better ways to communicate with their children. I'd like to know is anger good or bad do you think?

[1:30] Anita Weber

Well, anger is one of the most misunderstood emotions, anger is normal and useful. And it can be energizing. It can also result in positive actions towards change. So if we feel really strongly about an issue, we might join a group and attend a demonstration or a rally to bring about social change. Or if we were playing sport, anger can provide us with additional strength and accuracy. It can also lead to greater persistence with a frustrating activity. And for those who like to avoid conflict, sometimes anger can actually provide the energy to be more assertive.

[2:04] Laurie Arrowsmith

So there's definitely benefits to anger. So we're not saying that anger is something to be avoided.

[2:08] Anita Weber

No

[2:08] Laurie Arrowsmith

It's just how we use that anger. Is that right?

[2:11] Anita Weber

Exactly. So anger is often seen as uncontrollable, and it's linked to violence and aggression. Because quite often, that's the behavior that's exhibited by people who are angry. But that's not the only result from anger.

[2:26] Laurie Arrowsmith

Okay, so the real issue is not in the feeling, but how we behave or express that feeling.

[2:31] Anita Weber

Yeah. And the problem that we have when we're yelling, we yell when we're angry is that it actually increases the chance that our children will misbehave.

[2:38] Laurie Arrowsmith

Yes. And I know a lot of parents do say that it's gotten to the point where the kids will only actually do anything once they've yelled, so it's gotten to the stage where they have to yell in order to get anything done.

[2:48] Anita Weber

That's identifying that communication issue, you know, that parents are their only really serious when they're angry. And that loses the ability to get the child's attention when you really need to.

[2:59] Laurie Arrowsmith

Absolutely. What are some of the physical signs that we get when we're feeling angry?

[3:0] Anita Weber

Recently, I had an experience of anger myself. And I came home from work expecting my son to answer the door like he normally does. We had this ritual, when I get home that we connect, and I had my arm full of shopping, and I'm knocking on the door and he wasn't responding. And I just got angrier and angrier, because I imagined that he was sitting there and ignoring me

[3:26] Laurie Arrowsmith

Twiddling his thumbs ignoring you.

[3:28] Anita Weber

Yeah, absolutely ignoring me. And it was my thinking that was faulty. Because eventually when I calmed down and put my shopping down and had a look at my phone, he'd actually want me in advance that he wasn't going to be home when I got home. And instead of actually being really inconsiderate, and ignoring me, is actually being quite considerate. He let me know, in advance. And I'd missed it. I could tell I was angry because my fists were clenched. And you know, my banging on the door was getting louder, and you know, more pounding rather than knocking. So knowing that I was feeling angry, that I was talking to myself in a negative way about what was happening. My jaw was really tight. I was getting hot. I was feeling really like I was burning. Whilst everyone experiences in a different way, those probably the most common feeling a bit warm, hot, having, I guess, a bit more strength and a bit more energy.

[4:24] Laurie Arrowsmith

Yeah. And I definitely get that clenched jaw happening as well. Yeah, and the fast walking.

[4:29] Anita Weber

Yeah, that's a really good way to calm down is to use that energy, maybe go for a run or exercise and get that out as well.

[4:37] Laurie Arrowsmith

So it's being aware of those first. And then being picking up on them and then trying to calm them down. Before we do any sort of response to our child.

[4:45] Anita Weber

Yeah, yeah, for sure. And sometimes it might be that we're actually too late. We've realized that because we've yelled at our child. That doesn't mean that we can't repair the relationship. We can't come back to

our child and say, Hey, I was feeling really angry. I've said some things that are really didn't mean to, we need to show our kids that we experience the same emotions they do. And that we have ways that we can handle that.

[5:07] Laurie Arrowsmith

That's right, and that we're human too. And we make mistakes as well.

[5:10] Anita Weber

Yeah, the first step to helping our children with their experiences of emotions is knowing and understanding our own experiences as well.

[5:18] Laurie Arrowsmith

So you skipped ahead in your own mind.

[5:20] Anita Weber

Exactly. So, you know, I actually talked myself into the anger. So sometimes we as parents need to recognize those triggers. What are the things that make us angry? Sometimes we're actually angry just at those triggers, not at the actual behavior of our children. And we talk ourselves into thinking that means more than what it actually does.

[5:40] Laurie Arrowsmith

So what do we do with the self talk then? And how can we catch it?

[5:44] Anita Weber

We actually need to acknowledge whose issue it is. We're socialised to think that when we have a problem with something that someone else is to blame.

[5:52] Laurie Arrowsmith

We so are in society, aren't we?

[5:54] Anita Weber

Yeah, that leads to an expectation that that person, that guilty person should take action to fix it, or have some consequences. You know, and those consequences, you know, angry, angry minds, as parents are usually punishments.

[6:09] Laurie Arrowsmith

Yes. And so what are some of the triggers? Do you think that are likely to raise our angry response?

[6:14] Anita Weber

Well, for instance, kids not completing their tasks or tasks not done to our standards, that fight the siblings over something that once again, we need to go and intervene.

[6:24] Laurie Arrowsmith

Oh, yes, the siblings.

[6:26] Anita Weber

You know, showing disrespect or defiance. And the big one not listening, we always hear people complaining about our kids aren't listening to us.

[6:34] Laurie Arrowsmith

Always. Yes. So who has the issue?

[6:37] Anita Weber

Well, it's usually us, for example, a child leaving their clothes lying on the floor, we're the ones who actually care about it, because it's going to impact on our ability to do the laundry. We can't decide what's clean, what's not clean. And we might even be really angry about our ironed clothes, on the floor in a crumpled mess.

[6:56] Laurie Arrowsmith

The other one is a messy bedroom, our children having a messy bedroom. So who's issue is that?

[7:01] Anita Weber

Once again, it's ours. Because if our kids were really concerned about it, they'd actually take the action needed to clean it up. So you know, recognizing that we're the ones with the issue, and finding a way. So instead of our self talk, being my child leaves his clothes all over the place, in order to get to me, we might be thinking about, I'm cross about those clothes being left all over the floor, and not being put in the laundry basket.

[7:27] Laurie Arrowsmith

Because it means more work for me.

[7:29] Anita Weber

Yeah, so we need to focus on the solutions instead of blaming our children.

[7:33] Laurie Arrowsmith

Okay, so that's the key, we focus on the solutions instead of the blame, okay,

[7:37] Anita Weber

And children are more likely to cooperate with us, if we invite them to help us rather than fight with them, because we've yelled at them because of the messy floor.

[7:45] Laurie Arrowsmith

So can you give me an example of how we might do that?

[7:48] Anita Weber

First of all, we need to deal with our feelings. Remember that we have a choice. And we can choose to employ strategies that help us calm down, for instance, some of them might be walk away, have a drink of water, just stop, just take some time to breathe deeply. Maybe counting to 10 helps for you, whatever calm down strategy that you can use, that will actually work for you to just bring yourself back down to being able to think logically about the problem. And then to recognize it, ask that I have the issue, and think creatively about how we can solve it.

[8:23] Laurie Arrowsmith

So trying to solve it when our emotional temperature is high is not going to be a good result?

[8:28] Anita Weber

No, because we tend to react emotionally. And if we're angry, punitively. And that doesn't help our children, to cooperate with us.

[8:36] Laurie Arrowsmith

So bring ourselves back down so that we're calm, and then we can tackle it by offering the solution.

[8:42] Anita Weber

Yeah. And alternatively, we might decide that we can actually let something go, you know, yeah, if the child's messy bedroom doesn't really impact on us, if we can actually close the door and not see the mess. Why don't we just let it go?

[8:57] Laurie Arrowsmith

So that's actually another really good strategy, isn't it? If we can let it go? Let it go.

[9:01] Anita Weber

Let it go. And another option we have, instead of yelling is using that assertive communication, providing a clear instruction and using non blaming language.

[9:11] Laurie Arrowsmith

So can we talk through how we might do that?

[9:14] Anita Weber

So you know, we achieved that by first of all, identifying that it's our issue. So we start with an "I", not a "you", yes, very important. So "I: feel and he's an example. "I feel disappointed when," and when is our next, when the meal goes cold. when I've cooked dinner for the family, and nobody's come to the table, and then letting our kids know what we actually want to happen instead. I would like everyone to come to the table when I call dinner's ready.

[9:40] Laurie Arrowsmith

And that's very different from saying more like you messages and putting the blame on them, isn't it?

[9:45] Anita Weber

Yeah, we're taking responsibility for our feelings, and also the communication that's necessary for children to help us meet our goals.

[9:53] Laurie Arrowsmith

Excellent. I really like that. I think it's a really good, easy solution to a lot of these problems.

[9:58] Anita Weber

Yeah. I mean, the alternative might be that we go, "you never come to the table when I call", and our children then get on the defensive and they might be angry, you never pay attention. I'm busy.

[10:09] Laurie Arrowsmith

That's right. I might be doing something.

[10:11] Anita Weber

It invites conflict. Conflict invites conflict. So yeah, we want to do it as simply and as easily as possible. And we want to build a connection with our children. So if we think about connecting with our children before we correct them for their behaviour,

[10:26] Laurie Arrowsmith

Okay, so connection before correction.

[10:28] Anita Weber

Yeah.

[10:29] Laurie Arrowsmith

So in this episode, we talked about what drives our anger and what our triggers are. And that when we do stuff up that we can say sorry, to our children make that repair. So remember, it's helpful if we deal

with the issue when we and others are calm, and then we can be constructive. And then the times where we have actually yelled, it's okay, we're human, but that repairing is really important with our children. If you feel this is hitting home for you, and you'd like to have more information about the groups that we run at Parents Zone, Google "Anglicare Parents Zone" for more information, or check the show notes where you are listening now.