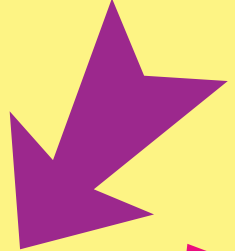



10
Things to Do
When You
Are 
Feeling
Angry 

By: Lawrence E. Shapiro, Ph.D.

A Letter from Dr. Larry

Everybody gets angry sometimes. Anger is a natural emotion, just like love, or fear, or the feeling of being surprised. Certain things make everyone angry—like when someone calls you names or takes something that belongs to you, or spreads gossip about you.

Probably other things make you angry too. You may be angry if you have to move and leave your school and your friends. You may be angry because a **parent is on a trip, and** your mom or dad won't be there for an important game, or a performance, or even for your birthday. These things would make anybody angry, and so you certainly have a right to your feelings.

But feeling angry, and acting in an angry way, are two very different things. You are always entitled to your feelings, but expressing your anger in certain ways can get you into trouble, and may make you feel much worse in the long run.

Here are some examples of kids who had a good reason to be angry, but made things worse by the way they acted:

Jimmy was mad at his mom because she made him go to bed at the same time as his younger brother. He was sure that his father would not do this, but his father was away on a business trip, and his policy was, "your mother is in charge when I am away." Jimmy decided that he wouldn't talk to his mom anymore unless he absolutely had to and gave her the "silent treatment."

Shawna was mad at her teacher because she got a C- on her science project, and she had worked for weeks on it. Shawna told her science teacher that she was being unfair and that she wasn't a good teacher. Her teacher wrote a note home that Shawna was being "rude" in class.

Brooke was mad because her father was being deployed the same day as her birthday. She thought that this should be a special day for her. She sulked around all day and said that she didn't even care about her birthday anymore or that her father was going away.

Jimmy, Shawna, and Brooke had good reasons to be angry, but they didn't handle their anger in a very good way. In fact they did things that got them into trouble, that probably made them feel guilty and sad, and that made other people feel bad.

Remember, no one can tell you how to feel. Your emotions are your own. But there are better ways to handle your anger. This workbook is about helping you understand your anger, and finding ways to express it that will help you feel better, not worse. I know you can do it.

Sincerely,
Dr. Larry

1.

Avoid (or prepare yourself for) situations that make you angry

Sometimes you can avoid things that make you angry, and that way you avoid arguments and getting into trouble. Here are some examples of kids who were able to avoid getting angry.

Every time Annie went over Catherine’s house, Catherine was rude to her. Catherine insisted that they only do things that she wanted, and sometimes she would just watch a movie and say “I’m busy. Go find something to do.” Annie wanted to be Catherine’s friend, but she decided that it just wasn’t worth it. She decided to stop going over Catherine’s house and to find some nicer friends to spend time with.

Raphael didn’t like having to visit his grandma’s house because there was nothing to do there. He wasn’t allowed to watch television, and there were no toys or games or computers to play with. When his baby cousin came over, she cried all of the time. He wanted to stay home by himself, but his mother said that he was too young. He was getting pretty mad about his situation, when he remembered that his mom had bought him a comic book drawing kit, and he hadn’t had a chance to try it out. So he got the kit out of the closet, put it in his backpack, and suddenly he was looking forward to going to his grandma’s house to get to work.

In the boxes below draw three things that make you angry, and next to each one write down what you could do to avoid the things that make you angry.

The form consists of three hand-drawn boxes arranged in a row. Each box is intended for a drawing. Below each box are several horizontal lines for writing. Arrows point to the bottom-left corner of the first box, the top-center of the second box, and the bottom-right corner of the third box.

2.

Talking about your feelings is the best way to deal with your anger

Many kids—and many adults too—find it hard to talk about their feelings. When someone asks them “what is wrong” they often say “nothing” even though it is clear to anyone who looks at them that there really is something wrong.

Talking about your feelings is important to your emotional health. When you talk about your feelings your mood will almost immediately be better. In fact scientists tell us that people who talk about their feelings have more friends, are happier, and even have better physical health. Talking about all your feelings, particularly when you are angry or upset, is very important. It may take some practice, but it is an important emotional skill to learn.

Below are 9 sentences about different feelings. Complete each sentence and then draw a line from that sentence to the face on the next page that shows how your face would look when you are having that feeling.

A. I am happy when _____

B. I get angry when _____

C. What always makes me sad is _____

D. I get bored when _____

E. I feel frustrated when _____

F. My biggest surprise was _____

G. I'm worried about _____

H. I get really excited about _____

I. I'm really proud of _____

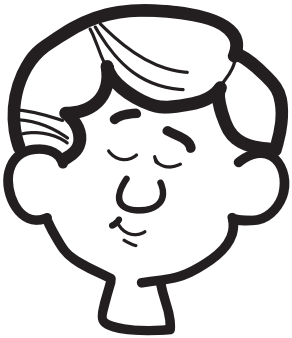
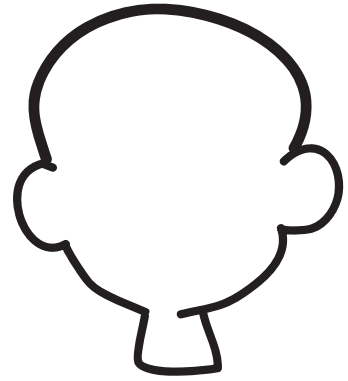
Now, write three more feelings and sentences, and then draw faces that show these feelings in the blank faces on the next page.



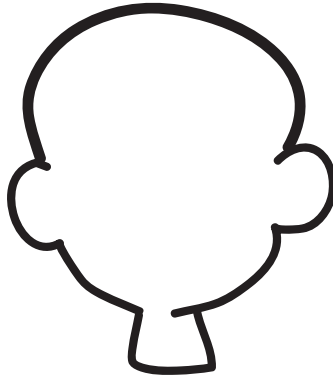
sad



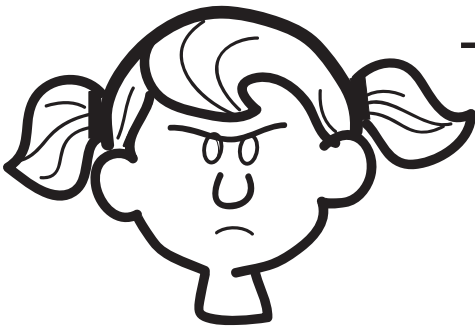
worried



proud



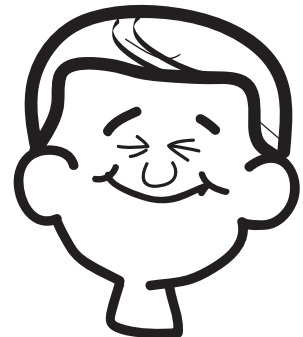
happy



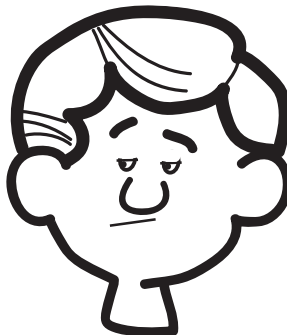
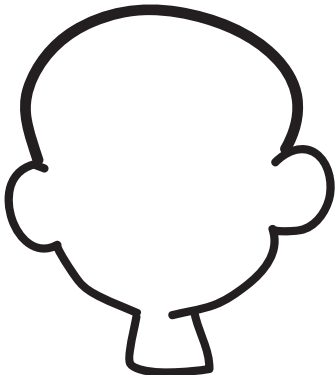
angry



surprised



excited



bored



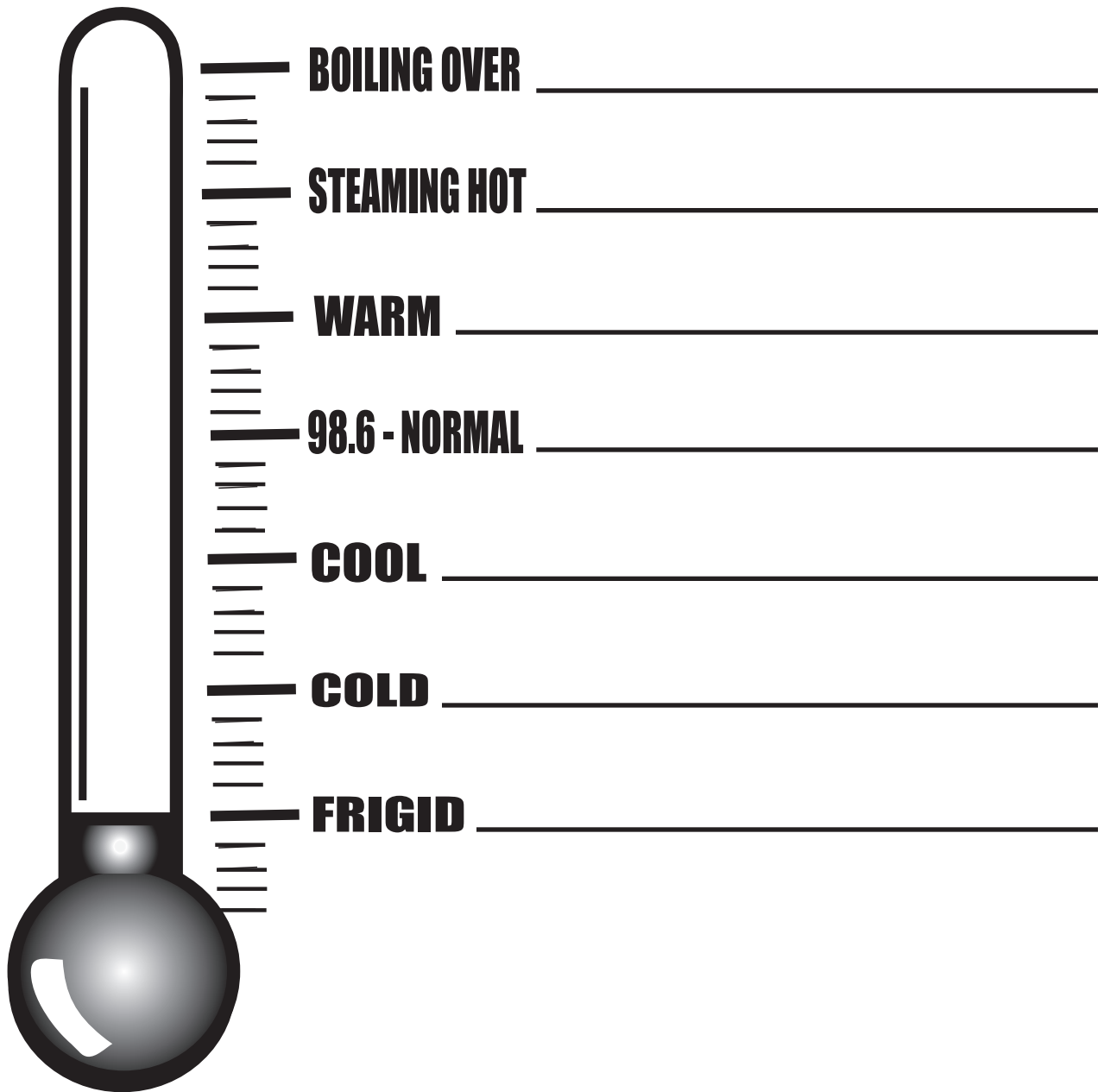
frustrated

3.

Learn how to lower your anger temperature

There are different types of anger. You can be just a little angry at someone or something, which makes you feel irritated. Or you can be super angry at someone or something, and you feel furious. It's important to understand the different levels of anger so that you can learn to control your emotions. When you are furious, it is harder to control your behavior, but when you learn to lower your anger temperature, you will feel more in control and it will be easier to act in ways which will make you feel better.

Below is an anger thermometer. Write down things that make you angry next to each of the feeling levels, from frigid to boiling over.





Change negative thoughts to positive ones

Have you ever noticed that some people are more “positive” thinkers and other people are more “negative” thinkers? Positive thinkers believe that things will soon get better and that even though some things are bad, other things are good. Negative thinkers believe that bad things will never get better and may even get worse, and that even if one bad thing stops, another will come along. Having a negative attitude will probably make it more likely that you will be angry. When you are angry you usually have more negative thoughts, and when you have negative thoughts you will likely be angrier, so you can see there is a circle with your anger and your negative thoughts chasing each other, and as long as this happens it will be harder to control your anger.

You can break this circle by having a more positive attitude. Just as negative thoughts can keep you angry, positive thoughts can keep you feeling calm and in control. See if you can turn the negative thoughts below into positive thoughts.

Complete the five negative thoughts below, and turn them into positive thoughts.

No one understands me, because _____ .

Positive thought: _____

Nobody likes me, because _____ .

Positive thought: _____

Life is unfair, because _____ .

Positive thought: _____

I have the worst luck in the world, because _____ .

Positive thought: _____

I am really bored, because _____ .

Positive thought: _____

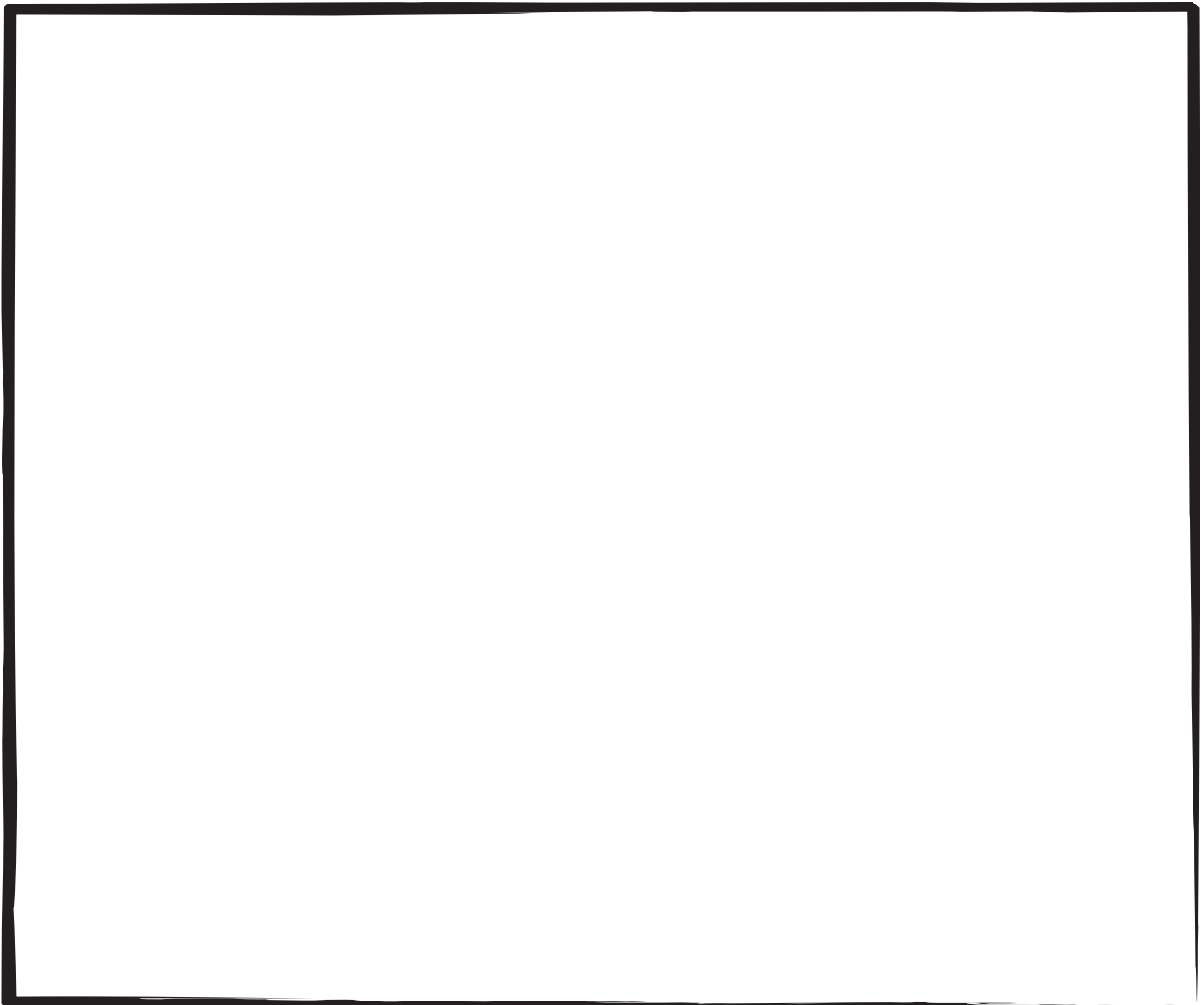
5.

A guaranteed way to lower your anger temperature

There are different things you can do to control your anger, but the simplest thing to do is called the Relaxation Response. When you get angry, your body goes through a physical response. Your heart beats faster, your muscles tighten up. Your brain tells your body, “Get ready to fight.”

But when you use the Relaxation Response your brain tells your body, “Don’t fight! Relax. There is a better way to handle this problem.”

The Relaxation Response is simple to use. When you feel ready to explode, just sit down in a comfortable chair. Take five deep “belly breaths” (breathe deeply from your belly rather than your chest). Count to 5 when you inhale, and count to 10 when you exhale. With each breath relax your muscles and feel your anger temperature going down. If you can, while you are breathing, think of a picture in your head that relaxes you, like sitting on the beach. Draw that picture in the box below.



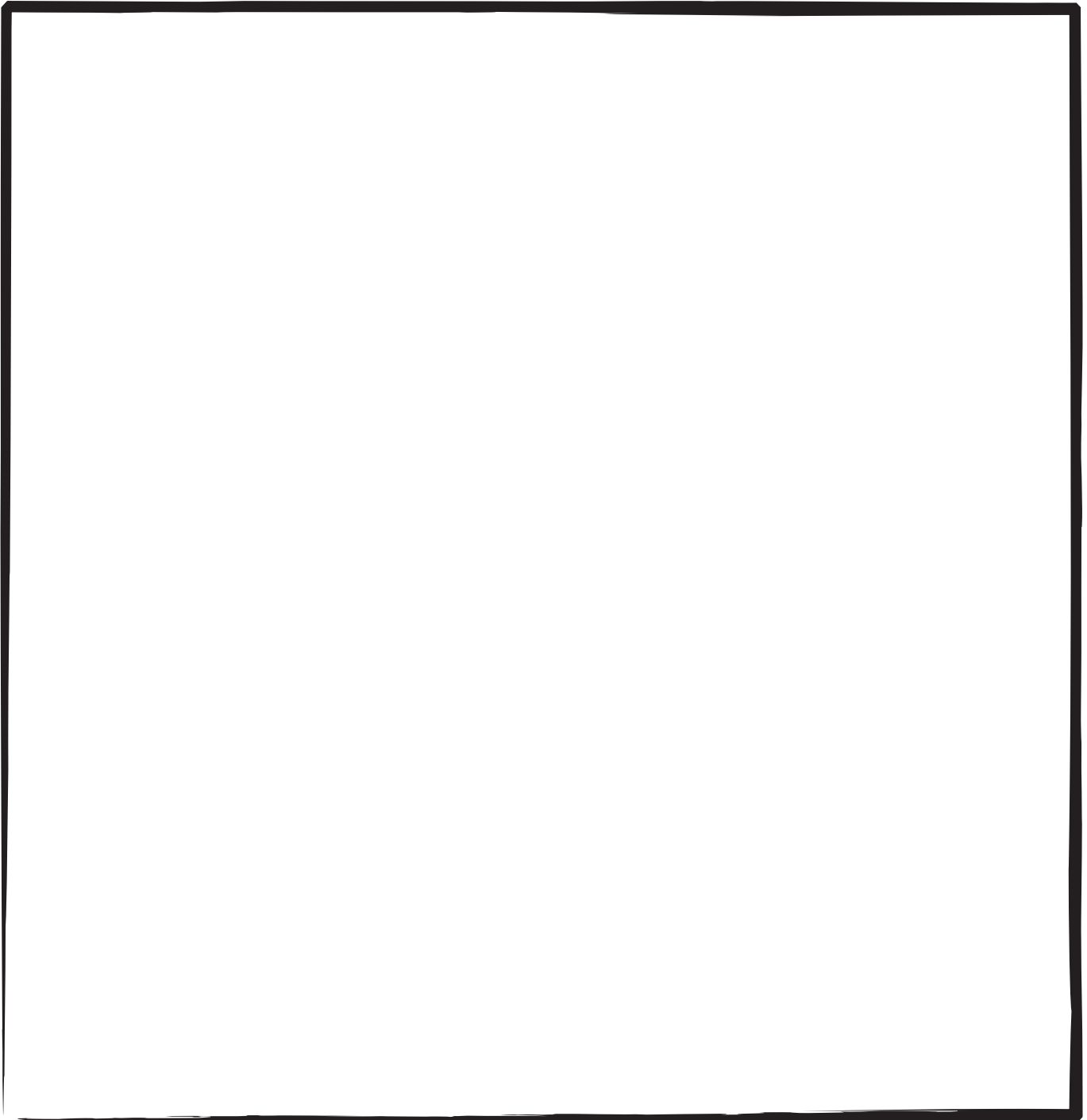
Now it's time to practice the Relaxation Response. Write down 5 things that make you REALLY ANGRY! One at a time, sit down and think about the thing that makes you angry. Let yourself feel angry, and feel your body change. Now practice the Relaxation Response:

Sit in a chair and take 5 deep breaths.

Relax your muscles with each breath.

Get a picture in your head that relaxes you.

In the box below, draw a picture of a scene you can imagine to help you feel relaxed.



6

Dealing with anger by solving problems

When you are really angry you might feel that there is nothing else you can do but express your anger or think about what is making you angry. But most of the time there is something about the situation that makes you angry that you can change. When you learn to solve some of the problems that make you angry, you will be much happier and more in control of your life.

Some people think that there is only one way to solve a problem, but actually there may be many possible solutions to a situation that makes you angry. Take Maddie for example, who was angry because her parents said that she couldn't have a cell phone. They said that Maddie was not responsible enough, because she always misplaced or lost things. Maddie was not only mad, she was upset, too. She really wanted a cell phone because her father was going for training all the way across the country for six months, and she wanted to be able to send him text messages and pictures. Maddie could have just complained, or sulked, but her father said, "When you convince me that you will be responsible, I'll consider getting you a cell phone." Maddie made a list of five things she could do to prove to her father that she would not lose her cell phone. She wrote down:

1. Make my bed every day.
2. Organize my closet.
3. Do my homework on time without being asked.
4. Do an extra chore every day.
5. Organize my backpack.

Maddie thought that they were all pretty good ideas, but she didn't think she could do them all at the same time, so she asked her father which one he thought was most important. "Doing your homework without being asked would be a big deal," Maddie's father said, so that is the one she decided to do.

What do you think happened next? If this were a fairy tale, Maddie might have a frog come to her while she's doing her homework and grant her a wish so that she could always do her homework right on time without being reminded. But life isn't a fairy tale, and, I'm sorry to say, there are no magic frogs. So in real life, Maddie's problem wasn't solved in a minute, and she needed to keep working at being more responsible, and solving problems every day.

When you practice solving problems, it becomes much easier. Write down 3 problems that you are having, and then write down 5 possible solutions to each problem. After you write the solutions to each problem, go back and look them over and circle the one that you think is the best solution. You can ask an adult for their opinion, just as Maddie did. Remember that things won't magically get better, you have to work at it. But when you are a good problem solver, everything in life will get a little easier.

Problem: _____

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Problem: _____

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Problem: _____

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

7.

Ask for help when you are frustrated

Almost everyone gets angry when they are frustrated. It's no fun to try hard at something, and not be able to get it done right. What frustrates you? Math? Reading? Putting together models or puzzles?

Some kids get frustrated with certain parts of their life. They get frustrated by their parents' rules. They get frustrated with their brothers or sisters. They get frustrated with their friends.

The first thing to do when you are frustrated, and your frustration is making you angry, is to see if there are some solutions to your problem (see Activity #6), but if you just can't solve your problem, you need to ask for help. You may have one person that you always go to for help, or you may have different people who help you with different things that frustrate you.

In the space below, write down 5 things that frustrate you and then write down the name and draw in the face of the person you could ask for help for each of these problems.

Things That Frustrate Me

- 1. _____

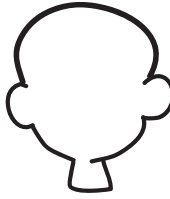
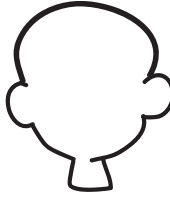
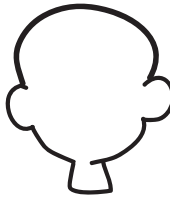
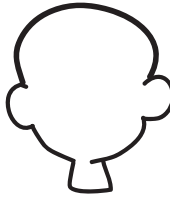
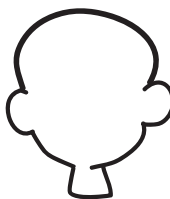
- 2. _____

- 3. _____

- 4. _____

- 5. _____

Person I Can Ask for Help

	Name: _____ _____
	Name: _____ _____
	Name: _____ _____
	Name: _____ _____
	Name: _____ _____

8.

Be assertive instead of being angry

Sometimes kids get angry for very understandable reasons. Did you ever get angry for any of these reasons?

You were teased about your family.

Someone called you names.

Someone took something of yours.

You saw someone picking on a little kid.

Someone spread gossip about you.

You were told that you couldn't sit with or play with a group of people.

You might have felt like trying to get back at these people, by doing the same thing back to them. You might have felt like yelling or even fighting with them. But the best thing to do when someone is doing something wrong to you (or someone else) is to be assertive.

Being assertive means to stand up for your rights or the rights of others—without being angry. When you are assertive, instead of getting angry, you just say what you are feeling in a clear, calm voice. If someone keeps doing something mean or wrong, then you need to tell an adult.

Being assertive can be easier than it sounds. Here is a story about James who was being picked on at school. Fill in the blank spaces to complete the story.

James was starting a new school because his family had just moved to a new house. He was worried that he might have a hard time making friends because he had a stutter, and he stuttered more when he was nervous.

On the very first day, Timothy made a comment about James' stuttering. "You talk weird," Timothy said. But James just replied: _____

_____.

Later that day going home on the school bus, James was going to sit down next to a girl named Katia, but Katia said, "I don't want to sit next to you. This seat is reserved for someone I like." So James _____

_____.

James was having a hard day. So when he got home, and found that his sister was using his computer without asking his permission, he was ready to get angry. But instead he _____

_____.

It's always good to do good things for other people, but this is particularly important when you have done something wrong. Use the boxes below to think about good deeds that could make up for something you did wrong when you were angry. Write down some Good Deeds you could do at home, at school, or in the community, and then show these to a parent or teacher. Maybe they'll have some other suggestions for you!

When you have wronged another person, show them this page and ask them to pick a Good Deed that you could do which would help make things right again.

Example: Help out with a younger brother or sister.

The form consists of ten empty rectangular boxes, each with a number in the top-left corner. The boxes are arranged in a staggered, non-linear pattern. Box 1 is at the top left. Box 2 is to the right of box 1. Box 3 is below box 1. Box 4 is to the right of box 3. Box 5 is to the right of box 4. Box 6 is below box 3. Box 7 is to the right of box 6. Box 8 is to the right of box 7. Box 9 is below box 8. Box 10 is at the bottom left, below box 6.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

10.

Understand how others are feeling

Understanding what others are thinking or how they are feeling is an important part of growing up. Babies don't care about anyone but themselves. But by the time kids enter school, they are old enough to start thinking about other people, including their parents, their friends, and their teachers.

When you take another person's point of view and you think about how he/she is feeling, this is called empathy. People who empathize with others almost always get along better in the world, and have fewer problems with others.

The next time you start to get angry at someone, stop for a minute and think about what the other person is feeling, and think if this explains what he/she is doing. Complete the sentences below for practice.

1. When kids give their parents a hard time about going to bed, most parents feel _____

_____ .

2. When people have a headache, they are more likely to _____

_____ .

3. If someone is always alone, they probably _____

_____ .

4. If a teacher is mad at a student for not bringing in their homework, it is because _____

_____ .