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## Know! To Stop, Drop and Breathe

*“Speak when you are angry and you will make the best speech you will ever regret.” — Ambrose Bierce*

Even as adults, anger can be a difficult emotion to control, especially when it involves a child who continues to defy his or her parents. No one can push our buttons like our own children. However, the importance of exhibiting self-control in order to discipline a child appropriately, is monumental.

An angry parent is scary enough. An angry parent who is in the habit of yelling and screaming, swearing and/or calling their child names, is likely to cause even more harm, since a child’s very sense of ‘self’ depends so greatly on mom and dad. As for hitting, slapping or other physical force toward a child; it is likely to not only cause fear and hurt in the present, but can leave lasting, negative impressions that follow the child into adulthood, including relationship problems, as well as increased risk for substance abuse, among other issues.

We love our children more than anything, but we all get frustrated and angry with them at times – that’s human nature. We are the adult in the relationship, however, so we must behave like one to express that frustration and anger properly. We must also keep in mind that we are our children’s role models. They, of course, get angry too. And how they handle their anger will depend a great deal on what they’ve learned by watching us. So think about the qualities and characteristics you want to create and nurture within your child, and the type of person you want your child to become. Dr. Laura Markham, clinical psychologist and author of *Peaceful Parents, Happy Kids*, offers these tips as effective, positive ways to discipline your child, that encourage better behavior, while keeping your emotions in-check:

**Set limits and expectations BEFORE you get angry:** Make sure the rules are clear and clearly known.

**Calm down BEFORE you take action:** Anger causes us to lose our ability to think clearly. So if your heart is beginning to race and your body is starting to tense, it is time to STOP, DROP (your agenda, just for a minute), and BREATHE. This is like hitting the pause button on the situation.

**Take five or 10:** You may need to step away for a moment to gain your composure and harness your self-control. Exiting does not let your child win. Instead it lets them know how serious the situation is, plus it models self-control. Just say, as calmly as you can, “I am too mad right now to talk about this. I am going to take a moment and calm down.”

**WAIT before disciplining:** Make it a point NEVER to act while angry. Nothing says you have to hand out a punishment on the fly. In fact, when we do, it is more likely to be irrational. Give yourself time to think; you can say something like, “I want to think about what just happened, and we will talk about it later. In the meantime, I need to make dinner and you need to finish your homework, please.” The suspense will be much more powerful than a list of empty threats that are not enforced because they were said in the heat of the moment.

**AVOID PHYSICAL FORCE, NO MATTER WHAT:** This is an instance where hands-off parenting is a must. According to Dr. Laura, getting physical may make YOU feel better temporarily because it discharges your rage, but it is bad for your child, and ultimately sabotages everything positive you do as a parent.

**Monitor your tone and word choice:** Nothing positive comes from swearing and/or speaking disrespectfully to children. It will only cause upset and further escalate the situation. Speaking in a calm tone, using appropriate language, helps us to remain calm and helps our children to respond more calmly.

**Consider that you're part of the problem:** Angry parents are more likely to produce angry kids. Be open to emotional growth, take responsibility to manage your own emotions first, and seek assistance if needed. Your positive example will bring your child closer to you, make them want to please you more and it will set the foundation for them in knowing how to appropriately deal with negative emotions.

For the full article, *How to Handle Your Anger at Your Child*, and more detailed tips on peaceful parenting by Dr. Laura, [click here](#).

Source: [Aha!Parenting.com - Laura Markham Ph.D., Peaceful Parents, Happy Kids: How to Handle Your Anger at Your Child](#).

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