



## THE FAMILY TREE

### Responding to the Angry Child

Some of the following suggestions for dealing with the angry child were taken from *The Aggressive Child* by Fritz Redl and David Wineman. They should be considered helpful ideas and not be seen as a “bag of tricks”.

**Catch the child being good.** Tell the child what behaviors please you. Respond to positive efforts and reinforce good behavior. Take time to make encouraging comments such as, “I appreciate your hanging up your clothes even though you were in a hurry to get out to play”.

**Deliberately ignore inappropriate behavior that can be tolerated.** This doesn’t mean ignore the child, just the behavior. The “ignoring” has to be planned and consistent. Even though this behavior may be tolerated, the child must recognize that it is inappropriate.

**Provide physical outlets and other alternatives.** It is important for children to have opportunities for physical exercise and movement, both at home and at school.

**Manipulate the surroundings.** Aggressive behavior is often triggered by tough, tempting situations. Stop a “problem” activity and substitute temporarily, a more desirable one. Sometimes rules and regulations, as well as physical space, may be too confining.

**Use closeness and touching.** Move physically closer to the child to curb his or her angry impulse. Young children are often calmed by having an adult nearby.

**Express interest in the child’s activities.** Children naturally try to involve adults in what they are doing. They need short periods of one on one, quality time with adults to reinforce positive behaviors.

**Be ready to show affection.** Sometimes all that is needed for any angry child to regain control is a sudden hug or other show of affection. Children with serious emotional problems, however, may have trouble accepting affection.

**Appeal directly to the child.** Tell him or her how you feel and ask for consideration. For example, a parent or a caregiver may gain a child’s cooperation by saying, “I know that noise you’re making doesn’t usually bother me, but today I’ve got a headache, so could you find something else you enjoy doing”.

**Explain situations.** Help the child understand the cause of a stressful situation by offering a

simple explanation.

**Use gentle physical restraint.** Occasionally a child may lose control so completely that he has to be physically restrained or removed from the scene to prevent him from hurting him or others. Gentle physical restraint or removal from the scene is a means of saying, "Let me help you regain control".

**Use promises and rewards.** Utilize rewards to reinforce positive behavior. A reward can be verbal praise, a star, a hug, etc.

**Say "NO".** Limits should be clearly explained and enforced. Children should be free to function within those limits.

**Tell the child that you accept his or her angry feelings.** Offer other suggestions for expressing them. Teach children to put their angry feelings into words, pictures, and stories. Talking helps a child have control and thus reduces acting-out behavior.

**Use punishment cautiously.** There is a fine line between punishment that is hostile toward a child and punishment that is educational.

**Model appropriate behavior.** Parents and teachers should be aware of the powerful influence of their actions on a child's or group's behavior.