



Ten Kindergarten Lessons in Anger Management

By Kurt von Schleicher

“Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man do not go, lest you learn his ways and set a snare for your soul”
(Prov. 22:24-25 nkj).

I was a principal in an elementary school for some years during the '90s and I gave this out to our wonderful teachers who sometimes found themselves in very difficult circumstances with rude and unreasonable parents... some who wanted to put their worshipped child first.

None of us want to flesh-out, fly off the handle, go postal or ballistic. None of us want to be a bummer to be around. We are called to walk in the Spirit – in agape LOVE. We are called to be people of self-control, victory, understanding and compassion. When someone or something at work causes you to fume, how do you deal with it? How do you blow off steam without blowing off your career? Learning how to control your emotions and reactions to the people or things that make you feel upset, peeved or angry is much easier than you might think. In fact, everything you need to know about managing your emotions in the workplace you more than likely learned in your own kindergarten classroom when you were younger. Here's a refresher.

Lesson #1: Give yourself a timeout.

If you're ready to blow a major gasket, do whatever you have to do to calmly remove yourself from the situation. Excuse yourself from a meeting, grab a breath of fresh air, take a walk to another area of the building or visit with a friend on another floor. Chances are by the time you return, you'll feel much better and be able to handle whatever made you angry in the first place. But maybe you are not allowed to leave your area of responsibility very often. If it's serious, just call your supervisor to come give you a break or assign someone to cover

you.

Lesson #2: Redirect your attention.

One of the most popular early childhood buzzwords of the '90s was "redirection," which moves your mental attention from an undesirable activity into a substitute, more positive activity or thought. It's embarrassing, but I have actually heard: *"Kurt, we are now redirecting so focus."* Yes, this technique is highly effective with young children as well as with angry grown-ups. What would I do if I was to feel angry with an irate school vendor or someone on the phone? Man, I would turn my chair (so as not to be a bad rep for Jesus), pray silently and read a Bible verse that I have posted on my wall. It comes from Jeremiah 29:11 and reminds me of God's huge LOVE and the wonderful things He has in store for my future. How could I feel angry then? I also have some photos of my wild sons that cause me to smile. This is a great way to change my perspective quickly.

Lesson #3: No temper tantrums allowed.

It's never appropriate to have a meltdown or blow-up in a secular office, but I allow for some meltdowns in our school from time to time. What's permitted will depend on your boss and situation to some degree. But remember this: Not only does a temper tantrum show a lack of self-control, it is an immature way of dealing with your emotions. Ask anyone in the business world – let's say in human resources. Employees who lose their cool rarely get promoted. They say, *"Count to 10, have a punching bag at home, take deep breaths, or blow an imaginary bubble."* You might need some extra oxygen but why not just call on the Lord. He made you the way he did and He can handle your straightforward candor. Take some time to refresh your spirit with Him. Relaxing in His strong arms slows down the testosterone (if applicable) and adrenaline flow.

Lesson #4: No hitting.

Hitting, spitting, kicking and the throwing of things like the office stapler is out. Avoid all forms of physical violence. We don't allow children to do these things. As much as you would like to clobber the guy with the stupid hair-thing goin' on in the lower office who ...say took credit for your hard work, don't kill him. Acting out your anger in a physical manner will not help his so-called laid back attitude. If you need to get physical, try a strenuous walk outside at lunchtime. Head to Curves, 24-hour fitness or some other health club and grab a stress ball.

Lesson #5: Don't be a bully.

It happens on the playground, on the street and unfortunately it happens in offices across America every day. It's bullying and it is demeaning for the victim at any age. Be aware of your feelings and actions that make you want to belittle, intimidate or tear down the efforts of subordinates or less talented co-workers. Ditch the king/queen syndrome and become a servant to the real King. It ain't about you – never was. Bullies lack self-worth and self-respect because they don't live respectable. I had an alcoholic dad who hated his own behavior and he took it out on his kids and wife. I knew he just hated himself. I prayed for him and he came to the Jesus of the Bible. We're best friends now. Take a look at how you feel about yourself and make sure it is not being directed toward others. Consider seeking spiritual help at your church or even professional help in some cases (be careful though, not all professionals are really biblical or professional).

“Runaway emotions corrode the bones” (Prov. 14:30 mess).

*“The hotheaded do things they'll later regret;
the coldhearted get the cold shoulder” (Prov. 14:17 mess).*

“A fool is hotheaded and reckless” (Prov. 14:16 niv).

“An angry man stirs up strife, and a furious man abounds in transgression.

A man's pride will bring him low” (Prov. 29:22-23 nkj).

Lesson #6: What happens at home stays at home.

Teachers must always consider that a child who acts out at school could be reacting to issues that occur at home. We all have mornings when the kids spill the milk, the dog runs away, and we get stuck at a train crossing and behind a school bus. Rather than bringing your frustrations to the office, let it all go to God before the time you arrive at work. While driving, practice prayerful-relaxation-breathing. Breathe in deeply in repentance, and out from your stomach in vertical thanks and praise. Feel your breath coming up from your "gut." Listen to relaxing edifying music and concentrate on noble truth-statements as you become calmer. Drop all your morning anger baggage at the foot of the cross as you walk from the parking lot to the door of your place of employment.

Lesson #7: Treat others as you would like to be treated.

It's the golden rule - the one our mothers and teachers quoted us hundreds - if not thousands - of times throughout our childhoods. By treating others in a respectful and courteous manner, you're likely to get the same in return.

Lesson #8: Choose your words carefully.

Be very careful when using words like "never" or "always" when talking about yourself or someone else. According to the American Psychological Association, "saying things like 'This !&-%@ machine never works.' Well the Bible already tells us that – duh! Statements like, 'You're always forgetting things' are totally unnecessary and are most always inaccurate. These statements also serve to make you feel that your anger is justified and that there's no way to solve the problem. They also alienate and humiliate people who might otherwise be willing to work with you on a solution." Christians should especially quit cussing under (or above) their breath.

Lesson #9: Grab your crayons.

When you're really mad at someone, use "silly humor" to help defuse your anger. If you think your co-worker is a total slime-ball, ask God to give you His perspective. They were made in His image. God in answer to prayer will always take the edge off anger ...at least anger towards people. He loves all people the same.

Lesson #10: Ask yourself, is it worth it?

The next time someone or something at work annoys you, ask yourself if it's worth the irritation and stress it is causing you. Then, ask yourself if it will be important a year from now or in eternity. If it's truly worth it, by all means take your annoyance to a supervisor or manager. If it's not, let it go.

"So get rid of your feelings of hatred" (2 Pet. 2:1 liv).
"A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back" (Prov. 29:11).
"Churned milk turns into butter; riled emotions turn into fist fights" (Prov. 30:33 mess).
"Starting a quarrel is like a leak in a dam,
so stop it before a fight breaks out" (Prov. 17:14 ncv).
"Stop your anger! Turn off your wrath" (Ps. 37:8 Liv).
"In the last days, mockers are going to have a heyday.
Reducing everything to the level of their puny feelings" (2 Pet 3:3 mess).
"The mouths of the wicked spew malice" (Prov. 19:28 mess).
"Make a clean sweep of malice and pretense, envy and hurtful talk" (1 Pet 2:1 mess).
"Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit,
hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking" (nkj).
"Malice backfires; spite boomerangs" (Prov 26:26 mess).
"Learn to love appropriately.
You need to use your head and test your feelings" (Phil. 1:9 mess).
(Prov. 15:1 nkj) "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."
"Try my best to be considerate of everyone's feelings" (1 Cor. 10:33 mess).
"Listen and help, O God. I'm reduced to a whine and a whimper,
obsessed with feelings of doomsday" (Ps. 64:1 mess).

“Never hide your feelings from Him [Jesus].” (Ps 34:5 mess).
“Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified their own sinful selves. They have given up their old selfish feelings” (Gal. 5:24 ncv).
Jesus said, “A genuine leader will never exploit your emotions or your pocketbook” (Matt. 7:20 mess).
Jesus talked about many charismatic who respond to the Gospel with instantly emotional enthusiasm saying, “there is no soil of character, and so when the emotions wear off and some difficulty arrives, there is nothing to show for it” (Matt. 13:21 mess).
“It is obvious what kind of life develops out of trying to get your own way all the time: ... a stinking accumulation of mental and emotional garbage” (Gal. 5:19 mess).
“Tell the unmarried and widows that singleness might well be the best thing for them, as it has been for me. But if they can’t manage their desires and emotions, they should by all means go ahead and get married” (1 Cor. 7:8-9 mess).