



## FREE LIFE-CHANGING ONLINE PARENTING COURSES

In these video-based, interactive classes—available 24/7—you’ll learn a consistent, encouraging style of parenting that will benefit you and your children for a lifetime. With this self-study course, you have the option of when to participate based on your own schedule and at your convenience. Gain additional insight from your online group leaders as they provide support and feedback.

Choose from four available courses:

- **Active Parenting: First Five Years:** For parents of children from birth to age 5
- **Active Parenting 4th ED:** For parents of children ages 5 to 12
- **Active Parenting of Teens:** For parents of preteens and teens
- **Crossroads of Parenting & Divorce:** For divorced and divorcing parents

Continue your experience as an “active” parent by reviewing what you learn in the class in your accompanying parent guide. Each guide contains additional information, activities, and worksheets to help you practice what you learn.

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## The Anatomy of Anger

If you’ve been on the roads or watched the news lately you are aware of the increased aggressiveness and anger that is becoming prevalent in our society. The management of anger has become recognized in recent years as vitally important to families and throughout society. Yet anger is also a natural part of life, so what should we make of this complicated emotion? Let’s look at the anatomy of anger.

### The Purpose of Anger

Anger is an emotional and physiological response to frustration. If an important need, want or desire is blocked for us, our bodies and emotions react with intense feelings that we often label as anger. Anger is one of the emotions that trigger that ancient human instinct of fight or flight. This causes our brains to release chemicals that make us stronger, faster and ready to take action, whether it’s to fight danger or run from it.

### Using, not Losing, Your Temper

Even in modern societies, anger sometimes pays off. Rudolf Dreikurs observed that people do not lose their temper; they use their temper. What he meant was that people sometimes use anger to intimidate others into giving them what they want.

### The Message of Anger

Our own angry feelings tell us that one of our goals is being blocked. They clearly send this message: “Act! Don’t just sit there; get up and do something!” If you do something soon, you can often solve the problem before it gets worse and before you “blow up.” If you don’t act but try to ignore the message, several things could happen:

- The problem might go away by other means, but this is a risky and uncertain possibility.
- Your anger may grow in intensity until it propels you into action, which is likely to be desperate, unthinking and potentially violent.
- Your anger will fester internally, expressing itself in unexpected ways: headaches, rashes, ulcers—even heart attacks.

### How to Use Anger Positively

Since anger is a natural response to frustration and it can give us the motivation we need to do something about the event (or behavior) that is causing that frustration, our goal in handling anger is not to stop getting angry; rather, we need to learn to use our anger in positive ways and teach our kids to do the same. When you find yourself angry, the following four steps can help you use it, not lose it:

1. First, acknowledge your anger early, when it is still small. Don’t wait for anger to get so intense that it overwhelms your thinking brain. Try to catch it early so that you can still take positive action.
2. Next, hit the imaginary “pause” button. Imagine this button—just like the “pause” button on your video player. As soon as you notice yourself becoming angry and before you say or do something that you may regret later, hit that pause button and think about what is triggering your anger.
3. If necessary, use self-calming techniques to reduce your anger. Some people have a short fuse. In other words, the part of the brain that responds to threats with anger produces chemicals so quickly that they flood the rational brain before the brain knows what’s happening. These people need to learn how to calm themselves down before they take action. Some self-calming methods include deep breathing, taking a time-out, counting to 10 (or 20, or 100) or taking a warm bath.
4. Solve the problem or change your thinking about the problem. This step requires your thinking brain, so either hit the pause button first or calm down before acting. Then use your anger to help you find a solution to the problem.

Next month we’ll explore how parents can use this information to help their children respond to anger.

To learn more about effective parenting skills, visit the Active Parenting Online Video Library. These helpful videos are offered free of charge by the ACFC in partnership with Active Parenting. Guidance and help are available for parents of children of all ages. To access the Online Video Library, go to the [ACFC website](https://www.acfcares.com), click on the Active Parenting tab, and follow the instructions on how to view the videos.