

7 Tips for Keeping Your Cool When Your Kids Misbehave

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February 09, 2019 by: [Sam Crabtree](#)



The Volcano Erupts

Do you identify with the parent who has said and done things he wouldn't ordinarily recommend? The child misbehaved—again!—and suddenly from somewhere down deep a volcano erupts. Not cool.

Beneath the Surface of the Volcano

So, you've blown your stack. You admit it. You confess your wrongness to all involved parties. You apologize, asking forgiveness. And you resolve to not be that way again, to not do it again. But there's the problem. The resolve of our own nature will fail. We need supernatural enablement for change. Overcoming anger requires something humanly impossible, something supernatural. The good news is that Jesus came to make it possible for all kinds of people—including angry parents—to be changed into people who yield their expectations to God in service to others, specifically their children.

When parents resort to a raised voice, name calling, derogatory labeling of the child (e.g., idiot, brat) bickering, rolling their eyes, exasperated exhaling, "I've had it," out of control outbursts and explosions disproportionate to the infraction, then everyone in the house walks on eggshells.

For several years of my childhood, I lived on a dairy farm. We always had to be extra

cautious around the udder of the cows, for you never knew when they might kick, or swat you with their tail. Being a child around a parent with an anger problem can be like that: never relaxed, but always on guard. If we don't practice what we preach, treating others with respect and care, our hypocrisy will damage relationships, respect, intimacy, and a warm environment in the home.

While not all anger is wrong per se, we are speaking here of excessive and ill-conceived reactions that dishonor God in two ways: first, improper heart motivations (self-oriented expectations) and second, outward expressions (lashing out, clenched teeth, elevated decibels, demeaning insults). Rarely does our anger express God's heart.

Yes, children may test your patience, but there is no such thing as patience that goes untested. On the cross, when being misunderstood, mistreated, and tortured, Jesus does not lose his cool, erupting in anger, but demonstrates the same Spirit-empowered self-control available to us.

Anger doesn't come out of the blue. Except for neurological and biological problems, anger is virtually always a byproduct of expectations. Something is happening that you were not expecting, or something you expected is not happening. Expectations: things not proceeding according to YOUR timeline, or not up to YOUR expected level of excellence in performance. What do you want (crave?) in the moment? What are your beliefs that excuse your over-reaction?

No one can make you angry. They can only expose the expectations already in you. We don't parent our children based on their behaviors, but based upon our interpretations of their behaviors, and our interpretations spring from our expectations. The point is not the control of your anger as though if you never become angry, you can call it mission accomplished. Rather, the point is to enthrone Jesus over your expectations.

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Anger reveals hearts.

The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.
([Luke 6:45](#))

Lurking somewhere in our hearts are some tenacious idols.

Angry outbursts demonstrate pride in who you are. Anger challenges the value of others by implying, "Who do you think YOU are to seemingly disregard who I think I am?!"

Awakening to our anger can be an awakening to our need for Jesus, who saves us.

Cultivating Fruit from the Volcanic Residue

1. Plan Early

Keeping your cool begins much earlier than the incident that provokes the anger. The time to address your anger is not when it's already too late. BEFORE the moment of anger arrives, yield your expectations, die to self. It's okay to have high expectations, but don't have them as an idol, for then they have YOU. Don't let standards become unreasonable demands. For example, it is reasonable to establish a standard of not spilling the milk and to raise children who join you in striving toward that standard. But don't expect that standard to be met flawlessly. When raising children, that standard is likely to encounter failures. Anticipate them and don't be emotionally blown out of the water when they occur.

2. Own Your Eruptions

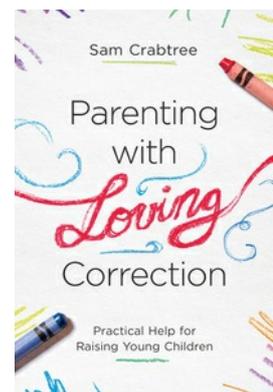
Confess and repent—to the child, to the SPOUSE (this is hope giving), to your small-group leader or pastor if it's a habitual pattern. We are responsible for our outbursts. Make no excuses. Don't trust your own judgment when it comes to deciding if anger is a pattern with you; ask those around you: your spouse, your children. Confession restores a measure of what is lost in the volcanic eruption of anger.

3. Pause

Step back, take a deep breath. Collect your thoughts. Remember they are kids and YOU are the grownup. In five years will you care are about the milk that was spilled?

4. Go to God

Ask God for help. Humility brings beauty to ugly situations. Ask him to fill you with his Spirit, for his spirit produces the fruit of peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, and self-control.



Parenting with Loving Correction

Sam Crabtree

This guide offers parents practical steps and tips for wise, God-centered, and consistent correction aimed at transforming their children's hearts.

5. Laugh Together

At the right time, use humor and laughter that is funny from the others' point of view.

6. Absorb the Bible

Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness that God requires. —[James 1:19-20](#)

Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city. ([Proverbs 16:32](#))

A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back. ([Proverbs 29:11](#))

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. ([James 3:17–18](#))

7. Give Thanks

It is impossible to be thankful and angry at the same time. Thank God for this opportunity to make progress in your sanctification.

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