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Foreword



WE ARE ALL RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR ACTIONS, but what about managing our thoughts and feelings? We often develop the skills of noticing, identifying, and responding to our emotions because we have to, not because we had great teachers early in life. But we have the power to improve those emotional regulation skills. Most people—even kids—can make a great deal of change in how happy and safe they feel by learning to understand their feelings instead of simply reacting to their emotions. As we develop a sense of control and reduce our reactivity to our thoughts and emotions, this also helps us more skillfully react to the environment and the emotions of others around us.

Kids are not simply tiny humans, and they have greater emotional needs for safety and security than they might later in life. They are extremely sophisticated in understanding that they are not happy, that something makes them feel bad, or that they don't like something. They don't have the agency or control over their environment that many adults do; but developing an understanding of their own minds, hearts, and reactions is a skill that will provide this agency, along with many lifelong benefits. As a kid in the 1970s with a lot of my own fear and anger, I wish someone had given me a book like this to help provide a framework for me to start getting a handle on the emotional discomfort every kid goes through.

With this workbook, Samantha Snowden has provided a rich and useful set of practices to help develop the skills to notice and manage our internal states. Once kids start to develop a sense of freedom from their own emotions—not by ignoring them or pushing them away, but by validating the processes and circumstances that are creating them—great self-regulation skills can start to develop.

I have worked with Samantha Snowden for many years in multiple health and wellness contexts. She is always the kids' favorite mindfulness teacher, bringing compassion, care, and humor to every teaching interaction. She has given a great deal to the clients and friends we share, and I was delighted to be asked to write this foreword to her book, *Anger Management Workbook for Kids*.

The exercises and readings that follow will help kids of all ages break through the habit of automatic reactions, provide tools for labeling and understanding how their anger and discomfort work, and support them on the path of learning to be comfortable with their own emotions. This will help kids act quickly and skillfully from those emotions and be less driven by fear and anger.

—ANDREW HILL, PhD

Founding Director of the Peak Brain Institute and UCLA Lecturer in Psychology

A Letter to GROWN-UPS



HELLO!

In over 10 years of working with families, I have learned that anger can be one of the biggest obstacles to harmony. I see families stuck in cycles of frustration around certain situations, like transitioning from school to home, playing video games, or going to bed.

I hope this workbook helps open the lines of communication and connection so your family feels united as you work toward common goals of understanding, cooperation, and self-awareness.

You can work on these activities with your child, or your child can work on them alone. When you explore the activities together, I encourage you to bring curiosity and a willingness to discover not only your child's angry tendencies, but also your own, free from blame or judgment. As you open up about your own experiences with anger, your child will feel more comfortable being vulnerable and will see that anger is an emotion that everyone feels.

This workbook addresses the following topics:

- Identifying habits and trends of anger
- Recognizing how anger feels
- Understanding what triggers anger
- Communicating feelings, needs, and wants
- Cultivating self-kindness, joy, and appreciation

These activities are designed to help children get to know their anger habits with openness and kindness. Once they identify their habits and their likely consequences, further activities cultivate more pleasant states of being through gratitude, friendliness, and self-kindness.

May your experience with this process be enjoyable, illuminating, and provide relief.

Warmly,

Samantha

A Letter to KIDS



ANGER IS A DIFFICULT FEELING. It makes us want to destroy things and say hurtful things we later regret. When we look back at what we said and did when we felt angry, we feel sorry and wish we had done things differently. This book will help you see anger in a new way. Instead of acting out of anger or pushing it away, you will get curious about anger and allow it to pass before it gets out of control.

This workbook is a safe place to learn more about yourself, try out new activities, and make new habits that will help you be happier, calmer, and more in control when you feel angry.

As you explore the activities in your workbook, you may want to ask an adult to practice with you and talk with you about what you notice. Always remember that we all feel angry sometimes and that when you feel upset, you are not alone. There are people around you who want to help you feel better.

I hope this book helps you feel happier, friendlier, and safer when things get tough.

Warmly,

Samantha

PART 1



Why Do I Feel Angry?

What We'll Learn

Figuring out what makes us angry can be a little tricky. Anger seems to come out of nowhere, and sometimes when we least expect it. Some of us get angry around certain people, and others get angry when going to certain places. When we are unsure when anger will show up or what our anger is like, it is much harder to know what to do.

This section introduces you to anger. You'll learn more about when anger may visit and how it makes you and other people feel. Using your curiosity, you can get to know your habits better, like a scientist discovering something new by looking at it with a microscope. Thinking about your anger habits will help you see patterns more clearly and find healthy ways to feel calm again.

Understanding *why* you feel angry and how it affects your friends and family will help you make better choices *when* you feel angry.



THIS IS HOW ANGER FEELS

Imagine you are a detective. Detectives find clues and solve mysteries. In this section, the mystery you will solve is how your anger feels and how to recognize and describe it.

Every day there are many things we must do and people we must be around. If we are not in the mood to do something, like go to school, do our homework, or share with friends, we can feel frustrated, annoyed, and angry.

What do you do when you are angry? You may scream or cry or even throw things. By taking the time now, while you are calm, to find clues about what makes you angry, you will be able to choose different ways of acting when you feel angry.

You will also learn to pay attention to the clues your body gives you that you are starting to feel upset, and you'll be able to describe them. Your body lets you know it's angry by speeding up your heartbeat, heating you up, or making you feel like you want to break or smash something.

Let's solve the mystery of anger.

Say Hi to Your Anger

When we feel angry, it is natural to want to make the feeling go away as quickly as possible, especially when we feel like we lose control of ourselves. However, when we use curiosity to get to know anger, we welcome the feeling instead, as though offering the difficult visitor some tea and cookies.

Take some time to get to know what your anger is like. As you think about your answers to the following questions, close your eyes and imagine all the different parts of anger. When you are done, you can draw a picture of you welcoming and getting to know your anger.



What does anger look like?

.....

What does anger smell like?

.....

What does anger sound like?

.....

What does anger feel like?

.....

Say Hi to Your Anger, *continued*

If anger was a character from a book or TV show, it would be:

.....

A motto is something a character says a lot. It represents their personality and what they're about. If your anger had a motto, what would it be?

.....

Take a few minutes to write a letter to your anger. Here are a few lines to start you off. Feel free to make your letter as long as you would like.

LETTER TO ANGER

Hi Anger, my name is

If you had a color it would be

I notice you most when

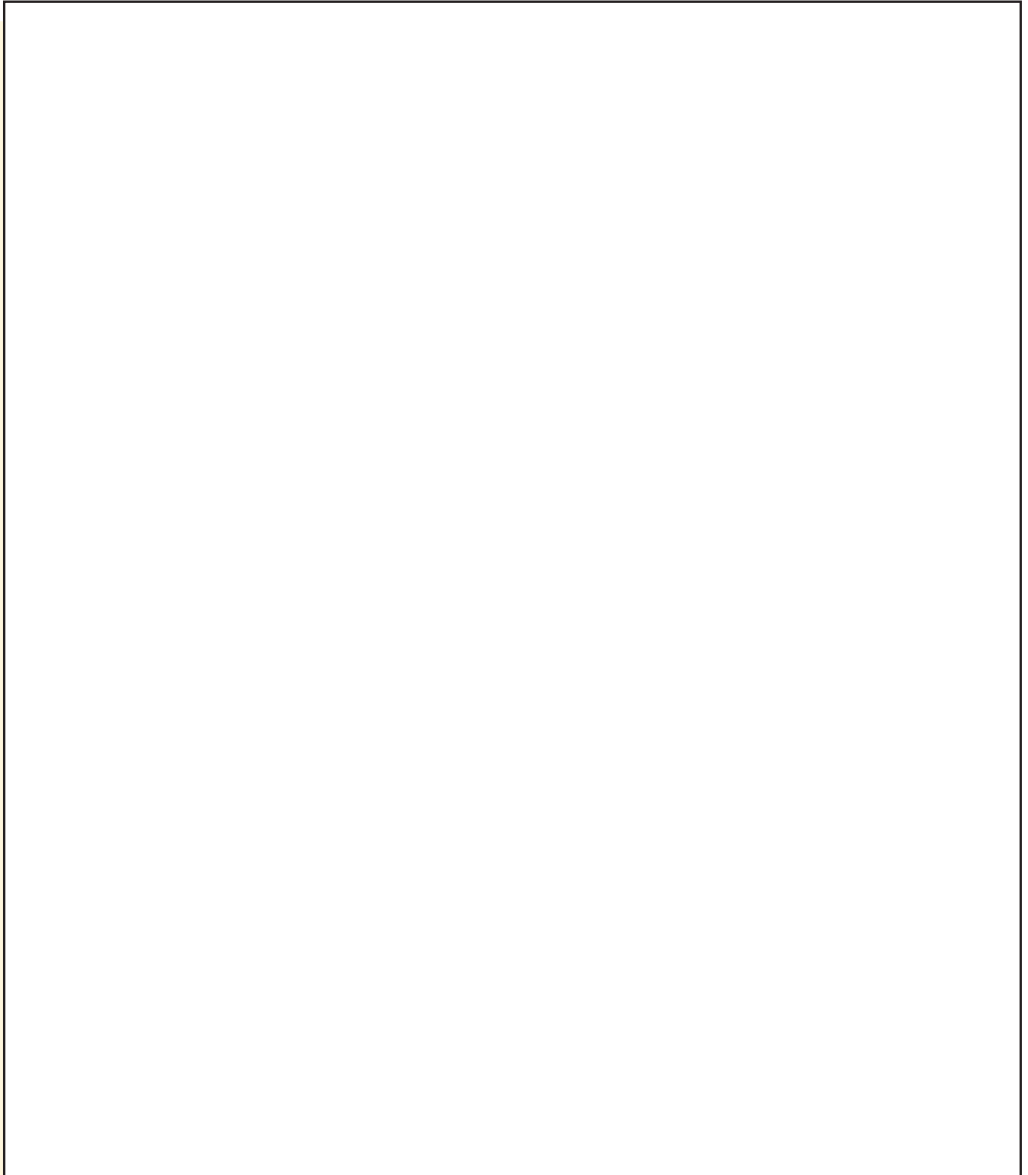
I would like to get to know you a little bit better.

.....

.....

.....

Now that you've gotten to know your anger, draw a picture of what it looks like when it comes to visit.



ACTIVITY 2

Naming Our Emotions

Anger is a difficult emotion that can make us want to do something quickly, without thinking first. We react this way because of the part of our brain called the *amygdala* (pronounced ah-mig-dah-la), which turns on when we have a big emotion like anger. The amygdala is like an alarm going off in the brain. This is helpful when you touch a hot stove, for instance, because you will get burned if you don't move away fast. Our ancestors needed to react quickly because predators such as lions and tigers could eat them if they weren't paying attention.

The world we live in now is very different from that time, but we still have that part of our brain. It can make us want to fight or destroy things when anger comes around.

Luckily, we also have another part of our brain called the *prefrontal cortex*, or PFC. This part of the brain gives us the ability to pause before we react, and to think of the consequences our actions will have for others. When we use the PFC to name an emotion like anger, it is like applying the brakes on a fast-moving train.

We help ourselves by pausing and thinking about the feelings moving through us. This calms the part of the brain that reacts quickly (the amygdala) by turning on the more responsible part of the brain (the PFC).

It helps to learn the right words so we can get better at understanding and explaining just what we feel.

Below you will find some words that describe different types of uncomfortable feelings. Read them to yourself or aloud to an adult, and ask for help with words you don't know yet.

FEELING WORDS FOR DIFFICULT MOODS

- Angry
- Careless
- Cranky
- Frustrated
- Impatient
- Irritated
- Rushed
- Sad
- Tired
- Worried

Imagine yourself in the following situations, then find one or two feelings from the word list that may come up in each of those situations. Write the feeling words down. Then add a situation of your own and write in a feeling word that describes how you feel in that moment.

When I leave for school in the morning, I feel

.....

When I am waiting to be picked up after school, I feel

.....

When I am late to a party or to play with friends, I feel

.....

When I share a toy when I don't want to, I feel

.....

When I don't sleep well because of bad dreams, I feel

.....

When I,

I feel

.....

ACTIVITY 3

How Does My Body Feel?

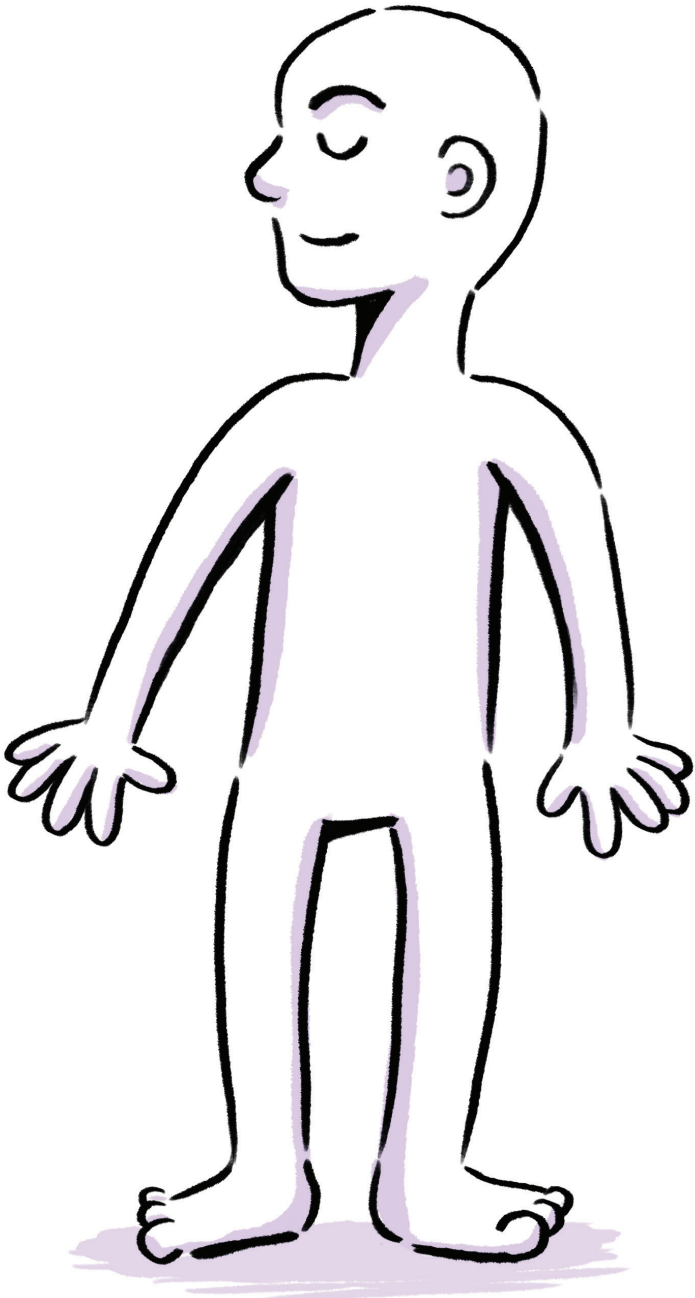
When we pause to notice our body sensations, our anger slows and starts to fade. It may be easy to notice how we feel when we get hurt or are really hungry, but there are many other body sensations that give us clues that something needs our attention. When we notice our sensations and name them, the wiser part of our brain (the PFC) turns on and we can soothe the reactive part of our brain (the amygdala).

Close your eyes and think back to a time when you were angry. Can you remember how you could tell you were angry from the clues your body gave you?

Use the sensation words below and your own words to identify the sensations you feel in your body when you feel angry, then draw them on the diagram. You can also use colors, shapes, and other drawings to show how anger feels for you.

SENSATION WORDS

- Dark
- Dizzy
- Fast breathing
- Fast heartbeat
- Hard to breathe
- Heavy
- Hollow
- Hot
- Nauseous
- Numb
- Tight
- Tingly
- Shaky
- Sharp
- Warm





THIS IS WHAT ANGER DOES

When we feel angry, we feel out of control. It is hard to control our body, our thoughts, and our words. For example, we may fall to the floor and kick and punch, think that we hate someone we really love, or scream and cry.

Anger makes a lot of our thoughts appear more intense to match the intensity of the anger we feel. It can be difficult to notice while it is happening, but when you are calm, it is easier to think about what anger does.

When you are relaxed it is also a good time to think about how you respond to anger and how your angry actions affect others. The things we do and say when we feel angry can scare or upset those we love. Friends may not want to play with us, or we may get in trouble at school. Think about the consequences of your angry words and actions. Thinking about the consequences will encourage you to find better ways of dealing with your anger.

What Happens in Your Brain and Body When You Feel Angry

When we are angry, our body usually feels a lot of energy. It is as though our body and mind are screaming, “Do something!” Anger tells the body to act, and many bodily changes happen to help us act. You may notice some of these feelings in your body: your muscles tensing, your heart beating faster, and your belly feeling tight.

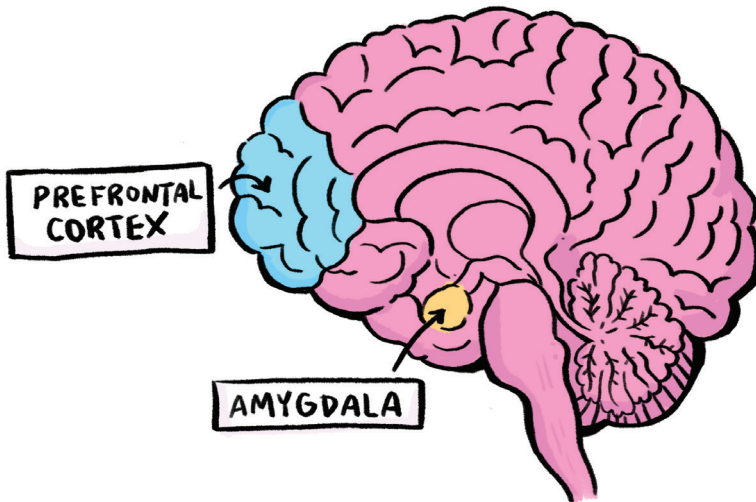
DEFINITION OF TERMS

Amygdala: Our emotional alarm system, which tells the body to fight danger, run from it, or freeze.

Prefrontal cortex: Calms the amygdala by naming our feelings and imagining the consequences of our actions.

Adrenaline: A chemical in our body that gives us the energy to do something fast.

When we have a big emotion like anger, the amygdala fires. Then adrenaline flows throughout the body, making the body want to do something quickly. The prefrontal cortex then comes in to help. It puts the brakes on by identifying our feelings and body sensations.



What Happens in Your Brain and Body When You Feel Angry, *continued*

What does your amygdala tell you to do when you're angry?

Example: "You should break your brother's Lego building!"

What does your prefrontal cortex tell your amygdala in order to put the brakes on your angry urges?

Example: "Wow! You are very angry. I can tell because your face is hot and you have a lot of energy in your body."
