

## Appendix 8 **Top Tips for Parents**

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Here are some top tips on simple ways that parents can help their children manage their stress and anger in everyday situations:

- 1 **Timing:** It is vital to remember that coping strategies should only be used at the early stages of anger and stress. Once the child is 'losing it', no strategy will be effective, and time and space are the only options. Using strategies at this time can cause problems as parents give up on good strategies as they seem ineffective and children may come to dislike the techniques because they link them to being upset/angry and to horrible times.
- 2 **Role model:** Spend some time thinking about your own response to anger. Most people will benefit from improving skills in handling anger – it can be a good idea to practise some of the strategies in this programme alongside your child. The more that you are in control of your own anger, the more able you are to support others. It is also helpful for children to realise that learning and refining these skills is something that we all need to do and that these are life-long learning experiences – even you (the adults) are not perfect!
- 3 **Try to stay calm:** Any signs of anxiety or frustration shown by you will only increase the young person's stress levels. Check your voice and body language and practise 'faking it'!
- 4 **Learn the 'warning signs':** Identify the early signs of anger that are unique to your child. Doing something at this point in order to prevent the build-up of anger is much easier than dealing with the 'explosion' later – divert, distract, use calming talk, etc.
- 5 **Don't be demanding!** When you detect early signs of anger make sure you do not add extra demands on the child or remind them of all the things they should and/or need to be doing. Instead use some of the strategies in the programme: provide them with space, reduce the demands (e.g. 'let's finish this one and then come back to it some other time' or 'let's take some time out now and come back to this later'). Remember that the priority is to avoid escalation.
- 6 **Use humour (but never sarcasm):** This helps to quickly change the mood, gives the young person a 'breathing space' in which they may be able to regain control, and ensures that feelings of shame and blame do not emerge and further escalate the situation.