



Anger Toolbox

The Caterpillar Mediator

In essence Curly is a mediator. Everything he does is from that skills base. You can look at what he does and have a go yourself.

The role of mediator is used more and more these days in all walks of life. It is proving to be the most successful type of conflict resolution intervention. So, why do they work?

Listening: When we listen we find out more about what has happened. It can take a while for a child, or an adult, to tell the full story of what they think and how they feel. Listening also helps the other person feel valued, which in turn helps them to calm down.

Does not Judge: If we judge other people we lose the opportunity to learn more about what has happened and also make the other person defensive towards us. Judging others also stops the building of trust which is critical to any agreement.

Asks Good Questions: One of the core functions of a mediator is to help new thinking to happen. This is required for the parties to move from confrontation to collaborative problem solving. Asking questions which are open and non-judgemental help this happen.

Understands: Trust is the core to any mediation process and understanding what people are going through is key to this. Mediators do not need to agree with either side. Their understanding comes from understanding the experience that the parties are going through.

Helps find solutions: The role of mediator also focuses on trying to reach a mutually beneficial agreement. This can be hard for kids to do first time but stick with the process and they will learn. The process is designed to be future focused and encourages participants to think in a new way. It works because they do it themselves and go through the thought process required to make a sustained agreement.

Curly models a lot of ideas you can use yourself. The books show you how these skills can help children change themselves. Have a go yourself and see you get on.

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Measuring Anger

One of the biggest problems we have with anger is the fact that we get overwhelmed with the emotion. We feel totally hijacked with the feeling and find it hard to describe. Quite literally it is beyond our emotional literacy.

If we can understand more about when and how we get angry and to what degree different things make us so, we will build up an emotional literacy which will help us stay calmer the next time we are triggered.

This exercise should be done when the child is calm and not when angry. It can help build this emotional literacy and when the child gets angry they will stand a better chance at being able to use words.

It can be useful to keep the thermometer that your child has done and, when they get angry, use it to help them talk about how they feel. This gives them a tool to help them articulate their anger.

Distraction is one of the things that can help us cool down. By drawing attention to the thermometer the child has to start thinking again, which in turn encourages the adrenaline to subside (see [whattriggersanger](#)).

Anger Rules

There is a difference between the feeling of anger, which is neither good or bad, and the behaviour we then carry out. There are many examples of anger being a stimulus for positive action. For example: The anger that makes us get up and argue for change (The Civil Rights Movement in America).

The important message for children to grow up with is that the feeling of anger is normal and we have to learn appropriate behaviour to deal with it.

The Anger Rules helps to affirm this and can create a feeling of safety. Anytime your child exhibits remind them of the rules calmly. Remember also when you get angry that modelling the rules is the best teacher for your child.

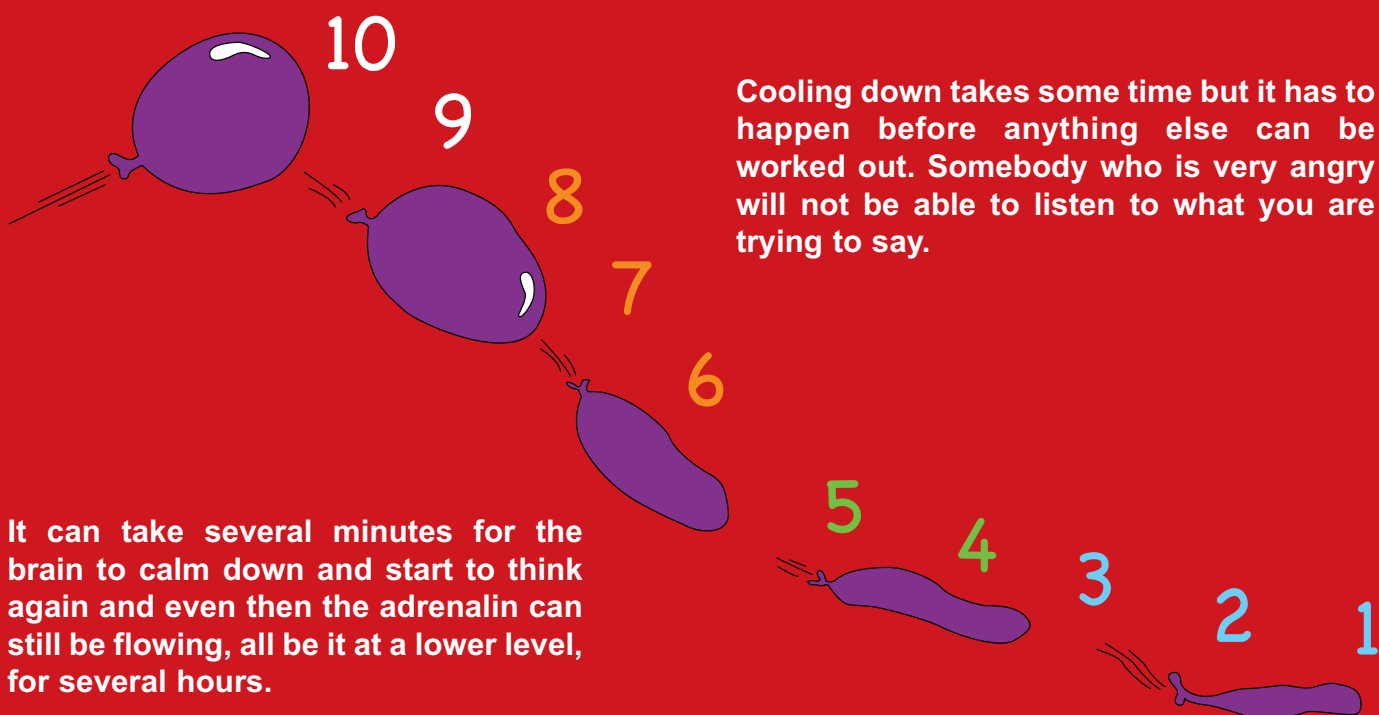
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Cooling Down

So why is cooling down important? Well first of all our brain works best in the calm, state. When our brain is flooded with adrenalin our language and thinking parts of our brain is switched off (see [whattriggersanger](#)). We can't think clearly and what to hit out instead of finding words to talk. In that state nothing can be sorted out.



Cooling down takes some time but it has to happen before anything else can be worked out. Somebody who is very angry will not be able to listen to what you are trying to say.

It can take several minutes for the brain to calm down and start to think again and even then the adrenalin can still be flowing, all be it at a lower level, for several hours.

Different cooling down strategies work for different people and they may need practise. When we are really angry a walk round the garden or up and down the road can help. Kicking a football for a while or playing a physical game can be great for boys. Listening to music or reading a book can distract us and help the brain to calm down.

The truth is that we can take the time to cool down first because the issue will still be there when we are ready to talk.

If two children are fighting it is possible to stop the fight, ask them to cool down and then sit down to sort it out. It is a more effective process in the long run.

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Cool Down Checklist



Making a personalised Cool Down List is a great idea. It encourages your child to take responsibility for their own behaviour and can be used when the child gets angry. The finished list can be put on the wall or kept in a handy drawer and fished out when needed.

The very act of getting the list and reading it when we are angry helps our brain to click back into thinking action.

The better we get at managing our anger the better we get at voicing what is making us angry. In being able to voice this clearly we immediately improve our chances at having our needs and interests met.

The more we learn about ourselves and what helps us when we are angry the better we are prepared for next time.

- ☐ Stop - take some long, deep breaths.
- ☐ Count slowly from 10 - 1.
- ☐ Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.
- ☐ Remember to think cool thoughts and not hot thoughts (*see the next page*).
- ☐ Think of a happy place where you feel safe.
- ☐ Imagine a balloon filling with your anger and then deflating, releasing your anger.
- ☐ Find a pattern in the room (on the carpet, wall paper) and trace around it with your eyes.
- ☐ Go and write down why you are angry.
- ☐ Go for a walk.
- ☐ Hug a large cushion.

When you have calmed down, you are ready to solve the problem.

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Hot and Cool Thoughts

The thoughts we think and how we talk to ourselves can be very affected by our emotional state. Just think of how we feel if a friend upsets us. Suddenly we start thinking about all the faults they may have and of how we are right to be upset. Then the phone rings and our friend apologises graciously. We change back to thinking of them with fondness and regard.

There is a saying “We are what we eat”. The truth is more likely to be “We are what we think”. And no more so than when we are angry.

As anger builds within us we start to have angry thoughts, which are stoked by the feeling. In turn the thoughts can make us angrier. As we ruminate over our hurt, our anger builds and we become more and more convinced that we are right. We get to the stage where revenge is easier to think of than forgiveness. It can be an exciting state to be in and we can feel very powerful. Our angry thoughts feed this feeling and our perspective alters as a result.

We can help ourselves to cool down by actively changing our thoughts to cool thoughts. This really can help because it can activate calming of our mood.

The truth is that nobody is totally right and that there is always room for other views. As these cooler thoughts take hold we calm down.

It is important to cool down before sorting out the issues that have made us angry because it is when we are cool and calm we make the best decisions.



Hot and Cool Thoughts

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What People See on the Outside

There are many signs of anger and it is important for children to be able to read the signs. About 75% of our communication is done through body language so a child who does not read the signs well is at a serious disadvantage.

This exercise helps to get children thinking. There are no right or wrong answers. The point of it is to encourage the children to look and think. It can also be useful to turn the sound down on the television and make up what you think is happening just from looking at the body language.

Talk to your child about what to do if someone is angry with them.

Conflict Iceberg

In the story Sam does not find it easy to talk about how he feels. It looks as if he is angry about painting but what has actually triggered his anger is how Jack treats him.

When we are angry we don't find it easy to talk honestly. We can say a lot we don't mean. It is difficult to be honest because we feel under threat. We protect what we really feel so we don't get hurt more.

Understanding that there is more to rows is an important skill to learn. If we only solve what is on the surface, just like cutting off the top of an iceberg, more will pop up from underneath.

This iceberg is a useful way of looking at conflict and can be a good tool to use with your child.

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How People Feel on the Inside

This exercise is good because it gets the child to think about what anger feels like. Children can feel overwhelmed and frightened by their own feelings, and in particular when they are angry.

Go through the various feelings in the picture and talk to your child about how you feel when you get angry. Encourage your child to talk about their own feelings and maybe draw a picture of them feeling angry.

The more your child talks about these sensations the less frightened by their own anger.

Working Together

The process outlined in this book is widely used in the field of conflict resolution and assisted negotiation. It takes a bit of getting used to but persevere.

Working together is ultimately the best way forward for everyone but it can be very hard to manage when Anger is present. This is why it is important to have a process with listening and understanding as the first stage. Time spent on this makes the rest a lot more sustainable.

It is easy to underestimate the importance of process but, in the work of solving rows and disputes it really matters. Both parties will negotiate better if they feel they have been treated equally and that they have had a chance to tell their side of the story. They will also hear the story for the other person better.

Remember that listening actually calms the other person and helps them to be more effective at sorting out their own problems.

Encouraging the parties to think of their own options helps them to take responsibility for their own agreement. They have to take ownership of the outcome which, in turn, means that there is more chance of the agreement being kept by them.

If both or all parties are about 70% happy with the planned agreement then it is probably workable.

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Rehearsal Room

Learning from our Mistakes (Rehearsal Room)

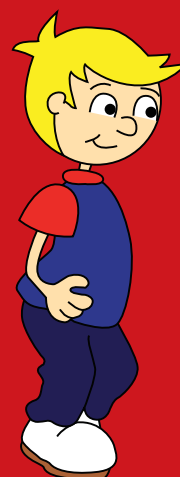
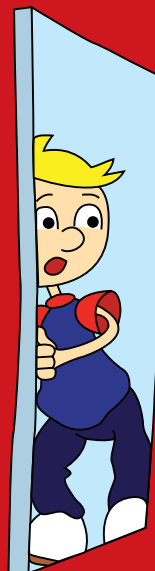
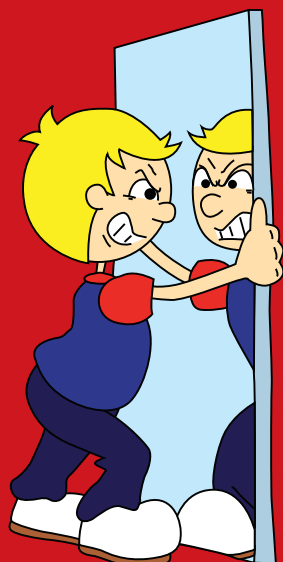
Practice is the cornerstone of any new learning. There is an old saying used by performers: 'It is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration'.

Musicians and sportspeople have training routines that they do everyday. These are built on small exercises that are repeated over and over again. The repetition trains the brain. Slowly the brain rewires to become better for the task in hand.

Neuro-plasticity is the term used by neuro-scientists to describe how the brain changes to facilitate new skills. This can be promoted in our brain through what is commonly known as 'brain training'.

The Rehearsal Room is these books are designed to help this process. Learning from our mistakes and trying to make mini life changes can slowly lead to big changes.

Don't expect your child to change overnight. Stick with it, stay calm and encourage your child to try again.



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