

Stay true to yourself. If they see you trying to become like them, they'll lose respect for you.

Be a steady, loving presence in their life. You may have to forego some of your other activities, but if you have an adolescent who is possibly moving toward violence or suicide, it's worth it.

Get in touch with your own healthy anger. You will have the personal power and confidence to deal with the energy of adolescent anger.

Work to master humor and love. Find as many ways as possible to have fun with the adolescent and show your love. Make sure that you are pursuing the relationship for them, and not to fulfill some unmet needs from your own past.

Consult with other adults and parents who are good with teenagers. Watch how they interact with kids and learn from their example.

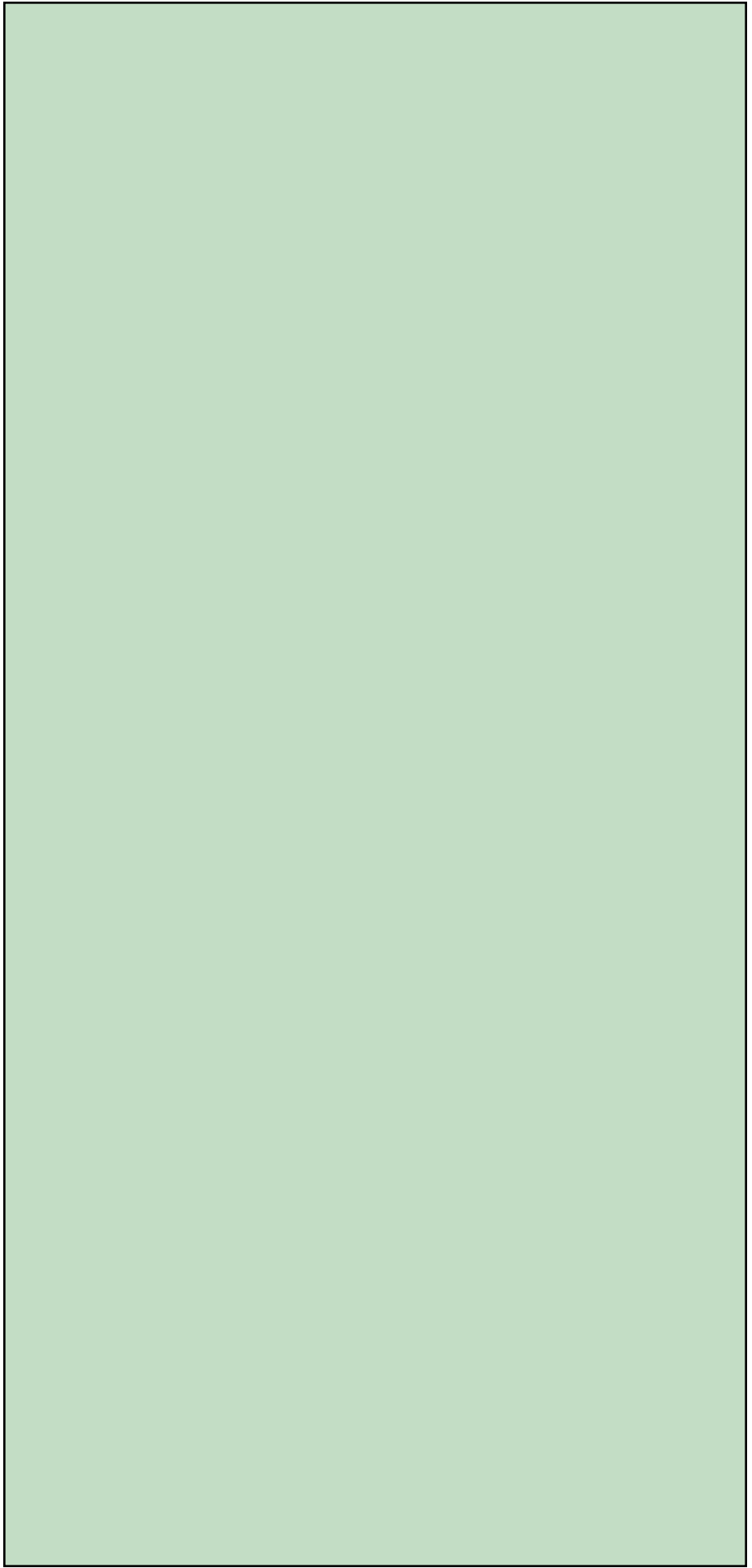
Pray. You need to know you are not alone in your mission to bring love to this unhappy child.

EMBRACING THE OUTCASTS AND MISFITS

This is simply impossible if you have outcasts and misfits in your own subconscious. You must first discover and embrace the children within you that represent remnants of memories that you have yet to resolve. These are the inner children that symbolize your pain, shame, and self-doubt. The outcast child that you approach in the outer world will not accept your embrace if they see unresolved fear and anger in your eyes or actions.

Since we know that the outcasts and misfits are the children most likely to become violent, we must offer them love and acceptance, and find a place where they fit. Look around you in your family and your community. Do you see the outcasts and misfits? They are the ones that seem to have no friends, or who only hang out with others like them. Especially look for the ones who seem to display depression and/or anger.

Genius often hides in such places. If you are wise, healthy and dedicated enough to win an inroad to the heart and mind of one of



these “personas non grata”, you may discover a hidden treasure. The movie “Good Will Hunting” depicts such a case, where an angry, violent misfit is also a gifted genius. The older movie, “The Breakfast Club” also shows us the beauty in the shadow of the misfit.

Kindness and compassion will sometimes be greeted with doubt, fear, and even anger at first. If you are sincere, you can penetrate that outer shell and touch the tender heart within. You may even be saving someone’s life.

Consider the outcasts and misfits in your world to be unexplored territories of your own soul, undiscovered treasures waiting for you. The rewards will be as great for you as for those you help. When we look deep enough into any living being, we find the face of God. Teach this to your children, as Max did with his own personal story.

METHODS FOR HELPING CHILDREN DEAL WITH THEIR ANGER

What to say:

When your child is expressing anger, your verbal response is extremely important. Although your non-verbal signals will speak more loudly than your words, we must not underestimate the power of the spoken word during intense emotional experiences.

-For a very young child (or when anger is being expressed in non-verbal ways) say something like, “Wow! I can see that you are really angry right now. I’m sure you have good reasons to be angry. Your anger seems really strong to me. I want you to know that it’s okay with me for you to be angry, and I want to help you deal with it so that nobody gets hurt-including you.” Communicate the idea that “There’s nothing wrong with feeling anger, the important thing is what you do with it”.

-Practice reflective listening. Repeat back to the child what you hear her saying in a non-judgmental, soothing tone. This provides a comforting effect, and lets the child know she’s being heard. Start with phrases like, “So what I hear you saying is...” or “So you’re saying...” Stick with their words and references, using as little interpretation as possible.

-Express empathy and understanding. Imag-

ine yourself in the child's position, and attempt to see things from his viewpoint. Use phrases like, "When I put myself in your shoes, I can see why you would feel that way," or "From where you stand, it looks like..." or "I think I see what you mean" or "That makes sense to me".

-Avoid teaching, correcting, or instructing while your child is angry. Help them deal with and understand their anger. Administer discipline when both you and the child are calm. That way the child understands that the discipline is directed at his behavior and not his emotion.

What to do:

If your child is small enough, might try holding her during her anger episode. It provides loving, powerful, and safe boundaries when the child is feeling out of control. The non-verbal message is, "I'm here. I'm not going to leave you. I'm not going to hurt you, and I won't let you hurt yourself or anyone else. I'm going to hold you until you feel safe again." Here are some recommendations to make this procedure safe and successful:

-If you are extremely afraid or angry yourself, do not try this technique. Your emotions will feed the anger and fear of your child and make the situation worse.

-Try holding the child from behind, with him sitting in your lap. Protect your face in case he tosses his head back toward you.

-There needs to be both love and power in your embrace. Strong but not too strong, relaxed but not too relaxed. This lets the child know you are in charge, that you love her and can and will protect her.

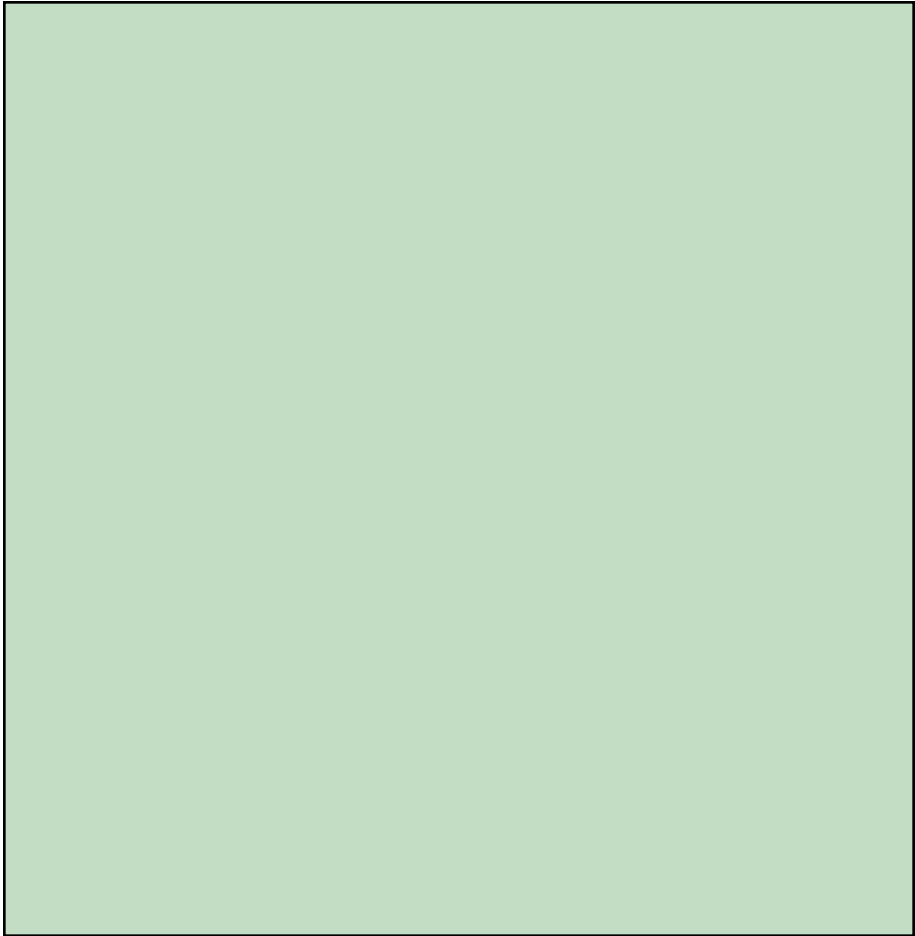
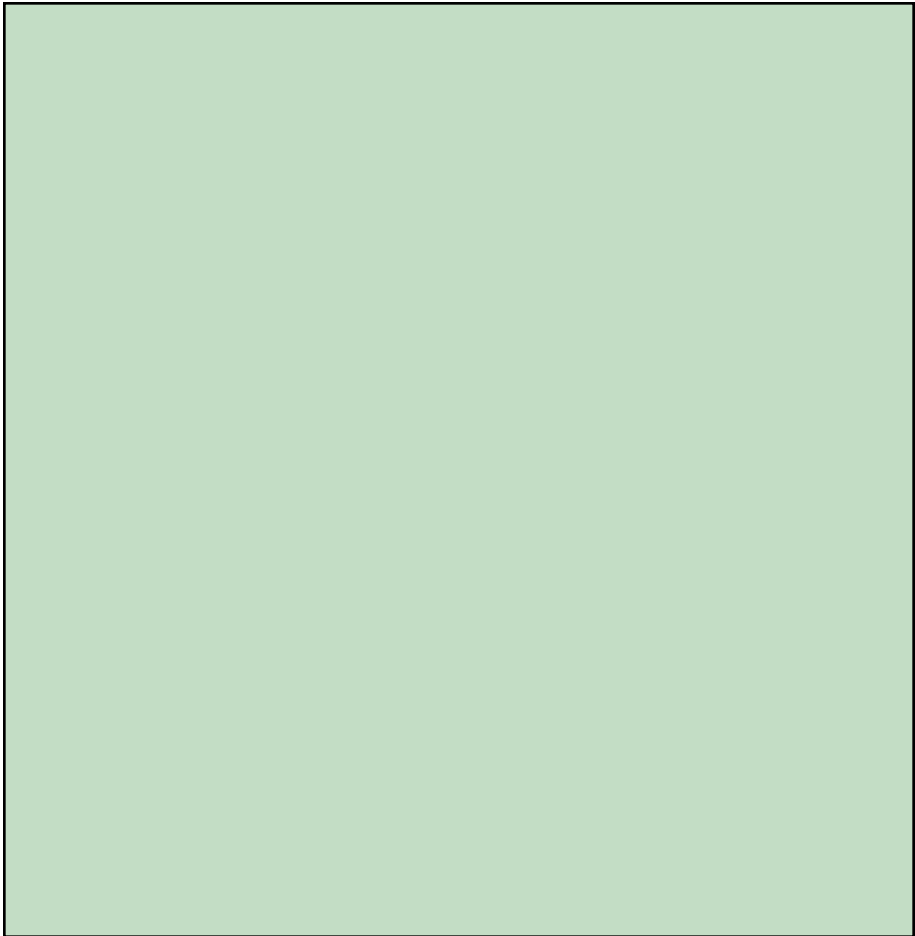
-This process takes time. If you don't complete the process, you may do more harm than good. Hold the child, and wait until he calms down and relaxes. He might cry or even fall asleep as the anger subsides.

-Through this gesture you are communicating love, acceptance, safety, protection, and power all at the same time.

What to have the child do:

In some cases, the child may need to release anger physically. This can be accomplished in a number of ways:

-Supervised play with toys, or play therapy in a professional setting. The violence that oc-



“Stay true to yourself”

curs between the toy characters is non-destructive, and can be very informative to the therapist and/or the parent who is observing. This can also include drawing pictures, or throwing clay against a wall or board.

-Hitting pillows or a mattress with a harmless object such as a nerf bat or bataca bat. This can be done in a playful manner, and the child will still receive benefit.

-The “temper tantrum technique.” Parents should use their own judgment as to when it is necessary to contract for the services of a professional for this type of exercise.

-The “name it, claim it, aim it” technique for dealing with anger. One of the best parents I know told me that he had his daughters put a name on their feeling, take responsibility for it, and direct it into some kind of release or constructive activity. For example, “I’m angry and sad, Daddy,” (naming and claiming it) “and I want you to help me talk to Bobby about taking my

things” (aiming it).

These are excellent approaches and I highly recommend that parents use these and any other guidelines they find that help them teach their children to manage and express their emotions in healthy ways. In conclusion, I encourage you to do your best to understand everything that is going on in your child’s life and development process. S/he is a complex being, and everything s/he is feeling makes sense at some level. Believe in the goodness of your child. Remember, what you pay attention to grows.

About The Author

*William DeFoore, Ph.D. is a counselor, speaker, and coach who conducts workshops on anger management and emotional intelligence in personal and business relationships. Get information, watch videos and buy books, CDs and downloads at <http://www.defoore.com>. **SHQ***

