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About babies  
toddlers and  
preschoolers



Everyday learning about

*managing angry feelings*

Diane Louise Szarkowicz





## About the author

### Diane Louise Szarkowicz

Dr Diane Szarkowicz has worked as a teacher in early childhood and primary classrooms. Diane is a registered psychologist and the author of the Early Childhood Australia Research in Practice title *Aggression and young children*. Currently Diane is a senior lecturer in the School of Education at Charles Sturt University.

### Series Editor

Sue Wales

### Graphic Design

Kate Brennan

### Photographers

Andrew Sikorski  
Kim Chapman

## About Early Childhood Australia

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## Contact details

Publishing and Marketing Section  
Early Childhood Australia Inc.  
PO Box 7105 Watson ACT 2602  
Tel: 02 6242 1800 Fax: 02 6242 1818  
Email: [publishing@earlychildhood.org.au](mailto:publishing@earlychildhood.org.au)

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## Introduction

Sara is 18 months old. Often she tries to take toys from her older brother and hits him when he won't let her have them.

Alex is three years old. When he goes shopping with his father and dad does not buy him a chocolate Alex starts to scream and kicks the shopping trolley.

Jules is four and a half years old. Gabbie was Jules' best friend at preschool until they had a fight. Since the fight Jules has been teasing Gabbie and telling other children not to play with him.

All these children are having problems managing their angry feelings. Having angry feelings or feeling aggressive is normal. All children have these feelings at some time but how each child manages these feelings will be different. Most children learn to manage their feelings in safe and acceptable ways. However, sometimes children cannot manage their feelings and need family and carers to help them learn how to do so.



'Having angry feelings or feeling aggressive is normal.'



## Why do children have angry feelings?

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There are many reasons for why children feel angry. These include:

- › Children do not always know what words to use so that others can understand what they want and need.
- › Children do not automatically know different ways of positively expressing anger.
- › Underlying feelings such as fear and anxiety can lead to anger.
- › Children do not always know that their angry actions and words hurt others.
- › Children see other children being angry and aggressive and can copy this.
- › Some children confuse being assertive with being aggressive.
- › Children do not always understand how their families and carers expect them to behave.
- › Anger can come from frustration about not being able or allowed to do something.
- › Anger can come from being hurt.
- › Some children grow up in environments where there is a lot of anger and copy this behaviour.



'There is no one right or wrong way of expressing angry feelings ...'

Some positive ways for children to manage angry feelings and aggression can include:

- › talking about how they feel
- › releasing energy through physical activities such as jumping a rope or running
- › hammering or pounding clay
- › painting
- › making or listening to music
- › sand and water play.

## Different ways of expressing angry feelings

Angry feelings can be expressed in many different ways. Positive ways of managing anger and aggression allow children to express their feelings in acceptable, safe ways. When children express feelings in negative ways they can hurt themselves and those around them. What is considered positive or negative will vary between different families and groups. There is no one right or wrong way of expressing angry feelings and children need to learn ways that are safe and acceptable to the people around them.





## Everyday learning about managing angry feelings

How do you respond when one child hits another when he won't give up the toy she wants?

Or when your two-year-old is on the verge of a tantrum in the supermarket because you won't buy that chocolate bar?

Having angry feelings or feeling aggressive is normal. All children have these feelings at some time but how each child manages these feelings will be different. Most children learn to manage their feelings in safe and acceptable ways. However, sometimes children cannot manage their feelings.

*Everyday learning about managing angry feelings*, by experienced teacher and psychologist Dr Diane Szarkowicz, is a helpful book that outlines a range of positive strategies to assist carers and parents to give young children ways of developing self-control and expressing feelings safely.

