

Inclusive Developmental and Therapy Center

Anger, Worry & Big Feelings (Ages 8–16)

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✓ Can I help my child at home?

Yes, you really can. Older children and teens can learn to catch anger or worry early, name what they are feeling, and use a calm-down plan they helped build — with you steady beside them. This free program breaks it down into simple weekly steps, built from proven therapy techniques — things any parent can do at home, in everyday moments, at no cost. It doesn't replace a professional assessment where one is needed, but for a lot of children it makes a real difference, and it never does any harm.

Go at your own pace — a new, gentle focus each week.

Download the whole program as a printable PDF to keep.

Includes the signs that mean it's worth getting a bit of extra help.

If your 8 to 16 year old explodes over something small, worries half the night about things they cannot change, or shuts down and refuses to talk at all, you are not dealing with something rare. Anger and big feelings usually get louder in these years rather than quieter, because the body, the brain and the whole social world are changing at the same time. It doesn't mean your child is “bad”, and it doesn't mean you've failed as a parent.

What helps most is a calm adult who can stay steady when their child can't — therapists call this co-regulation, and it is the quiet engine behind everything below. Over six weeks this free home program, one of our **free parent-led home programs**, gives you and your child small things to practise together in ordinary moments, so they slowly build a toolkit of their own: spotting the early signs in their body, putting a name and a size to the feeling, reaching for a calm-down plan they designed themselves, and repairing things afterwards without shame.

Parents in Multan often describe it to us in almost the same words — bacha baat baat par gussa karta hai, chhoti si baat par larna shuru kar deta hai. Strong feelings at this age are normal, and they are workable. This program supports your family; it isn't a diagnosis and it doesn't replace advice from a doctor, counsellor or mental health professional. If something worries you, ask early — it's always kinder than waiting, and you can **talk to our team in Model Town, Multan** at any point.

♥ Who this program is for

- ✓ Gets angry very fast, or “explodes” over something that looks small from the outside
- ✓ Has meltdowns or shutdowns that feel intense for their age
- ✓ Carries a lot of worry — overthinking, stomach aches before school, a mind that won't switch off at night (our page on anxiety in children explains what this can look like)
- ✓ Finds it very hard to come back down once upset, and stays upset for a long time
- ✓ Slips into all-or-nothing thinking — “everyone hates me”, “I always fail”
- ✓ Holds it together all day at school, then lets everything out the moment they walk through the door
- ✓ Flares up around the same few triggers: homework, exams, a screen ending, or a younger sibling
- ✓ Says sorry afterwards and truly means it, but the same thing happens again the following week

⚡ Important — when to get professional help

This is a supportive home program — it isn't a diagnosis, and it doesn't replace a proper assessment. Please speak to a professional soon if:

ANY talk of self-harm, of hurting themselves or others, or of not wanting to be here — **SEEK HELP IMMEDIATELY** from a doctor or your local emergency service

Ongoing low mood, hopelessness or crying that drags on for weeks

Sudden big changes — pulling away from friends, or shifts in sleep, appetite or the things they used to enjoy

Panic-type episodes, or refusing to go to school for days at a time

Anger that has become unsafe — hitting people, or damage that is getting worse rather than better

Feelings that are taking over daily life, school or relationships

Any worry that feels too big to carry on your own — trust your instinct and ask a professional

Getting help where you live

Everything here is free to use **anywhere in the world**. If you'd like a professional to take a closer look, the best next step is someone local to you:

Work with us online, from anywhere. We offer **online sessions and parent coaching** worldwide — book an online consultation and we'll guide you and your child directly.

Talk to your child's **doctor, paediatrician, GP or health visitor** — share what you noticed.

Ask about **free early-childhood or early-intervention services** in your area — many countries offer them for young children (e.g. Early Intervention in the US, NHS referrals in the UK).

Search **“child speech & language therapist near me”**, or ask your doctor for a referral.

Near Multan, Pakistan? You're also warmly welcome in person at our centre — **contact us here**.

Your step-by-step roadmap

Move at your child's pace, not the calendar's — the “weeks” are just a gentle order, not a race. Feel free to repeat any stage for as long as it's helping.

Week 1 – What feelings are & spotting the early signs

Help your child see that all feelings are normal, and learn to catch them in the body before they boil over.

Pick a calm, fed, unhurried moment — never mid-argument — and talk about feelings as signals rather than problems. Even anger and worry are trying to tell us something.

Draw a rough body outline together and let them mark where a big feeling shows up first. Many children this age point to a hot face, a tight chest, a clenched jaw or restless hands.

Across the week, name one early sign out loud as it happens, with no lecture attached: “I can see your shoulders going tense — that’s good noticing.” Then step back and let it be.

 **Try** Feelings are a bit like a kettle — the earlier you catch the steam, the **this:** easier it is to turn down the heat.

Week 2 – Building a personal calm-down toolkit

Put together a set of calming tools your child actually picks, so there are real options when feelings rise.

Sit together in a calm moment and choose four or five tools: slow breathing, a run or a walk, music, a fidget or sensory item, cold water on the wrists, or a quiet “safe space”.

Try each one for real this week while everyone is settled, so the body already knows the routine. A tool practised only during a blow-up won't work during a blow-up.

Agree a signal — a word, a hand sign, a note on the door — that lets them step away and reset without it counting as rudeness or getting them into trouble.

⚡ **Try** Let them design and name the toolkit. A plan they helped build is one **this:** they will actually reach for — our printable calm-down card sets out five simple steps to start from.

Week 3 – Naming & rating feelings

Give feelings words and a size, so your child can tell a small annoyance apart from a huge wave.

Introduce an “emotion thermometer” or a simple 1–10 scale, where 1 is calm and 10 is completely overwhelmed. Stick it somewhere ordinary, like the fridge or the back of a bedroom door.

Practise naming and rating out loud in easy moments, and rate your own too: “That looks like a 4 frustration — am I right?” “I’m at about a 6 today, so I’m going outside for five minutes.”

Tie the number to a plan: agree that around a 5 or 6 is the moment to reach for a calm-down tool, long before it climbs to 10. Above an 8, nobody teaches and nobody argues.

⚡ **Try** Naming it takes some of the power out of it — words help the thinking **this:** part of the brain switch back on. The scale below is the version we use with families.

1 = calm

10 = overwhelmed



☐ 1–4 · Calm enough to notice and name it

☒ 5–7 · Reach for a calm-down tool

☒ 8–10 · Safety first — teach and talk later

Week 4 – Helpful vs unhelpful thoughts

Show your child that thoughts are not always facts, and gently practise kinder, more balanced self-talk.

Talk about how thoughts, feelings and actions link up — an unhelpful thought like “I always mess up” makes the feeling bigger and the reaction faster.

When you catch all-or-nothing thinking, offer a more balanced version rather than an argument: “I always” becomes “this time”, and “I can’t” becomes “not yet”.

Together, write two or three coping phrases they can say to themselves, in whichever language feels natural — “this feeling will pass”, “I can handle this”, “yeh guzar jaye ga”.

 **Try** Ask “What would you say to a friend who felt like this?” Children are **this:** almost always kinder to friends than to themselves.

Week 5 – Solving the problem & repairing after a blow-up

Once everyone is genuinely calm, work on the real problem and mend any hurt — no shame, no blame.

Wait until your child is fully back down, which is often an hour or more later, then go back over what happened and name the problem sitting underneath the feeling.

Brainstorm two options for next time and let them choose one. The goal is a plan, not a punishment — a consequence can still stand, but it’s agreed calmly and kept small.

Model repair yourself. A simple “I’m sorry I raised my voice — let’s try again” teaches that everyone recovers and that the relationship stays safe even after a bad day.

 **Try** Connect before you correct. A calm reconnection first is what makes **this:** the problem-solving actually land.

Week 6 – Building everyday resilience

Shore up the daily foundations — sleep, routine, movement and connection — that make big feelings easier to handle.

Protect sleep and a predictable evening routine. A tired, hungry or overstimulated child has a much shorter fuse, and short sleep is the single most common reason progress stalls.

Build in daily physical movement — cricket in the street, a run, stairs, skipping, carrying something heavy. Movement burns off the surge that words alone cannot reach.

Keep ten unhurried minutes a day with no agenda and no correction, and keep quietly modelling your own calming so it stays a normal family habit rather than a lesson.

 **Try** A regulated adult regulates a child — your own calm is the single most **this:** powerful tool in the whole toolkit, which is why looking after your own wellbeing counts as part of the program, not a luxury.

Little tricks that make it work

- ✓ Name it to tame it — putting a word to a feeling helps settle the emotional part of the brain. At the younger end of this age range, our printable feelings chart gives them faces to point to on the days words are hard to find.
- ✓ Connect before you correct — a calm, warm reconnection works far better than a lecture.
- ✓ Teach and practise skills in the calm moments — never try to teach a new one mid-meltdown.
- ✓ Model your own calming out loud: “I’m feeling frustrated, so I’m going to take a few slow breaths.”
- ✓ Never remove the calm-down tools as a punishment — they have to stay available on the worst days too.
- ✓ Movement is a real tool, not a distraction. A hard run does something a conversation can’t.

- ✓ When your child is at a 10, your only job is to stay calm and keep everyone safe. Teach and talk later.

How you'll know it's working

- Your child notices or names a feeling before it fully takes over
- The gap between the trigger and the explosion gets a little longer
- They reach for a calming tool sometimes, even if not every time
- Meltdowns get shorter, less intense, or easier to recover from
- The family recovers faster afterwards, so one blow-up stops ruining the whole day
- They talk to you more openly about worries or about what upset them
- Progress at this age is slow and easy to miss, so write down two or three of these on our printable goals and progress tracker and tick them off week by week



Is this based on real methods? This program draws on widely used, non-proprietary approaches: emotional regulation and co-regulation (a calm adult helping a child settle and, over time, learn to settle themselves), and CBT-informed strategies such as naming and rating feelings and gently reframing unhelpful thoughts. Public health services such as the NHS give parents broadly the same advice for a child struggling with anger — notice the early warning signs, agree a calm-down plan in advance, stay calm yourself, and talk it through only once everyone has settled. Consistent, warm and calm parenting is well recognised as supporting a child's developing self-regulation. It is general educational guidance, not a diagnosis or treatment, and does not replace advice from a qualified professional.

✔ **Educational information, not a diagnosis.** Our guidance follows standard, research-based practice (CDC, NHS, ASHA and WHO), is written by our therapy team and **medically reviewed by a GMC-registered doctor**. Every child is different, so we can't promise specific results — always use your own judgement and speak to a qualified professional about your child. **Read our full disclaimer.**

— FAQ

Anger & Big Feelings (8–16): questions parents ask