

# ANGER – HITTING

PARENTING CHALLENGES ★ PAGE 1 OF 1

PARENT: I have a question regarding my 2 year old son. He is a wonderful little boy, however, he loves to hit.

SANDY: Very common among young children in today's world. There is so much hitting on the television that children pick it up and try to figure out how to use it to their advantage.

PARENT: He especially loves to hit me, and I don't know how to handle it.

SANDY: When he hits you (or preferably before) grab the hand he hits with, pull him towards you and turn him around so his back is to you--a sweeping motion which pulls him towards you and turns him around in one swoop. Say in his ear, "It is ok to feel angry, it is not ok to hit." Then gently push him away from you and move away from where you were sitting or standing. This makes it impossible for him to turn and swing at you.

PARENT: I have tried time out's and they don't work, as he is really too young to get why he's there.

SANDY: I don't agree--depending on how it is done. If he hits you, you say your "it's ok to feel angry message", swoop him up and dump him into the play pen--he will get why it happened. If he climbs out of the playpen, put him back in with no comment. Turn a timer on for two minutes. At the end of two minutes, take him out of the playpen saying your "it's ok" message. If he hits again, put him back into the playpen and turn on the timer for two minutes. This process takes time for the parent and it will get extremely boring for the child. The child will stop the behavior.

PARENT: My husband is at the point where he is ready to try spanking because nothing else has worked. I try to explain to my two year old that hitting hurts, but he could care less. He also bites on occasion, I just try to avoid his little teeth when this happens.

SANDY: Same deal. "It hurts when you bite! You are not to bite when you are angry.".....and back he goes into the playpen for five minutes.

PARENT: I really enjoyed your talk and have even used a couple of your "hints" with my son. He loves to yell, especially in the car. So now we just pull over and sit quietly until he stops, boy does he hate that!

SANDY: Remember, behavior that is rewarded continues, behavior that is not rewarded stops. There is a huge difference in saying something with a tone of voice (not yelling, just firm) that tells the child you mean it. Check out how much power is in your messages. Look the child in the eye. Touch your nose as you say, "(Name)": he will look at your eyes. Look like you mean what you are saying. Be firm, not angry.

It is also important to begin to teach him to constructively channel his anger. (For more information, see "anger.") He can learn to run in place, run to a tree or take deep breaths to quell his anger. More training on working positively with anger may be found in my books.