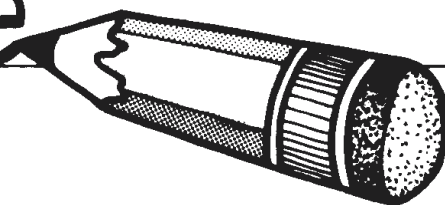


Parenting Pipeline

A newsletter for parents of sixth-grade children
from Iowa State University Extension



Anger and Rebellion

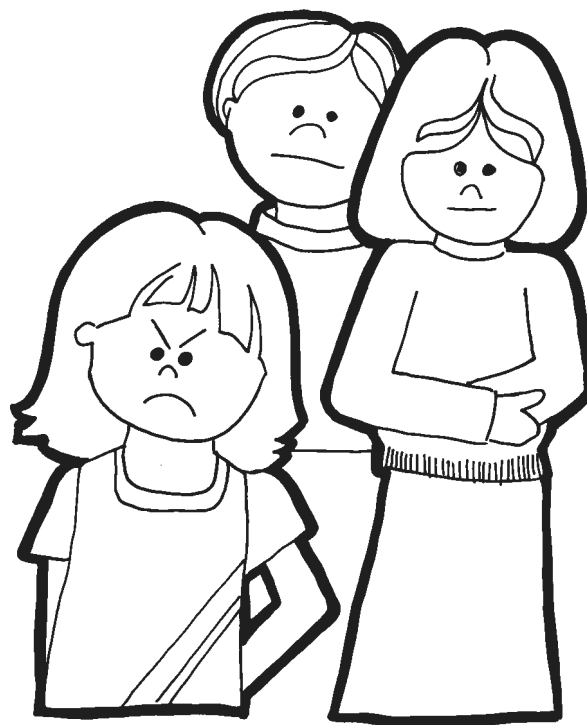
Around age 11, youngsters begin to express an urge for independence. The preteen continues to be emotionally dependent, but blind faith in and total acceptance of parents is not as likely as it was in earlier childhood.

Preteens are undergoing social conflicts since they are trying to please parents, friends and teachers all at the same time. Some of this turmoil may be expressed through increased anger and rebellion directed toward parents and other adults.

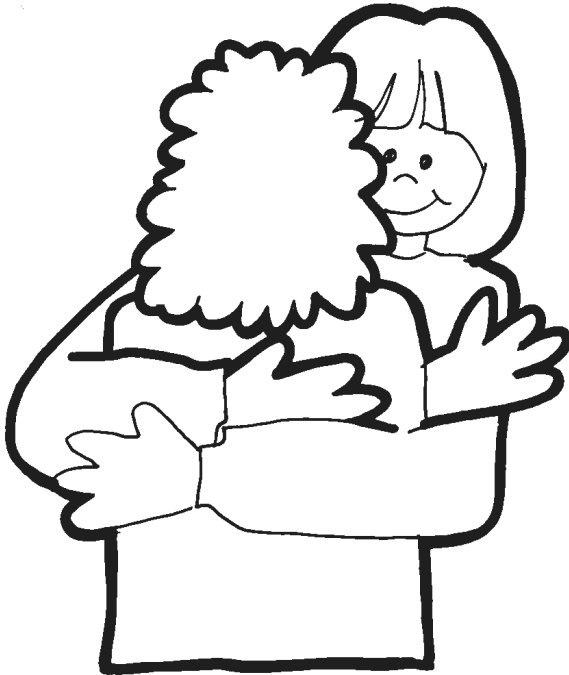
Preteen anger usually occurs when children encounter some situation that they cannot control or which does not come out as they expected. They are angered and frustrated by things that

upset *their* routine or *their* plan. Their anger is self-centered. This may provide you with images of your child at age 2 — another phase in the development of independence.

Adults are a common target for anger as they seek to set and enforce limits. Society permits many behaviors that were uncommon for preteens a generation ago: sleep overs, summer camp, makeup, pierced ears. Parents need to ask themselves, “Why do I object to my child doing this?” Is it because it’s potentially unhealthy for the child or because you just don’t want to give permission? Are you sometimes afraid that the more independent children become, the more you will lose control? Total control usually leads to open rebellion. “Because I said so” just won’t work with a preteen.



This age group is likely to express anger verbally with sarcastic remarks and sulkiness. They may also fight, kick, hit and slam doors. Preteens need to be shown socially acceptable ways to express and vent their anger. Whereas parents would like angry children to think and speak rationally, in lowered tones with controlled feelings, some do not always display such control themselves.



It is unrealistic to think a person should never get angry, whether that person is 11 or 42. The goal should be to teach preteens to express anger in appropriate ways, not to eliminate it. You might say, “It’s OK to be angry, but it’s not OK to slam doors.” Or, after a cooling down period, engage your child in a discussion of what happened, why and what could be done next time to handle it more effectively.

Activities that can help vent frustration or anger include physical exercise — biking, walking and room cleaning; creative endeavors such as painting and piano playing; and mental exercises, including writing or drawing about how they feel.

The home is the greatest source of rebellion for preteens. They do not want to overthrow their parents; they simply want to believe they are competent to do many things without parental

assistance. Avoid taking this rebellion personally. Preteens are trying to sort out the fact that their anger is with something they can’t control, not necessarily with you.

Preteens need guidance and support. It is important to allow them to make independent choices whenever possible. When a free choice is not possible, viable alternatives and their consequences should be considered. With independence or individuality comes self-responsibility. Preteens must associate the right to do something with responsible behavior on their part.

Preteens need more love than harshness, more positive than negative feelings, more encouragement to do things on their own than parental control, more guidance than indulgence, and more hugs than “I told you so” statements.

Some parents withdraw the hugs, kisses and strokes as their child grows. Some preteens are uncomfortable with these public displays. Preteens still need to be shown your love and affection. Appropriate non-public hugs and kisses are rarely rejected. If you have established this pattern from infancy on, it will continue throughout the preteen and adolescent years. If you have not established this pattern, it may be more difficult at this time, but it’s never too late to begin!

Adapted for use in Iowa from Parenting Pipeline, North Dakota State University Extension Service, by Donna K. Donald, family life field specialist, Iowa State University Extension.

This newsletter is published for families with sixth-grade children by Iowa State University Extension. For more information about parenting education, contact your local county extension office or access the Iowa State University Extension to Families website, www.extension.iastate.edu/families.

... and justice for all
The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Many materials can be made available in alternative formats for ADA clients. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call 202-720-5964.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Stanley R. Johnson, director, Cooperative Extension Service, Iowa State University of Science and Technology, Ames, Iowa.