LEMONS OR LEMONADE?

An Anger Workbook for Kids

Jane Gilgun
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To the children
About the Author

For many years, Jane Gilgun worked with children and families where the children had experienced severe adversities and were at risk for aggressive and self-destructive behaviors and attitudes. Currently, she does research on children and families where the children are having difficulties at home and in school. Most of the children are dealing with the effects of adversities.

She also does research on how persons overcome risks for violent behaviors, the development of violent behaviors, and the meanings of various forms of violence to perpetrators. She has won two Silberman Awards, one in 1993 and the other in 1997 to fund the writing of her research. In 1995, she won the Excellence in Research Award from the College of Human Ecology, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.

Dr. Gilgun is the author of many articles, co-developed the core courses of the Child Abuse Prevention Studies Program, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, and was the developer and faculty director of the Violence and its Prevention series at the University of Minnesota. This series won an Outstanding Program Award from Continuing Education and Conferences, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.

She has a Ph.D. from Syracuse University in child and family studies and other graduate degrees from the University of Chicago in social service administration and from the University of Louvain, Belgium, in family studies and sexuality. Dr. Gilgun is a professor, School of Social Work, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, and a licensed independent clinical social worker.
Foreword

Children and Adversity

Millions of children today face a range of adversities, such as parental chemical dependency, parental discord, abuse and neglect, poverty, homelessness, chaotic and dangerous neighborhoods, and discrimination based on social class, race, and gender. Conflict with peers and problems in schools can compound the effects of adversity and are by themselves adversities. Anger is an expected response to such circumstances. Many children express their anger in ways that help them feel better, but often these are temporary solutions that hurt the children and sometimes hurt other people. Reactions such overeating, cutting, fighting, lying, stealing, and running away are examples.

Yet, children can learn to express their anger in ways that help them feel better and do not harm themselves or others. This workbook guides children’s anger toward constructive expressions that turn the lemons of adversity into lemonade.
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1

Reasons to Be Angry

Some kids have lots of reasons to be angry. Bad things happen to good kids. Put a check mark in front of the things that have happened to you. Some of these things might not be happening now, but you can check them if they have ever happened, even once.

___ Your mother doesn’t listen to you.
___ Your father doesn’t listen to you.
___ Things that go wrong are your fault.
___ Your mother and father fight.
___ Your mother gets high on drugs.
___ Your father gets high on drugs.
___ Your father gets drunk.
___ Your mother gets drunk.
___ You feel ashamed of your mother.
___ You feel ashamed of your father.
___ Your mother and father are getting a divorce.
___ Your mother and father are divorced.
___ You hardly ever see your father.
___ You hardly ever see your mother.
___ You don’t live with your family.
___ You don’t feel like you belong anywhere.
___ Other kids pick on you.
___ You feel ignored.
___ There’s not enough money for food or nice clothes.
Reasons to Be Angry

___ Someone you love doesn’t love you.
___ You feel ignored.
___ You are ashamed of where you live.
___ Other people steal your things.
___ You get yelled at.
___ Someone hits you.
___ You’re not welcome in some neighborhoods.
___ Someone beats you up.
___ Your brother or sister tease you.
___ Someone makes you do sexual things.
___ Someone you loved died.
___ A pet died.
___ You don’t have a girlfriend or boyfriend.
___ You move a lot.
___ You miss friends when you move.
___ You think you’re ugly.
___ You don’t have any friends.
___ You broke up with your girlfriend or boyfriend.
___ No one cares how you feel.
___ No want cares what you want.
___ You feel unloved.
___ You feel unwanted.
___ No one understands you.

How many of these items did you check? ___

- Did the things you checked make you feel angry? Yes No
- Did the things you checked make you feel sad? Yes No
- Did the things you checked make you feel angry and sad? Yes No
Feeling Sad and Angry

Kids sometimes feel angry about these things. Sometimes they feel sad, too. Sometimes kids start out feeling sad and then they feel angry. Then they feel sad again. Sometimes kids just forget about these things, but when they think about them, they start feeling angry, sad, or angry and sad all over again.

This is just like being on a see-saw or a swing, but it’s not much fun.

You might be feeling sad and angry or just angry or just sad right now. You can use the space below for anything you want. Have things happened to you that aren’t on the list? You could write about them or draw them right here. Maybe there’s someone you could talk to about these things.

My Space
3

Do Other Kids Deserve it?

Kids sometimes believe that certain kids deserve to be treated bad. Circle yes or no to the following questions.

- It's okay to make other kids cry if I think they are bad.  Yes  No
- Some kids deserve to be beat up.  Yes  No
- Some kids deserve to be teased.  Yes  No
- I can take things from other kids if I want them.  Yes  No
- It's okay to tease kids I think are stupid.  Yes  No
- It's okay to tease kids I think are ugly.  Yes  No
- It's okay to do mean things to other kids if I enjoy it.  Yes  No
- It's okay to trick other kids into doing things.  Yes  No
- It's okay to force other kids into doing things.  Yes  No
- Kids deserve it when other people are mean to them.  Yes  No

You can probably think of other things kids do to other kids. Write them on these lines or talk to someone you trust.

__________________________________________________________________________________________

What I Think

Kids have opinions about good and bad things in their lives. Check the items below that you agree with.

___ Bad things can happen to good kids.
___ Good kids sometimes do bad things.
___ If someone does bad things to me, I want them to stop.
___ It is wrong to do bad things to other people.
Your Opinions

You probably have other opinions about these things. Use the space below to express them.

My Space
What do you do when you are angry? What do you do when you are sad? What do you do when you are feeling both sad and angry? Here are some things kids do. Put a check mark beside the things you do when you are angry or sad.

___ You think you are bad.
___ You don’t talk.
___ You pretend everything is okay.
___ You stay away from other people.
___ You pick on other kids.
___ You listen to music.
___ You hurt animals.
___ You fight with other kids.
___ You talk to someone about your anger.
___ You steal.
___ You read a book.
___ You destroy other people’s property.
___ You think about hurting other people.
___ You do something nice for someone else.
___ You set fires.
___ You feel you are watching yourself from far away.
___ You draw pictures about things that make you angry.
___ You drink beer, wine, or liquor.
___ You think about getting back at the person who made you angry.
___ You sniff glue, gasoline, or other things that make you high.
___ You write down the things that make you angry.
___ You take drugs.
You think about running away.
You run away.
You work hard at something, like school work.
You do sexual things to yourself.
You do sexual things to others.
You eat a lot of food.
You throw up after you eat a lot of food.
You cut yourself.
You do things to make other people mad at you.
You refuse to do what other people tell you to do. Like teachers who want you to do your homework or parents who want you to come in at night.

How many items did you check?  

There's nothing wrong with being upset and angry. You have reasons to be angry if other kids pick on you, if your parents ignore you, if someone yells at you, beats you up you, if you feel you don't belong anywhere, if you have been sexually abused, and if no one cares what you want. **What's important is what you do when you are angry and upset.**

My Space
5

Anger is Like a Sour Lemon Taste

For lots of kids, anger is like a sour lemon taste in your mouth. If you don’t do something that helps anger go away, anger grows stronger and more bitter.

- Then it becomes like a great big lemon growing inside you. It gets so huge you feel as if you are going to explode.

- It’s like someone squirts lemon juice in your eyes and you can’t see.

- It’s like someone stuffs a lemon in your mouth and the seeds go up your nose. You can’t breathe.

- It’s like someone straps a huge basket of lemons on your back and you feel as if your back is going to break. You do everything you can to get that heavy burden off your back. You can’t.

- Anger can be sour. It can hurt. It can make you feel helpless. It can make you feel desperate.

- When you’re angry, you can think you are a bad kid. You may think other people are laughing at you.

- When you’re angry, you may think about getting back at other people. This is called revenge.
Doing Things to Make You Feel Better

People who are angry do things to make themselves feel better. Some of these things help the anger go away. Some of these things make the anger grow.

How do you feel when you are angry? Complete the sentences below.

When I’m angry, I think about ____________________________
_____________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________

When I’m angry, I want to ________________________________
_____________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________

When I’m angry, I think I’m a ____________________________
_____________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________

When I’m angry, I feel like ______________________________
_____________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________

Use this space any way you’d like.

My Space
6

Feeling Better...
for a Little While

Kids do lots of things to make themselves feel better. Sometimes these things hurt other people and themselves. These things help kids feel better for a little while. Before you know it, the kids feel bad all over again.

Kids may pick on other kids, steal, destroy property, fight with other kids, run away, set fires, drink, use drugs, do sexual things, eat too much, and cut themselves.

And you know what? Kids do feel better when they do these things...for a little while. Some kids feel terrific when they do these things...for a little while.

Good Feelings that Turn Bad

These good feelings don’t last. In a little while, you start feeling bad again. Sometimes you are ashamed of what you did. Sometimes you feel guilty for what you did. You think about the people you hurt. You’re sorry you hurt other people.

Did you ever feel sorry for hurting other people? Yes No
The Endless Circle

Sometimes, you feel so bad about what you did, you want to feel better. So, once again you do things that make you feel better for a little while. Once again you do things that hurt yourself or other people. Then you feel bad because of what you’ve done to feel better.

Does it make any sense to feel bad because of what you’ve done to feel better? Yes No

It gets to be like a big circle. You feel bad. You feel desperate. You want to feel better.

It’s like the hamster in the wire wheel. Around and around you go. You can’t jump off the wire wheel.

You’re stuck, like a car stuck in sand. The wheels go around and around, but the car doesn’t go anywhere. The sand flies right in your face, and you can’t get out of the way.

- Have you ever felt like a hamster in a wire wheel? Yes No
- Have you ever felt like a car stuck in sand? Yes No
7

**Making Lemonade**

You know what? You can make lemonade out of the lemons of anger. Think of how lemonade tastes on a hot day. Your throat is dry and maybe even a little sore. You bring the glass to your mouth. The flecks of lemon slide over your tongue. The lemonade fills your mouth and slides down your throat. You finish the lemonade and say, "Ah. It tastes so good."

There are things you can do that will make lemonade out of the lemons of anger. These things won’t make you feel ashamed or guilty afterward. You won’t get in trouble if you do them. You will feel good about yourself. The sour lemon taste of anger will turn to the sweet taste of doing something good. You will feel good about being you, maybe not at first, but after a while you will.

When you do them, you won’t hurt other people. You will not hurt yourself. When you do them, the good feelings will last and last and last.

You may even feel proud that you did them. You will make lemonade out of the lemons of anger.

Making lemonade out of lemons can be hard work. At first, it might not seem like fun. Keep at it. You will be rewarded!

---

It’s important to want to.
These are some things you can do to feel better. Pick the ones you want to do. Some may be better for younger kids, and some may be better for older kids.

😊 Color the pictures in your coloring book any colors you want. You don’t even have to stay in the lines. Scribble if you want to. Use only black if you want.

😊 Tear up old newspapers or magazines. Find some newspapers or magazines no one wants. Tear them to pieces.

While you tear them up, say whatever you want to say about your anger. Or you could pretend you’re telling someone you trust about why you are angry.

When you’ve torn them all, tear them into even smaller pieces. Say whatever you want. When you are finished, put the pieces in a bag and put the bag in the recycling bin.

The more you do things that make you feel better and that don’t hurt yourself or others, the more you will want to do them.

😊 Draw a picture of something that makes you angry. Use the darkest, angriest colors you can find. Draw monsters, flying dragons, or anything you want that shows how angry you are.

You might even make a story out of pictures. You could start by showing what makes you angry and then show what you did when you felt angry. Then you can show what happened after you got angry. Did things turn out the way you wanted?
😊 Draw a picture of something that makes you happy. Suppose you’d like to ride a horse. Draw a picture of a horse you’d like to ride. Maybe you’d like to ride a flying horse, or a unicorn. You could also draw pictures that tell a story of something you want.

😊 Pretend with toys. Using toy people, pretend you are telling someone you are angry. Chose a toy person to be you and another toy person to be a person you want to talk to. Then, do or say with the toys whatever you want.

There may be other people who might want to play pretend games with you. Can you think of who these people could be? Write their names in the lines below, or you can leave the lines blank.

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

😊 Build a tower and knock it down. Find some blocks or anything else that you can use to build a tower. Maybe you want to build something else, like a building.

Make it as big and tall as you want. Then knock it down. Build something else. Knock it down. Stop when you want to.
😊 Throw a rubber ball against the garage. Find a rubber ball or tennis balls and throw them as hard as you can against the side of a garage. Make sure there’s no one around whom you could hit. Pretend the person you’re angry at is there. Yell at the person every time you throw the ball. Maybe you could tack a target on the wall. See how many times you hit the bull’s eye. Pretty soon you will have a good throwing arm for baseball.

Pretty soon you will have a good throwing arm for baseball.

😊 Swing. Find a swing. It could be in your backyard or down the road in a park or playground. Get on that swing and pump until your arms ache and you think your legs are going to fall off. Don’t swing over the bars, though.

😊 Kick a soccer ball around.
Take your a soccer ball. Go a field or a park. Kick that soccer ball as hard and as far as you want. Yell as loud as you want about how angry you are. You also might get pretty good at soccer.

😊 Run. Put your running shoes on and run. Run until your chest and legs ache. Run wherever it’s okay to run, like sidewalks and the playground. Each time your foot hits the ground, say, "I am angry." Say whatever else you want to say, but keep on running.

Other kids will think you are practicing for track. Pretty soon you might want to race other kids or try out for the track team.
😊 Dig holes in the backyard. Ask your parents where in the back yard you can dig in the back yard. Using a shovel, dig as many holes as you want. Dig as deep as you want. When you are finished, shovel the dirt back into the holes. Start all over again. You may end up with a freshly dug garden.

😊 Plant seeds in your new garden. Water them. Watch them grow. If you planted flower seeds, give your flowers away. If you planted vegetables, give them to other people, too.

😊 Listen to music. Find music that helps you think of the good things about your life. Some songs are funny. Sometimes they talk about things that are fun to do, like swinging on swings, walking in the woods, playing with other kids. Find that kind of music and get your mind off what is making you angry.

😊 Dance to music. Sometimes dancing to music will help you think about happier things. Move around. Shake your body. Move your hands and feet to the music.

"I’m a good person who sometimes makes mistakes."

😊 Substitute good thoughts for bad. Whenever you start thinking things like "I’m bad" substitute, "I’m a good person who sometimes makes mistakes."

😊 Ask questions. If you think you are a bad person because of what someone else has done to you, find someone to talk to about this. Other questions you might ask are, "Is this person telling me something true about myself?" "Do other people think it’s true?" These are hard questions to ask, but it’s important for you to ask them.
Think consequences. Something might seem like a good idea at the time. Think of the good things and the bad things that could happen if you do what you want to do. Don’t fool yourself. If what you do hurts yourself or other people, this is not a good consequence.

Think consequences.

Consequences is a hard word. Choose the correct word to complete the sentences below. Doing this will show you what consequences means.

1. Mea took Mario’s bat. Mario felt like crying when he found his bat was gone. The consequence of taking the bat was Mario felt ____________.
   sad     glad

2. Mea was proud of the bat at first. When she found out that Mario felt sad about losing his bat, Mea felt guilty. The consequences for Mea of taking the bat was first ______________ and then ________________.
   pride     shame     happiness     guilt

3. Mea returned the bat. She said to Mario, "I’m sorry I took the bat." Mario said, "I’m mad at you for taking the bat, but I’m glad you gave it back." Mea felt good about returning the bat, but sad that Mario was mad. She hoped Mario would forgive her. Mario did forgive Mea after Mea never again stole other people’s things. The consequence for Mea of giving the bat back was Mario ________________.
   never forgave her     forgave her

What do you think consequences are? ________________
客商  Write in a diary. The diary is a place for your special thoughts. When you’re feeling angry, you could write your thoughts down in words, you could draw pictures that show how you feel, or you could cut out pictures from magazines and paste them in your diary.

You could tell stories in pictures or in words or both. Sometimes you might want to write in your diary when you are not angry but are feeling good.

客商 Read a joke book. Go to the library and ask the librarian where the kids’ joke books are. Read the jokes alone or with a friend, whatever you want. Read them out loud to yourself if you want to.

Laugh as loud as you want. You might even ask your teacher if you could tell a few jokes to the class. Other books that are not joke books can be a lot of fun to read, too.

客商 Have a pretend conversation with someone who isn’t there. It could be your father. Or your mother. Or your favorite aunt who died.

Find a picture of that person. If you don’t have a picture, you could draw one. Then, pretend the picture is the person. Talk to the picture. Maybe you want to tell the person something that makes you angry. You might want to tell a funny story.

You might want to pretend you are the person you want to talk to. It could be like a game that goes like this. First, move two chairs to face each other. Dining room or kitchen chairs work well. Then, sit in one chair and be yourself. Talk as if the other person is sitting in the other chair.

After you have said what you want to say, sit in the other chair. Pretend you are the person you just talked to. Give an answer to whatever you just said as if you are now that person. Then, you can switch back to the other chair and be yourself again and say something back. Keep doing this until you want to stop.
Be on the lookout for someone you can talk to.

😊 Find a friend to be with. Sometimes when you’re feeling angry, just being with people you like can help you feel better. Visit them, or call them on the phone. You might tell them about your anger or you could ask them how their day is going.

😊 Talk to someone you trust. Be on the lookout for someone you can talk to. Some kids watch another person for a long time before they decide they can trust this person.

How do you know when you can trust another person? That is a hard question. There are lots of adults who like children and want to help them out.

People you can trust are nice to other people. They don’t make fun of other people. You feel good when you are around them.

😊 Stand up for yourself. Sometimes people who are hurting you will stop if you tell them to. You might have to practice with someone else about what to say, someone you trust. You could say to the person who is hurting you, "I don’t like what you do. I want you to stop."

If the person doesn’t stop, never believe there is something wrong with you. The behavior of the person who is hurting you is wrong. Find someone to talk to about the person who is hurting you. Don’t keep it a secret. You have nothing to be ashamed of.
😊 Do something nice for someone else. No matter how mad or sad you feel, there are other people who appreciate you when you do something nice for them. How about raking the yard without being asked? What other nice things can you do for other people?

😊 Apologize. If you have hurt someone, tell this person, "I am sorry I hurt you. I hope you can accept my apology. If you can’t, I will understand." Talk to friends and adults about how to apologize. You could practice apologizing with other people or by yourself in front of a mirror.

😊 Make restitution. This means to make up for something you’ve done that hurt someone else. Maybe you’ve broken someone else’s toy. To make restitution, you would buy a new one. If you broke someone’s window, apologize and then make up for it. You could pay for fixing the window or do errands or chores.

Learn to do something really well.

😊 Learn to do something really well. When you are angry, do something you like. It doesn’t matter what it is as long as it doesn’t hurt you or other people. Practice a lot so you can do it really well.

Maybe it’s jumping rope or playing the piano or shooting hoops. Maybe you like math. Other kids like to read.

You might find other kids who like what you like. Soon, you have new friends.
Say, "I am hurt by what you did." It's great to tell persons who have hurt you, "I am hurt by what you did." It would then be wonderful if these persons would say to you they're sorry, that they never meant to hurt you, and they will do all they can to make restitution. It would be great if they could say they did not think consequences and that they especially did not think about the consequences for you.

Wouldn't it take away a lot of your anger if they said, "I hope you can forgive me." Finally, wouldn't it be great if they made up for hurting you by consistently thinking of the consequences for you from then on?

Sometimes this is possible. Children who have experienced severe adversities benefit enormously when they can speak directly to the persons who have hurt them. Children need the help of other people to do this. Sometimes children and other family members work with professionals to reach the point where the children can speak directly to adults and other children about angry thoughts and feelings.

Unfortunately, for many children, the persons who have hurt them are no longer available. They could have died or for many other reasons are not part of the children's lives. Perhaps they have a serious mental illness or are chemically dependent. Some children risk verbal and physical abuse if they try to talk to persons who have hurt them. There are many reasons why children might not have opportunities to express their feelings directly to the persons whose behaviors have hurt them.

With guidance from adults, the exercises in this book can help most children learn to express their anger appropriately and directly.
Anger can be as sour and bitter as lemons or you can turn lemons into lemonade. Anger can give you a lot of energy. You can use that energy to feel better in ways that seem to make you feel better but only make you feel worse.

You will know you're doing the right thing when what you do makes you feel better, does not hurt you, and does not hurt others.

Remember, there's nothing wrong with wanting to feel better when you are angry. In fact, it's important to help yourself feel better when you are angry. It is wrong to feel better by hurting others or yourself. Using anger the right way will help you get many of things you want. It will also help you make friends and get along with other people.
Lemons or Lemonade?

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Remember, there’s nothing wrong with wanting to feel better when you are angry. In fact, it’s important to help yourself feel better when you are angry. It is wrong to feel better by hurting others or yourself. Using anger the right way will help you get many of things you want. It will also help you make friends and get along with other people.
The Making Lemonade Checklist

This checklist is for you. You can carry it around with you or put it up on your wall. It might come in handy.

😊 Color the pictures in your coloring book any colors you want.
😊 Tear up old newspapers or magazines.
😊 Draw a picture of something that makes you angry.
😊 Draw a picture of something that makes you happy.
😊 Pretend with toys.
😊 Build a tower and knock it down.
😊 Throw a rubber ball against the garage.
😊 Swing.
😊 Kick a soccer ball around.
😊 Run.
😊 Dig holes in the backyard.
😊 Plant seeds in your new garden bed.
😊 Listen to music.
😊 Dance to music.
😊 Substitute good thoughts for bad.
😊 Ask questions.
😊 Think consequences.
😊 Write in a diary.
😊 Read a joke book.
😊 Have a pretend conversation with someone who isn’t there.
😊 Find a friend to be with.
😊 Talk to someone you trust.
😊 Stand up for yourself.
😊 Do something for someone else.
😊 Apologize.
😊 Make restitution.
😊 Learn to do something really well.
😊 Say, "I am hurt by what you did."

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Doing Something Really Well