



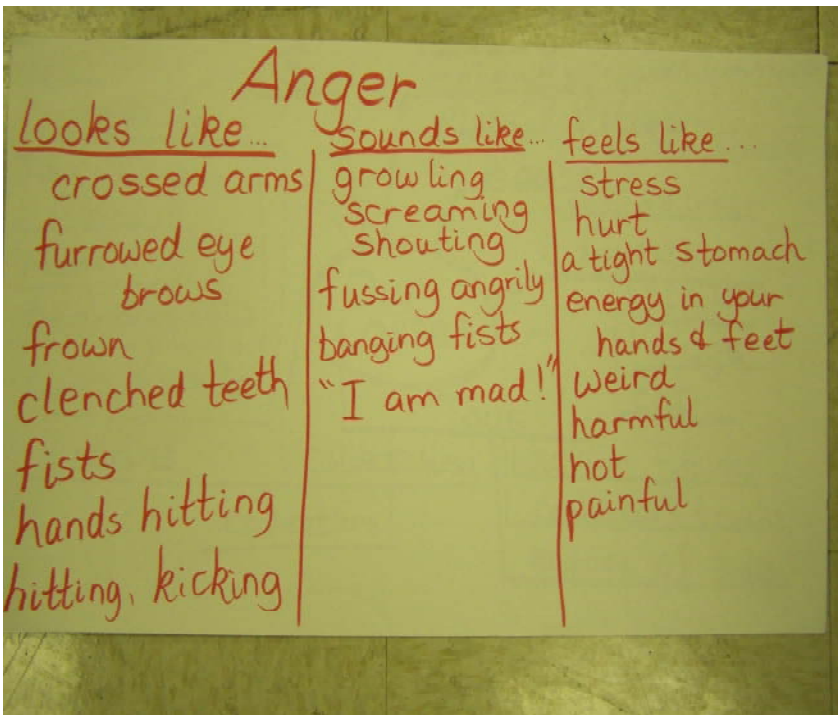
EMOTIONS AND CHRISTMAS IN CHILDREN OF DIVORCE

By Linda Ranson Jacobs

11/30/2012

Thanksgiving is now a memory and Christmas looms before us. For some kids Christmas is an exciting time of the year. For many kids Christmas may mean staying up late, no school, visits with relatives, presents and candy. As people who work with kids, we want them to find the true meaning of Christmas. Most of you will go overboard trying to relay the story of the baby Jesus and his humble birth with special lessons and activities. There will be special Christmas musicals; special holiday parties or celebrations; perhaps even caroling events also.

Explaining emotions



We want kids to come to church and enjoy the specialness of this time of year. That's why I want to start early this year asking you to prepare yourself for the child of divorce. If it is a child's first Christmas after the separation or divorce of their parents, you might want to be prepared for a variety of feelings to be exhibited. Depending on how recent the divorce was, the child may appear to be in shock, or the child may be confused not sure of what their feelings are.

If it has been several months, and the child has begun to process the divorce, you may find some anger feelings

emerging in your classes. If the child feels safe with you, then don't be surprised if a lot of anger comes out. Some children will hold their anger in when they are around their parents. They don't want to upset their





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already stressed and/or angry parents. But, when they get to a safe place and if you have developed a relationship with them, then they will let their guard down and express themselves.

One of the ways you can help these children, especially around Christmas when they are feeling even more stressed than normal, is to help them understand their anger. You can do this by helping them see what

1. Anger looks like
2. Anger sounds like
3. Anger feels like

In DC4K we make a chart and the kids share their examples. I have included one such chart. In this chart:

ANGER LOOKS LIKE

- Crossed arms
- Furrowed eye brows
- Frown
- Clenched teeth
- Fists balling
- Hands hitting
- Kicking

ANGER SOUNDS LIKE

- Growling
- Screaming
- Shouting
- Fussing angrily
- Banging fist
- Saying, "I AM MAD!"

ANGER FEELS LIKE

- Stress
- Hurt
- A tight stomach
- Energy in your hands and feet
- Weird





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- Harmful
- Hot
- Painful

I particularly find kids comments under “Anger Feels Like” interesting. They feel energy in their hands and feet? It feels “weird” or “hot?” Kids are perceptive when they have a chance to acknowledge things. When kids recognize what is happening in their bodies as a response to anger, they can then get control of it. Anger is no longer scary but logical. Things that are happening with them begin to make sense.

With Christmas coming up, see if you can pinpoint what anger looks like, sounds like and feels like in some of your children. You will be doing them a big favor when you can help them now several weeks before Christmas. Hopefully they will be ready and able to really enjoy the true meaning of Christmas.

You might even want to start with your volunteers first so they too can become aware of when stress is turning to anger. Once the volunteers and leadership understand anger better in themselves, they can then help the children of divorce with a deeper understanding.

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.” Luke 2:14 (NIV)

Linda Ranson Jacobs is one of the forefront leaders in the area of children and divorce. She developed and created the DivorceCare for Kids programs. DC4K is an international program for churches to use to help children of divorced parents find healing within the arms of a loving church family. As a speaker, author, trainer, program developer and child care center owner, Linda has assisted countless families by modeling and acting on the healing love she has found in Jesus Christ. Linda offers support, encouragement and suggestions to help those working with the child of divorce. She serves as DC4K Ambassador (<http://www.dc4k.org>) and can be reached via email at ljacobs@dc4k.org.

Free articles and devotions for single parent families in your church can be found at Linda's website Healthy Loving Partnerships for Our Kids (<http://www.hlp4.com>).

