

For Help With Your Angry Child, Listen to God's Still, Small Whisper

The pressure on my chest made sleep difficult. I dreaded waking up the next day, only to deal with my child's anger again. *I'm the worst mom ever. How could I feel this way?*

I grew up in a calm home within a gentle family. There wasn't a lot of drama. As a child, I was cared for. Later, as a wife, I was adored. For most of my parenting years, my kids returned the love I gave them. In my work, I felt appreciated and respected. But now all those feelings of doing a good job or feeling worthy were a distant memory.

The only way to understand what life with an angry child is like is to live through it. The pain of offering love and having hate shot back is heartbreaking. To feed, care for and serve an angry child is like shoveling coal into a steam engine that has no wheels. No matter how much energy I put into it, a lot of fuel was getting burned, but we weren't going anywhere.

I hated feelings of insufficiency, and I ached with the knowledge that daily I was sacrificing—my time, my work, my friendships and my personal ease—only to see no good result. Even worse, it seemed the more love I poured out, the more I was ignored.

Even as I write this confession, it almost feels foolish. After all, I'm the adult. I should be able to deal with my emotions, put on my big-girl boots and keep stepping forward and offering love, right? But maybe you understand. Since you're reading this book, maybe you've been there too. Maybe you're there now. We all want to be loved and respected, but there is something uniquely meaningful about receiving these

things back from our kids. Yet many angry kids are so consumed with their anger there is no room for any other emotion, especially love.

Tired of these emotions keeping me awake for days in a row, I took them before God. In the middle of the night, I slipped out of my bed, grabbed my Bible and my journal, and poured out all my emotions on the page. I wrote,

I am hurt by my daughter's rejection. I give so much, and to have it rejected hurts. I feel abandoned and not good enough. I can't fix this. I can't fix her. I worry about the other kids. I want to be loved by her, and I want to love her. I'm tired of being hurt. I feel angry to sacrifice so much, and instead of gratitude, I get defiance and rejection in return.

It felt cleansing to get those words on paper. I'd carried around those emotions for so long, but seeing them—the deep pain my child's anger caused me—made me understand why everything had been so hard lately. It's not easy to go on with your life—trying to be happy, caring and giving—with so much emotion bottled up inside.

Yet even as I looked at what I had written, I heard a still, small whisper from God: *Ask Me how I see her.* I knew what God was asking me to do—to view this situation through His eyes, with His eternal perspective.

As I gazed at those words on my page, it was not only my heart cry that I saw there, but also my child's. I wrote this in my journal next:

She is afraid of being hurt. She's given so much to others, and her heart is battered. She has been abandoned. She has been told she's not good enough. She couldn't fix anything about her family or where she lived. She wants to love me and be loved by me, but she's afraid. No matter what she gets, she's scared it will be taken away. She wants to reject me before she is rejected.

As I wrote those words, I knew they were the truth, and I chose to continue to reach out to my daughter through loving actions, no matter how she responded. I prayed that God would soften and open my heart. I prayed He would help me show her my love in ways she'd understand. As I prayed this way and began to show love in ways that spoke to my daughter, things changed. I started looking forward to trying to connect with her emotionally, and I watched the walls around her heart crumble and her anger diminish.

And it all started with my heart. In order to help my child, I first needed to focus on myself. {eo}

*In the midst of an angry child's tantrums, many parents feel embarrassed, isolated and hopeless. Award-winning fiction and nonfiction author **Tricia Goyer** comes to the rescue, sharing her personal journey through recognizing, understanding and creating an environment of peace in her own family in her new book, *Calming Angry Kids: Help and Hope for Parents in the Whirlwind*.*

Excerpted from *Calming Angry Kids* by Tricia Goyer (David C Cook) © 2018