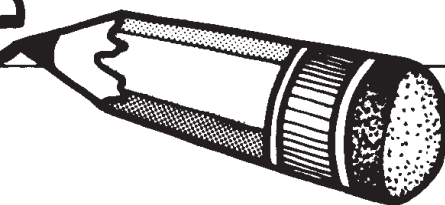


# Parenting Pipeline

A newsletter for parents of sixth-grade children  
from the North Dakota State University Extension Service



## Anger and Rebellion

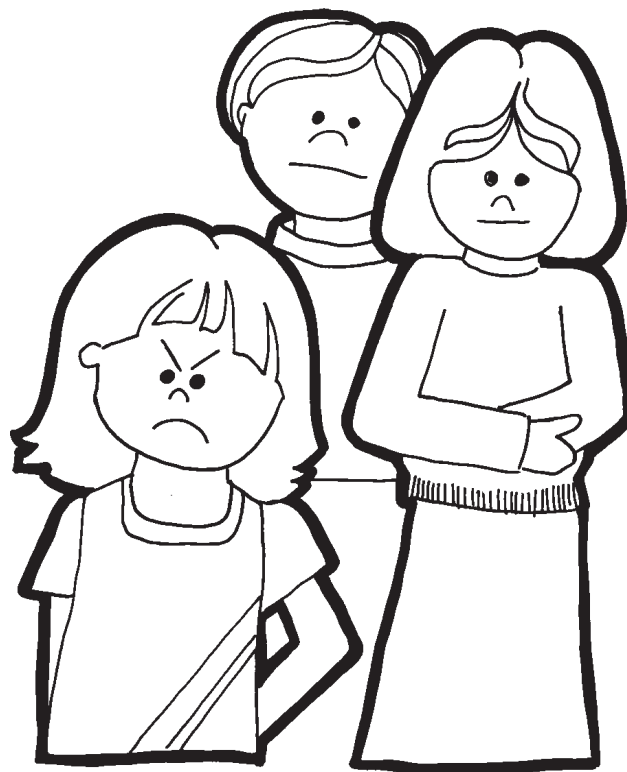
Around age 11, youngsters begin to express an urge for independence. The preteen continues to be emotionally dependent, but blind faith in and total acceptance of parents is not as likely as it was in earlier childhood.

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.

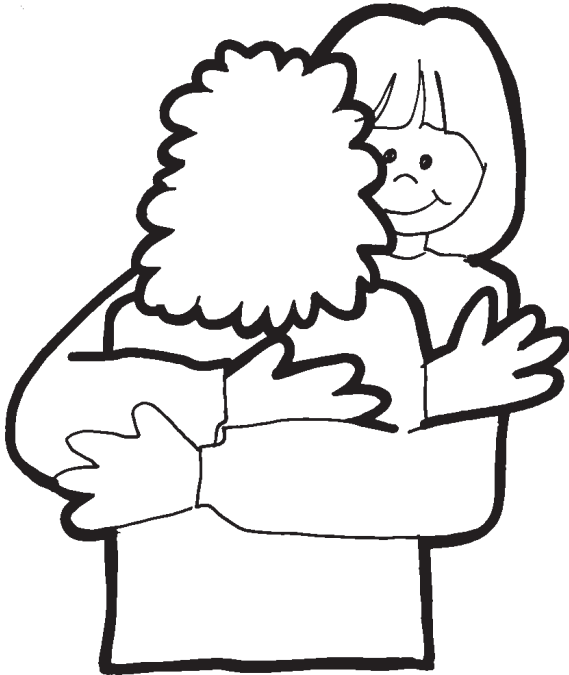
Preteen anger usually occurs when children encounter some situation that they cannot control or which does not come out as they expected. They are angered and frustrated by things that

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!

This newsletter is published for North Dakota families with sixth-graders by the NDSU Extension Service and distributed through your county extension office. See your extension agent for more parenting information and other home economics programs.