

# Fastbreak For Fathers

---

**a monthly e-mail to help you be the kind of dad your child needs you to be.**

---

by Rich Batten, Family and Consumer Science Agent, Douglas County  
Colorado State University Cooperative Extension

You are receiving this e-mail because you sent a request to [fatherwork@douglas.co.us](mailto:fatherwork@douglas.co.us). You may unsubscribe at anytime by sending an unsubscribe request to the same address.

**In this issue: *Dealing with Anger***

## **Observations**

**We all lose our temper** at times, even professionally certified family life educators. A reminder of that fact stares me in the face every time I look to the right after climbing the stairs to the second floor of our home. My teenage daughter's bedroom door is there. The door itself is non-descript, except for the splintered break just above the door handle. It looks as though someone hit the door with something. That something was my fist. I don't typically hit things. The last time I even came close to hitting another person was in grade school. But the evidence is there, and has been for twelve months.

We were engaged in a verbal spar. She decided it was over and I was determined that it was not. Long story short, she slammed her door. I slammed my fist against, no through, the veneer of the door. I was embarrassed. My daughter was shocked. I apologized and retreated. She stayed behind her door.

Samuel Osherson, a practicing psychotherapist and a research psychologist at the Harvard University Health Services, has written, "Anger is often a father's way of responding to the powerlessness of parenting."

I remember that frustration of powerlessness when in the middle of the night my vulnerable, inconsolable infant child would not stop crying. I remember that frustration when I see the door at the top of the stairs. One of the first steps to preventing the misuse of power in parenting is to acknowledge the possibility of its abuse.

I'm proud to say that our family values and esteems dialogue, constructive conflict, forgiveness and grace. But I must confess that as much as I would like to say we have arrived, the reality is our life, and yours, is a journey of successes and failures. We all get angry and we don't always express it appropriately. One of the keys to long-term success is to acknowledge our failures and take the appropriate steps to make right our wrongs – seek forgiveness and to seek out the relationships and resources to make lasting change.

My daughter and I should have taken a "time-out" from our argument before the door incident. We didn't. I'm reminded of all this now because I finally got around to fixing the door. Fortunately we did the soul repair the same day of the incident. The door is almost as good as new. Almost . . . if you look real close you can discern a blemish. Two people can see it without looking close. But those same two people have made a commitment to express their anger appropriately so that the blemish remains on the door and not on their relationship.

**Cooperative Extension programs are available to all without discrimination.**

**Domestic violence of any sort is unacceptable, wrong and dangerous. If you feel you are at risk for seriously hurting your child or partner physically or psychologically, you should seek professional counseling. Your health-care provider or a local crisis hotline can give you referrals.**

## **Research**

Despite what you might think after seeing the Adam Sandler movie, *Anger Management*, **anger management classes** aren't designed to make you angry and they **can help**. One program that has proved effective for parents, with normal anger levels who volunteer to participate, is *RETHINK*. Three-way ANOVA's run with repeated measures to test for main effects and interactions with pretest-posttest changes on 16 dependent variables with 297 parents who completed *RETHINK* weekly workshops revealed that participants' lives improved as a result of practicing the seven *RETHINK* anger management skills. They reported statistically significant reductions in overall anger expression levels, trait anger levels, family conflict levels, verbal aggression self levels, verbal aggression other levels, physical aggression self levels, physical aggression other levels, and negative personal belief levels. They also reported a statistically significant increase in rational-empathic anger management levels plus increases in knowledge gained, attitudes improved, and behaviors changed. Data has been collected from 1,323 parents. *RETHINK* appears to help parents improve their parenting and anger management skills and reduce their anger and violence levels, when taught by trained instructors for six or seven two-to-two-and-one-half hour weekly sessions. ( [www.caahs.colostate.edu/hdfs/faculty/fetsch/files/CO-PE.doc](http://www.caahs.colostate.edu/hdfs/faculty/fetsch/files/CO-PE.doc) )

## **Ideas**

- While not a substitute for an anger management course, consider putting into practice these **seven skills** that are a part of the *RETHINK* program.

**R**egonize when you are beginning to feel angry, what you are angry about and what the other person might be angry about.

**E**mpathize with the other person.

**T**hink about your anger and consider if there is another way to reframe the situation that might reduce or eliminate your anger.

**H**ear what the other person is saying. Give your complete attention and demonstrate that you understand the other person's experience from his/her perspective.

**I**ntegrate compassion, respect and where appropriate, love in your responses. Use "I" statements to express strong feelings.

**N**otice how your body tells you that it is feeling angry. What are the signals of your "Individual Anger Alarm System?" Notice what you do to calm yourself once your "system" has been triggered.

**K**eep to the problem at hand. Resolve the current situation without bringing up any issues from the past.

- Take an **online anger management course**: *FireWorks* a free online non-credit course that examines anger management with a special emphasis on adult-child relationships is available through Kansas State Research and Extension at Kansas State University. [www.ksu.edu/wwwparent/courses/fireworks/index.htm](http://www.ksu.edu/wwwparent/courses/fireworks/index.htm)
- Read or listen to a parenting book that effectively helps fathers understand their emotions and the role they play in the parenting of their children: ***The Heart of Parenting: Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child*** by John Gottman.

## **Connections (specific to Douglas County Colorado)**

**Be a Fan of Your Kid Essay Contest** – Write a story or draw a picture about how your dad is your biggest fan, or maybe it is your uncle, step-dad, or grandfather. Prizes will be awarded in two age groups: 9 & under and 10 & older. First place prize – eight luxury suite tickets to the Denver Nuggets/Houston Rockets game Friday, April 2! Entries must be received by March 17, 2004. Go to [www.BeAFanOfYourKid.org](http://www.BeAFanOfYourKid.org) for your entry form today.

**Father Fraternity** – (Parker Adventist Hospital) Classes for new dads. Next series of classes begins May 11. Call 303.269.4390 for more information and to register.

**RETHINK Anger Management Classes for Dads** – Six session series on Tuesday evenings beginning April 20. Contact [fatherwork@douglas.co.us](mailto:fatherwork@douglas.co.us) or 720.733.6926 to register.

**Take Our Sons and Daughters to Work Day** April 22. For more information visit [www.daughtersandsonstowork.org](http://www.daughtersandsonstowork.org) and contact your employer.



**“You can’t be the kind of dad that you want to be. You can’t be the kind of dad that you wanted to have. You’ve got to be the kind of dad that your child needs you to be.”**  
- Roland Warren, The National Fatherhood Initiative

---

If you find this e-mail helpful, please forward it to others you know. Subscribe to **Fastbreak for Fathers** by sending an e-mail to [fatherwork@douglas.co.us](mailto:fatherwork@douglas.co.us) with “subscribe” in the subject line. Non-electronic versions of this newsletter are available upon request by calling 720.733.6926.

---

**Fastbreak for Fathers** is a publication of the Douglas County FatherWork Connection, a countywide, research-based, fathering education and advocacy initiative committed to increasing the probability of every child in Douglas County Colorado being intimately connected to an involved, responsible and loving father or father figure.

**The Douglas County FatherWork Connection is facilitated by  
Rich Batten, Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agent - Douglas County  
Colorado State University Cooperative Extension  
720.733.6926 [rbatten@douglas.co.us](mailto:rbatten@douglas.co.us)**

**Cooperative Extension programs are available to all without discrimination.**