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Book Review: Staying in Control: Anger Management Skills for Parents of Young Adolescents

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Book Review of *Staying in Control: Anger Management Skills for Parents of Young Adolescents*

Lori L. Ellison

This book is designed as a workbook for parents of young teens who are having difficulty managing anger. The author wrote this book as a result of feedback from parents of adolescents who were using her previous *In Control: A Skill-Building Program for Teaching Young Adolescents to Manage Their Anger*. This book is intended as a guide that parents can work through to help them learn to handle their own anger more appropriately and to model those skills for their teen. The author encourages open dialog between parents and their children, open discussion of these exercises and applied practice both separately and together. The author also suggests the book's usefulness to practitioners as they work with teens, parents and family groups in developing more appropriate anger management skills in those populations.

Each chapter of this book contains helpful information about the emotion of anger, tips and tools to use in exploring ways to use anger appropriately, and an open-ended summary at the end where the reader may add his or her own thoughts to the list of ideas discussed in that chapter. Chapter One, in particular, includes an Anger Checklist which can be helpful in assessing level of anger management ability both before and after working through this book. The author is careful to provide example ways of filling out the various exercises found in each chapter. She also gives vignettes of possible scenarios which parents might use with their teens concerning the information found in the chapter which help prepare parents to communicating with their teens about these ideas and exercises.

The specific subjects the author addresses in this book include the physiological changes that occur in anger episodes and ways to reduce them; the settings in which anger often occurs and the triggers that bring it on; different degrees of anger and how to respond appropriately for the degree to which the parent is provoked. She also discusses ways in which the parent may be more introspective about his or her own anger and the thinking and behavior that often precede and follow anger episodes. In the final chapters, she discusses developing an anger plan for parents that will aid them in managing their own anger more appropriately so that they can teach the same skills to their teens. She also addresses how substances such as alcohol and drugs can influence the success of such a plan and offers some resources where parents can get help for substance abuse information should they need help. Finally, she offers a long-term plan for maintaining their anger management program through support networks of friends, family, and other parents struggling with anger in themselves or their children.

This book is very practical in its approach. It is written on a level that is very accessible to parents in the average population. The skills and tools the author provides are easy to understand and implement and appear to be helpful resources for a family that may be struggling with uncontrolled anger. These exercises could be helpful for professionals working with families or anger management groups as they are not highly time consuming or overly complicated yet they still have the potential to aid parents in understanding and controlling their own anger more effectively.

A major strong point in this workbook is the encouragement the author gives the parent to share their experience of growth with their child. This promotes a stronger effort toward effective communication between parent and child which may prove quite

beneficial. Another strength is how the author makes the understanding and management of anger a progressive process rather than a single moment in time. This helps the reader see that they can start small and work their way into a much better system of handling their angry outbursts. Beginning with achievable goals encourages the reader to continue building on what they have learned and to practice those skills frequently and consistently as they work through this book. This would be particularly helpful in group work to keep group members on task from week to week.

As a whole this book is an excellent resource. The information in the book is rather basic to a seasoned professional but the form and presentation are successful in making these concepts and exercises accessible to the parent who may have little experience in effective anger control. It could be a highly effective tool to use in family and group work with the potential to have a significant impact on both the parents and the teens involved regarding managing their anger more appropriately.