

STORY #1

If You're Angry and You Know It . . . Remember Henry!

(Age of child in story: 4th grader)

p. 278 in the book

Chicken Soup for the Soul: Stories for a Better World

Canfield, Hansen, Carter, Palomares, Williams, and Winch

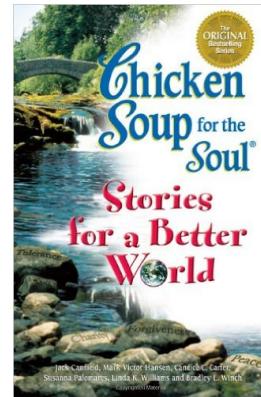
Songs:

[If You're Angry & You Know It](#) (2:14) + [Bonus Resources](#) **GIVE NEW**

[It's OK to Feel](#) (2:14) + [Bonus Resources](#) **GIVE NEW LINK**

[I'm Dealing with my Feelings](#) (2:50) + [Bonus Resource: Dealing with Feelings](#)

GIVE NEW LINK



YOUTUBE READING of the story by Linda K. Williams 8:35

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcNA3asgb84&list=PL4tCO3OQR1wTRSQHIGjcDhrE67wlb2wnj&index=18>

1. I hit myself.
2. I hit my sister.
3. I hit my brother.

I sighed, shook my head and rolled my eyes as I read fourth-grade Henry's answers to our school/family activity sheet on "Three Things I Do When I Am Angry." Henry, who often enjoyed being the class clown, had been in rare form that day, and obviously had carried his silliness over into filling out the activity sheet.

So, right before giving our good-bye hugs for the week, I called to Henry in a none-too-pleased tone of voice, "Henry, stick around for a few minutes." With an innocent look on his face—as if he had no idea what he'd done wrong—he shrugged and nodded an okay.

At that point, my disappointment became irritation—the nerve of him! For, during our "School Family" hour just that day, my sixteen kindergarten through fifth-graders had sung and energetically enacted the lyrics to this song:

*If you're angry and you know it, talk it over—(I'm angry!),
If you're angry and you know it, talk it over—(I'm angry!),
If you're angry and you know it, that's okay, you can control it!
If you're angry and you know it, talk it over—(I'm angry!).*

And we sang and acted out the other verses, too:

*Count to ten—(One, two, three . . .),
Stop and think—(Hmm!),
Pound a pillow—(Whap, whap!),
Take a walk—(Step, step!),
Just relax—(Ahh!).*

We also had a lively discussion of the topic, with eager hands flying in the air, sharing when and why they've been angry, and we brainstormed many additional ways of dealing with that potentially explosive emotion. They were so into it! After hearing all their creative, diverse and effective ways to deal with their anger in positive ways, I looked proudly and lovingly at my kids with a definite lump in my throat, and said, "If only everyone in the world would deal with their anger in the smart, self-disciplined and kind ways that you've all shared here . . . well, we certainly wouldn't see the horrible headlines in the daily newspapers that we do now, would we? And this would be such a better world!"

Yes, the lesson had gone even better than I'd hoped!

And then Henry had to go and spoil the moment for me. He sure had managed to burst my bubble, pretty much obliterating my sense of accomplishment at how beautifully the lesson had gone. Here he was, being disrespectful and a real smart aleck about something he knew darn well I felt passionately about. For heaven's sake, we'd been together for five full years!

So, with the other students now gone, I was face-to-face with Henry and just about to address him with stern admonitions of "When I give the group a written activity like this, I expect your thoughtful, serious responses! No wasting time or paper; no being silly and disrespectful!"

Was I in for a surprise! He looked up at me with a solemn face, utter sincerity in his big brown eyes, and said sadly, "But that's what I really do when I'm angry!"

What a false judgment I had made! I suddenly saw him in a totally different light. Yes, silly though he could be at times, here was a sweet young man willing to share openly with me something that he knew without question I'd view as a BIG problem. I felt honored that he trusted me with his cry for help—and regretted having been so quick to react negatively.

I said, "Henry, I'm really sorry I misjudged you; I had no idea you were being serious with those answers. I want to thank you for your honesty. It's very important to me that you're willing to share this concern with me. I'd really like to talk with you for a few more minutes. I'll send your classroom teacher a note to let her know that I've 'borrowed' you for just a bit—okay?"

With a sigh of relief, Henry responded, "Yes, I do need some help!" He actually seemed eager to explore some ways to channel his anger into more positive directions. His cooperative attitude and interest were such a relief for me.

Together, we brainstormed some anger-control ideas on the spot, and I gave him another copy of the activity sheet. Instead of asking for just three options, I added more lines, saying, "You and your family can work on these together. I'm sure they'll be happy to help you try to find different ways to deal with your anger."

"Without beating up on them, huh?" Henry put in, true to his class-clown nature.

We shared a chuckle at that.

Also, I changed the wording to read, "HELPFUL Things I CAN Do When I Am Angry." Henry gave me a hopeful smile before happily heading back to his classroom.

As I watched him leave, I wondered what the result would be. But of one thing I was certain: I would never again sing this song without remembering this crossroads moment with Henry.

On Monday, Henry bounded to my room, beaming with pride as he handed me his newly filled-out sheet:

HELPFUL Things I CAN Do When I Am Angry

- Play soccer
- Play tag
- Watch TV
- Tell my mom and dad what I am mad at
- Talk with my friends on the phone
- Play outside
- Play inside
- Help people

I filled with joy and pride as I read his answers, and the last one melted my heart. From now on, if you're angry and you know it, remember Henry. I sure do, and I always will.

By Linda K. Williams