

Cut it Out! - Jumping Out of the Irritation-Anger-Guilt Cycle

Allison Rees

Do you often feel guilty for having negative emotions about your child's demands? If so, you may want to *Cut It Out!* Feeling irritated can be a signal that you need to pay attention your boundaries and need to set some clear, consistent limits. If you feel guilty about your irritation and dismiss your feelings, your child's behaviour will escalate. Why wouldn't it if the guidelines aren't in place? While all parents experience times of being inconsistent and losing it, the Irritation-Anger-Guilt Cycle can create more serious problems.

This kind of cycle happens frequently when parents have difficulty setting firm boundaries. The child's demands cause irritation in the parent. The parent then feels guilty for being irritated and gives in to the child. The child is thereby rewarded for being so demanding, and continues to demand. The parent eventually blows up unreasonably over some point. She then feels very guilty for blowing up, and becomes even more submissive to the child.

The best exit from this cycle is to pay attention to your feelings and needs and apply age appropriate expectations around your child's behaviour. Slowly as your children mature it is healthy to consider your needs for sleep, respect, consideration and so on. Your boundaries will help children appreciate and accept the boundaries of other people. So look after yourself, your kids are watching you!

THE IRRITATION-ANGER-GUILT CYCLE

