

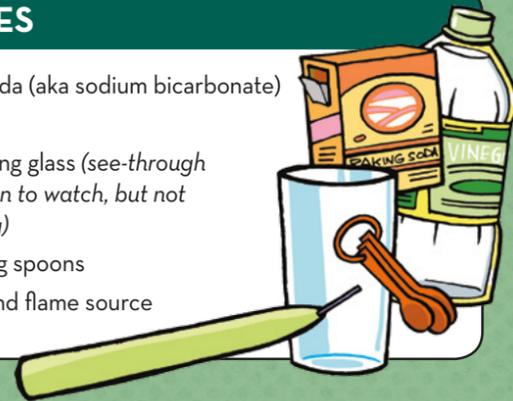
Stopping Anger in Its Tracks

Use this object lesson to show how we can avoid adding fuel to the fire of anger.

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Church Magazines

SUPPLIES

- Baking soda (aka sodium bicarbonate)
- Vinegar
- Tall drinking glass (see-through is more fun to watch, but not necessary)
- Measuring spoons
- Candle and flame source



Fire has been used to describe a wide range of things, from romantic love to a “burning” testimony. Another common association with fire is anger. Ever heard of someone being described as “hotheaded” or as having a “fiery” temper?

Anger, like fire, can appear suddenly and without warning. Both can destroy anything they touch. Yet there’s something intriguing about fire. If you cut off its access to fuel, the flames vanish. The same principle applies to anger.

Object lesson time!

HEADS UP!
This object lesson will likely improve your relationships.

A Flash of Fire

Explain to your family that in this object lesson, fire represents anger. Ask somebody to read the following story by President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008). As they read the story, light the candle.

“Many years ago I worked for one of our railroads. A switchman was aimlessly strolling about the platform one day. I asked him to move a car to another track. He exploded. He threw his cap on the pavement and jumped up and down on it, swearing like a drunken sailor. I stood there and laughed at his childish behavior. Noting my laughter, he began to laugh at his own foolishness. He then quietly climbed on the switch engine, drove it over to the empty car, and moved it to an empty track.”¹

Talk about this story for a bit. What are some things that cause anger to come out of nowhere? What can happen if that anger keeps growing? You might point to the candle and discuss what that small flame could actually do if left unattended.

A Sneaky Fire Extinguisher

How did President Hinckley help to diffuse the anger in this situation? By replacing it with laughter!

Talk about that strategy. Come up with ideas for what you can use to replace angry feelings. Humor is only one solution. What about going for a walk? Turning on Church music? Lowering your voice (see Proverbs 15:1)? You could even try something silly, such as a family rule that all arguments must be done in a singing voice.

STEP 1. Once you’ve listed “sneaky fire extinguishers,” mix 1 rounded teaspoon of baking soda and then 1 level tablespoon of vinegar in the glass. As the bubbles die down, explain that there is now something invisible in the glass that represents the items on the list you’ve just created.

Here comes the fun part.

A Cool Success

We’ve all blown out birthday candles with a puff of air. What happens next is far sneakier than trying to overpower flame with breath. Instead, you’re replacing what fire needs—oxygen—with something it can’t use (carbon dioxide).

STEP 2. You might want to practice this bit ahead of time. The idea is to tip the glass above the flame as if you were going to pour out liquid. But *don’t* let any liquid spill. Instead, you’ll be pouring out an invisible gas (carbon dioxide) that is heavier than air.

STEP 3. This invisible fire extinguisher—which, again, represents any of the items on your list—will completely snuff out the flame! It’s crafty, subtle, and oh, so effective.

Connecting the Dots

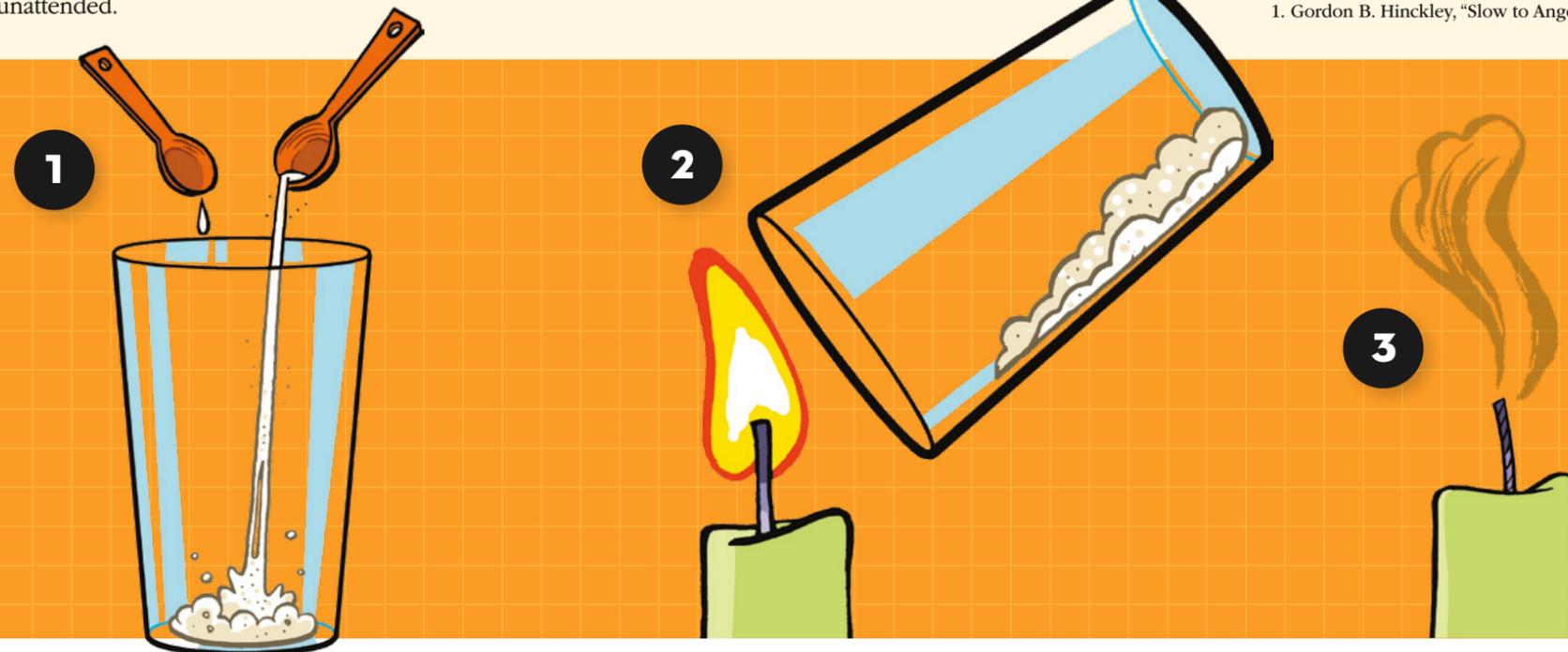
Discuss what just happened in terms of replacing anger with better emotions. As an example, ask everybody to imagine that they’re sitting on a couch and starting to feel angry. Now, ask them to imagine that somebody just plopped a tail-wagging puppy into their lap. What would change? That’s the general idea, here.

You’ll find that once the dangerous emotion of anger is removed, it’s much easier and safer to solve whatever problems you’re facing.

With a few “sneaky fire extinguishers” at the ready, anger won’t stand a chance. **NE**

NOTE

1. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Slow to Anger,” Oct. 2007 general conference.



DISCLAIMER:

This activity involves fire, which can potentially be hazardous. Find an adult to help you before doing this experiment. (Also, remember that open flames or lighted candles can’t be used in Church buildings.)