



## Coping with Anger – Yours and Your Child’s

### **"You're mean! I hate you!"**

The parent who is tenderly cradling a newborn baby never expects the day those words may be pronounced in anger by their child. Yet strong emotions, including anger, are normal experiences in a family. Many adults learned that anger is bad and should be eliminated. Yet anger is just a feeling. It signals to us something is going wrong or needs attention.

### **Know What Triggers Brings On Your Anger**

Learn what triggers your anger and prepare strategies for how you will act in those situations. Anger is usually a secondary emotion. First you feel scared (or helpless, frustrated, exhausted, disappointed, threatened or insulted), then angry. The adult who feels like spanking a child who just run out into the street first felt fear before being angry. Identifying the emotions accompanying your anger can help you choose how to respond.



### **Recognize The Signs of Anger**

Learn to recognize the physical signs of anger, so you can prevent your anger from escalating into an explosion. When you feel anger rising, you can take steps to calm down before you "hit the roof": breathe deeply, count to 10, leave the room. Then, when you are ready, you can refocus on the problem together. However, intense anger you cannot control is a warning signal of a larger problem. Be willing to ask for help if needed.

### **Help Your Children Express Anger Safely**

Children learn how to deal with their anger by watching others, especially their parents. To help children manage their anger, it's important to first to acknowledge it: "I can see you're really, really mad!" Follow that up with some suggestions for burning off the anger energy without hurting anyone or damaging anything. A few ideas: rip up scrap paper, run up and down the stairs, punch a big cushion, throw a ball against the wall (outside!), or by drawing or writing about their anger.

<u>Responding To Your Child's Anger</u>	
<u>Your Child Says:</u>	<u>You Respond:</u>
"I hate you!"	"I can see you are very angry."
"You <u>always</u> say no"	"Well, that's my job sometimes."
"Daddy (or Mom)'s nice, but <u>you're mean!</u> "	"I know you don't like it when I say no"
"I <u>hate</u> it here. I'm running away!"	"That would make me very sad."
"I'm <u>not</u> going to be your <u>friend</u> any more."	"I sure hope you change your mind."

Adapted from an Article by Betsy Mann,  
Canadian Assoc. of Family Resource Centers

