



Dealing with anger: what is healthy

Anger, violence and withdrawal can be coping strategies (that's not an excuse it's just how people use them) however, they aren't acceptable or healthy coping strategies. They are what some people do when it gets too uncomfortable for them to manage a situation. Others eat or shop or drink alcohol or blame others or seek attention or pretend to be ill (the list can go on)... we do lots of things when we are desperate – but that doesn't make them helpful. Positive coping strategies might be to talk to a friend or go for a jog/walk or do some deep breathing.

It is not alright to be angry and take it out on your new baby or partner. If you are finding that you have a 'short fuse' then it is important to remove yourself from the situation until the anger passes. It might mean putting the baby in the cot and walking away even if the baby is still crying. When angry you will be unable to settle your baby, in fact you will be unable to think clearly due to what is happening in your brain. When you feel like this often it is also important that you seek some professional help to deal with this anger. Anger can mask other feelings like hurt, fear and loss of control, so it is important not only for you but also your family to explore what actually the anger is hiding.

Some practical things you can do in the moment when stressed:

- » Walk outside, have some time to yourself.
- » Put on music you love.
- » Wash your face in hot or cold water.
- » Scream into a towel or punch your pillow, then take some deep breaths.
- » Lie down and think calm thoughts for 2 minutes.
- » Take a shower.
- » Put yourself in time out.
- » Ring a friend – talk about your feelings with someone you trust.
- » Take 5 long deep breaths.
- » Access a parent hotline.

If you think are so angry you are about to hurt your child, make sure the child is safe (placing the child in a cot or playpen) and go into another room until your feelings have settled down. Make a cup of tea; listen to music – whatever helps you. Say to your baby, 'Mummy/Daddy has to go and calm down first. I'll be back as soon as I can'. If this keeps happening, seek some professional help.