

## **Strong Bonds Fact Sheet:** **Handling the Situation : Dealing with Conflict**

All families have conflict. Disagreements and anger are part of life. We need to have good ways to handle disagreements and express anger. We need to be able to get past disagreements and be able to continue relationships.

### **Disagreements**

Disagreements are a normal part of human relationships. They tend to be even more common in a family with teenagers. People often find disagreements uncomfortable. Yet it is healthy for a family to know they do not all have to share the same opinions to get along.

Conflict can be resolved if everyone tries to keep calm and show respect for others. If someone is very emotional, it may be better to wait for another time to tackle the disagreement.

Try to make a time to come back to it. It usually helps to try to stick to the current issue, and not make the discussion about everything.

Try to give everyone a chance to express his or her own point of view. Even if you disagree, you can respect others point of view.

Humour can lighten an argument, as long as it is not sarcastic.

Yelling, bitter accusations, sulking, abuse or violence are not good ways to handle disagreement. As well as upsetting people, they stop things being sorted out.

It is important to realise that you may not ultimately agree. Instead, you are working to find a way to get along, even when you may disagree.

It is a great lesson for your child to see that you are committed to the relationship even when you disagree and that you do not hold grudges.

### **Anger**

Anger is a healthy human emotion. It can help to keep you safe and strengthen you to stand up for yourself.

However, anger needs to be expressed in an appropriate way. Abusive or violent explosions of anger do not solve problems. They often make things worse, especially if property is damaged or people are injured.

People who explode in anger often blame others for making them feel that way. But they are responsible for how they express their anger. People who are violent or abusive towards others have to learn to control themselves and express their anger in appropriate ways. They cannot excuse themselves by blaming others for making them angry.

### **Anger and adolescents**

Anger is a common emotion in adolescence. It is a natural response to the stresses and confusion of this period of growth. Young people are still learning to manage their emotions. Over time they will hopefully learn to recognise the type of things that trigger their anger and how to control their impulses.

Adolescents need help to learn acceptable ways to express their feelings. How you express your own anger is an important lesson for them.

If your child is angry:

#### **Hear them out**

If your child is angry with you, they are likely to want to tell you why. It usually helps to hear them out. You do not have to agree with them. It helps that you listen, and try to understand their feelings.

#### **Have boundaries**

If you are worried about how your child expresses anger, you may need to work out some boundaries about what is an acceptable way to express feelings of anger. It must be made clear that violence is not acceptable.

#### **If anger scares you**

Some people can cope with anger directed at them better than others. Some people feel very uncomfortable when anger is directed at them and it can trigger quite deep fears. If you know you are like this, you may need a plan to work on changing or reducing the young person's expressions of anger.

It might help to explain to your child how you feel when they get angry and where your fear comes from. Tell your child that you understand their right to get angry sometimes and that they need a way to express it. But alert them to how it makes you feel.

See if you can come up with some other ways for them to express anger that you can cope with – for example: waiting until they feel calmer; in writing; by speaking indirectly through someone else; or while another person is there with you. Work on this together.

### If you get angry with your child

It is normal for parents to feel angry with their children at times. If your young person behaves badly towards you or other members of the family, you will feel angry.

You need to be able to express your own anger in appropriate ways too. You need to be able to let your child know that you feel angry, and why. If you are not able to express your feelings in a calm way, postpone the conversation until you do feel calmer and are able to express your feelings in a rational way.

### Stress

It may be hard to find an opportunity to discuss your frustrations and the things that are annoying you about your child's behaviour – they may not be around much, or may shut you out, or be substance affected. If you do not have opportunities to express your anger, resentment can build up, making you feel more frustrated and tense. You will need to find ways to release that tension. Physical exercise may help; talking to a supportive friend can also help to defuse some of the tension.

### If you get out of control

If you know you get angry too easily, or become abusive or violent when you are angry, it is important to learn ways to deal with this situation.

Feeling stressed or frustrated can make it more likely that you will explode, so you need to look after yourself to make sure you are releasing the tensions that build up in your life.

Counselling and training in how to manage your anger can help you learn to recognise your triggers and stop yourself reacting badly.



### Tips from this Help Sheet

- Disagreements are a normal, healthy part of relationships. It is important to resolve disagreements in a calm, respectful manner.
- Anger is a healthy emotion that needs to be expressed in healthy ways.
- Anger is common in adolescence, and young people need to learn ways to deal with it well.
- If your child is angry with you, hear them out, and then explain how it makes you feel. Come up with some safer ways for them to express their feelings.
- If you are angry with your child, let them know in a calm manner. It is important to release the tension in a way other than abuse or violence.



### Related Help Sheets

- Dealing with Violence
- Dealing with Past Hurts and Trauma
- Keeping Calm
- Improving Communication
- Adolescent Development
- Need a Helping Hand?



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