Anger is a normal human emotion. How you deal with your anger is the more important concern. Anger expressed in a healthy way can provide a positive example for your children. This week we’ll give you strategies to manage your anger and express anger in a healthy way.

Managing Your Own Anger

1. **Be aware of your body’s response to anger.** When you feel yourself getting angry, notice how your body is responding physiologically. You may notice that your heart is beating faster, your breathing is shallow, and there may be a knot in the pit of your stomach.

2. **Breathe deeply.** Deep breaths will help to calm your body and increase the supply of oxygen to your brain—oxygen that will help you to think clearly and calmly.

3. **Ask yourself, “Why am I angry?”** Take a brief break to calm down and ask yourself these questions: Why am I allowing my children to trigger my anger? Have they hit a sore spot? Could I be overreacting because of other stresses in my life?

4. **Decide if you want to speak up.** Do you want your child to know that you are angry? It may be an opportunity to teach your child that it is possible to express anger without yelling, hitting, or other undesirable behavior. Or you might decide not to discuss your anger with your child but simply carry on in a calm, patient manner.

Expressing Your Anger

If you do want to express your anger to your child, here are some steps to follow:

1. **Be direct, specific, and brief.** Stick to one issue at a time, and don’t bring up the past. It is difficult enough to resolve one problem at a time; don’t get out your laundry list. Bringing up past issues is likely to cause confusion and resentment.

2. **Focus on feelings, not blame.** Don’t blame your child for yours. (“You made me so mad that I couldn’t help losing my temper with you!”) Try to avoid using phrases such as “you always” or “you never.” Words like this will only put your child on the defensive.

3. **Listen to your child’s response.** We owe it to our children to hear their side of the story. Try to put yourself in your child’s position. What are they trying to tell you?

4. **Be realistic about your expectations.** Parents often think they can force their children to think or behave in a certain way. This is seldom true, and even if it were, it is contrary to one of the goals of parenthood—to help our children become independent adults who can think for themselves and make their own decisions.

Adapted from parent resources provided by Crisis Prevention Institute