

## LETTING GO OF THE ANGER

**“The trauma in the child lasts as long as the anger in their parents.”**

You may be one of many parents who are faced with what may be the greatest test of parenthood – helping your children deal with the breakup of your marriage/partnering relationship and the reorganization of your family unit from a nuclear to a binuclear household. If the situation is handled carefully by loving parents, sensitive teachers, and concerned members of the community, many of the ill effects of separate households on children can be minimized. If you choose to hold on to your anger with your child's other parent your child may suffer from the trauma of the separation for many years to come. Take a look at the following to see how well you are dealing with your anger.

Do you:

- Fear what will happen if you let down your guard
- Dread uncomfortable communication with or about your child's other parent
- Feel you make poor decisions – or possibly don't think clearly because of your anger
- Fear retribution or consequences of your decisions
- Feel you got the raw end of the deal
- Overwhelmed with single parenting
- Find yourself complaining to others about your child's other parent

Do your children:

- Worry about divided loyalties
- Fear losing both parents
- Manipulate both parents – playing on their anger with each other
- Demonstrate behavior problems in other social or educational settings
- Feel frustration with both parents because they feel they are not allowed to love both without suffering the consequences from the other
- Shut down emotionally with other family members
- Emotionally distance themselves from both parents
- Get angry over the smallest of incidents
- Feel the need to rescue their other parent (either the angry one or the one that is the recipient of the anger by defending them)
- Turn to unhealthy relationships with peers to escape family angers
- Reluctant to bring friends into their home
- Reluctant to discuss emotional issues with parent
- Demonstrate unhealthy pleasing to keep the peace

If you see yourself or your children in the above descriptions, maybe it's time you took a closer look at how your anger may contribute to an uncomfortable environment for you and your children. Take a few minutes with a Certified Family Life Educator or parenting coordinator to brainstorm ways to let go of your anger and start the process of creating an environment that is healthy for you, your child, and your child's other parent.