Dealing with Our Own Emotions
(Parenting When We Are Upset)

by John Hoffman

Raising children is inherently emotional. The positive emotions help us enjoy parenting and connect with our children. But any parent knows that anger, frustration, and other feelings are inevitable. Children can really push our buttons sometimes, and we are all prone to anger when we are tired and overstretched. Unfortunately, negative emotions make parenting harder. Here are some tips for managing your anger and frustration while interacting with your children.

- **Accept that negative emotions are inevitable.** Don't beat yourself up for getting upset with your children. It happens to all parents. Just try to deal with it and move on. If you do a good job of managing your own anger, your children will learn important lessons about how to handle their own emotions.

- **Look before you leap.** We all tend to say and do things we regret when we're upset. Try to avoid lesson-giving lectures or important discipline decisions (like what consequence to impose) when you're very angry. Wait until you have calmed down. You'll say it better and your children will hear it better.

- **Take a time-out**. If you're extremely upset it's often wiser to leave your school-aged children alone for a few minutes, than to do something you might regret later.

- **Apologize for your overly angry words and deeds**. All parents lose it sometimes. You can't take it back, but you can lessen the damage by apologizing. "I was really angry when I called you an idiot and I didn't really mean it. I'm sorry." This also sets a good example for children for how to deal with their own angry mistakes.

- **Ask for help.** If you are angry a lot of the time, get some help: seek advice from another parent or trusted friend, have someone watch your children for a while so you can take a break, or even go to counselling. All parents need support, help, and advice sometimes.