



BY CHRIS LUTES

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU'RE ANGRY

"DON'T YOU DARE leave this house!" Trisha's mother shouted. Ignoring the warning, Trisha slammed the back door. Trisha was angry. She was angry at her parents for treating her like she was still in junior high. She was angry at her brother and sister for always getting their way. She was angry that her parents fought over money all the time. Buried deep inside, her anger only increased. One day it could explode on parent, teacher or friend. Or maybe it would erupt internally, causing long-lasting emotional scars.

Anger. It can make us bitter, withdrawn, negative. Rarely, but sometimes, it turns us mean, violent, even self-destructive. It can cripple or destroy friendships and other relationships. The fact is, if we don't learn to control our anger—it will control us. The next time you feel angry, here are some things to try:

- **Breathe deeply.** Count to 10 (or a hundred). Take a long walk. Do something to help you calm down.
- **Go for a run.** Physical exercise helps relieve tension and frustration.
- **Beat up your pillow.** Or lock yourself in the car and scream—whatever it takes to let go of your anger without hurting someone.
- **Learn to laugh.** Serious problems should be taken seriously, but stupid stuff shouldn't. Instead of getting mad, just have a good laugh at life's silly irritations.
- **Try to discover what made you an-**

gry. On the surface, you may be angry at your mother for accidentally tossing away your homework, at your brother for eating your candy bar, at a friend for failing to pick you up. Yet all those things are often symptoms of some deeper hurt, like your parents' divorce, a friend's betrayal, a close relative's untimely death. By pinpointing the source of your anger, you can begin to deal with the real problem.

- **Write an honest letter.** Write the person or people who made you angry. Or your letter could simply be "to" a situation or circumstance that's really bothering you. Write furiously, write honestly. Next step: Rip the letter into a thousand pieces. This will help keep you from ripping into another person—from doing something you'll later regret. Most important, it will allow you to release some of the anger you have inside.

- **Shout at God.** He's seen anger before, he's even experienced it. So he can take it. If you blame him, say so. Just tell him what you're feeling. Then allow him to talk to you: Spend some time reading and thinking about scripture that addresses anger (Ephesians 4:26, Psalm 4, Colossians 3:8, James 1:19).

- **Confront.** After you've blown off some steam, you may still feel you need to confront the person you're angry at. Go ahead. But do it without emotional or accusatory language. Instead of saying, "You make me angry," phrase it: "I feel angry when you..." Be firm but gentle. And if you were part of the problem, admit it.

- **Forgive others.** People full of bitterness and hatred are people who refuse to forgive. So forgive—for your own good.

- **Forgive yourself.** You're only human; you make mistakes. So look at yourself in the mirror and say, "You're forgiven."

- **Apologize.** Don't let emotional outbursts destroy relationships and friendships. If your anger has hurt someone, tell that person you're sorry.

- **Use good anger to do good.** It's all right to be mad about pollution. It's OK to be mad at kids who drive drunk. It's appropriate to be mad because some people in our world are homeless and go hungry. Vent that anger by doing something constructive and positive. For instance: Join SADD, spend a summer building homes for the poor, work in a soup kitchen on weekends.

- **If needed, get professional help.** If your anger causes you to be destructive or violent, continually depressed or totally withdrawn from your family, seek assistance from a professional Christian counselor right away. Ignoring it will only cause more serious problems. □