

# CAN THIS BE LOVE?

## HOT STUFF! How to defuse, deflect and deal with his anger

Chances are, unless the man you live with is so phlegmatic that visitors to your home mistake him for the umbrella stand, he will get angry at you once in a while. This will occur no matter how blameless you are, since most men have a primal need to imitate their prehistoric ancestors and beat their breasts with rage. You should try to understand your partner's anger, for the same reason that you should try to understand your local bus routes: It will make your life easier. Here's the minimum you should know:

**1. What sets him off:** Knowing what it is that arouses your partner's anger is as important as knowing your own address. Without either piece of information, you can't go home. Think back. What happened when you invited your entire family (parents, sister, brother-in-law and their three preschoolers) for a New Year's brunch, to which they arrived a little on the early side (8:00 A.M.)? Did your partner, upon being awakened four hours after going to sleep, get out of the bed and then try to throw it at you? If so, you should be aware that he may have a primitive need for uninterrupted slumber. Promise never again to wake him up for anything trivial, like sex. Or, what happened when you gently pointed out that his chosen outfit wasn't suitable for the party you were attending, and would not, in fact, be suitable for a barn raising? Did he spend the rest of the evening behaving as if you were an infectious microbe? You should come to grips with the fact that your partner is pathologically sensitive to criticism and vow never to mention his choice of dress, even if he goes to a formal wedding looking ready for a cookout. Finally, when you used his bronze swimming medal as a doorstop, did he threaten to have you bronzed? Then realize that the symbols of his so-called achievements are sacred to him and treat them accordingly. You might, for instance, frame and exhibit on your living room wall the old bathing trunks bearing his lifesaving badge.

**2. How he expresses himself:** Understanding how your partner shows his anger is not as easy as it sounds, since some men camouflage feelings better than they express them, effectively hiding them not only from you, but from themselves. However, recognizing your partner's anger is the first step to defusing it. So watch carefully the next time you think he might have cause to

be angry (as when, perhaps, you're unable to suppress a giggle at his supposition that he only has to lose a couple of pounds to look a lot like Jeff Bridges). Suppose you notice that he exhibits his negative feelings by the fierce handling of inanimate objects—slamming doors and books, snapping pencils, slapping tabletops. Knowing this, you would be in a position to point out how cowardly it is to take his feelings out on things that can't fight back, and suggest he would do better to tell *you*, in words of more than one syllable, what's bothering him. Or, if you realize that he shows his anger by not bothering to show up at home for thirty-six hours at a stretch, you'll know to send a wire to his office, politely asking him to enumerate his supposed injuries and ship said list to you by return mail (parcel post if it is particularly weighty). On the other hand, if you notice that he tends to express anger by sticking around home, but acting as if *you* were no longer on the premises, you'd understand that the first thing you had to do was somehow or other make him acknowledge you, perhaps by appearing at the dinner table wearing one of his suits.

**3. How you react:** To handle your partner's anger intelligently, it's essential to un-

derstand how you respond to it, and if your response is appropriate and productive, or whacked out and as healing as a wrecking ball. For instance, when he berates you for buying, as a Christmas gift for his secretary, the assertiveness-training manual *Make Your Own Coffee, Buster!* do you calm him down by promising never again to help with his gift-giving, or get defensive and yell something about it not being your fault that he's a congenital tyrant? When he stamps around angrily because you forgot to mail his life insurance premium, do you admit he may have a legitimate complaint, or tell him not to worry, because with your luck he'll probably live to one hundred?

If the honest appraisal of these situations makes you think you may not be handling your partner's anger in the most productive way, then remind yourself that when your teddy bear turns grizzly, you can catch more of him with honey than with a big mouth.

by Bette-Jane Raphael

Bette-Jane Raphael's book, *Can This Be Love?* was published by Arbor House in November.



## PERK UP A POTATO

One potato. Two potato. Three potato. Four. When you add Campbell's® Cheddar Cheese Soup, four potatoes become more than potatoes. Here's a Campbell's recipe that will perk up your potatoes:

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| 1 can (11 oz.) Campbell's<br>Condensed Cheddar<br>Cheese Soup | 2 tbsp. sour cream<br>1/2 tsp. Dijon mustard |
| 1 cup cooked broccoli flowerets                               | 4 large baked potatoes<br>Chopped pimiento   |

In 1½ qt. saucepan over medium heat, stir soup. Stir in broccoli, sour cream and mustard. Heat thoroughly; stir occasionally. Split potatoes; fluff with fork. Serve sauce over potatoes. Garnish with chopped pimiento. 4 servings.



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