



# About Anna

I'm a psychotherapist, a bestselling author and a mum of two boys and a girl, living in Surrey. I am passionate about taking therapy out of the therapy room. I love sharing my personal and professional experience to support fellow mums through motherhood.

Over the years, I have realized just how much we judge and criticize ourselves for feeling anything other than 'happy and grateful'. Sure, babies bring us much gratitude and joy but also a boatload of other feelings too.

## ABOUT ANNA

It can often feel like a vulnerable thing to do, to start honest conversations about the highs and lows, the mundane and the challenges along the way in early motherhood. Judgement, shame and guilt are hurdles preventing us from connecting authentically with others. My hope is that, as you read these pages, you'll feel heard, understood and increasingly confident in both facing and sharing the feelings of motherhood. For your feelings are no reflection on the love you have for your baby, and the sooner we find compassion and understanding for ourselves, the more confidence we will find in seeking it from, and offering it to, others.

So, wave goodbye to destructive self-judgement, and say hello to life-affirming self-compassion.

# How to Use This Book

If I were to sit with you on your sofa, make you a cup of tea and support you through the feelings that come with being a new mum, these would be the things I'd say.

Whether you need some quick grounding or compassion, or you want to untangle a feeling, flick to a page for a moment of support and calm.

You'll find a quick takeaway mantra should you be tight on time, which you can repeat for some comfort in the moment.

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

You'll also find an action tip and then I'll suggest three other topics you can flick to, should you want to explore things more deeply.

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# angry

**Anger and rage  
point to unexpressed,  
unvalidated emotion,  
and repeatedly unmet needs**



Sometimes I feel like the inside of my core holds some red-hot lava. It can lie dormant, or it can be bubbling away, coming out in spurts of irritation at something that wouldn't normally bother me that much. Perhaps a badly timed doorbell, a message requiring something of me in a moment I'm busy,

## ANGRY

something dropped or scraped. Or the lava can erupt, flooding out in a physical and emotional way that makes me want to throw or break something, run away or scream. I've roared like a lioness in my kitchen when I've hit breaking point after a day of tantrums and screaming.

Anger is a very active emotion, and an outburst can lead to feelings of shame and guilt. So, what do you do with anger and rage when you're a mum? It's an emotion so many of us, including myself, feel an increase of in motherhood!

Here are my three approaches to when you feel the rage:

### **1 Compassion**

*Always* start with compassion. You are not a bad person. I repeat, you are not a bad person for feeling a normal, human emotion. A taboo

one perhaps (I'm trying to change that), but a normal one. There will be a reason you feel this way. You don't need to shame and criticize yourself; you need gentleness and comfort.

Anger and rage are often pointers to unexpressed, unvalidated emotion, and repeatedly unmet needs. You have a baby and it's likely that in loving them, as you do so well, you've forgotten to care for yourself too. In meeting their needs, you've overlooked yours; in responding to their feelings, you've nudged yours aside. This isn't about 'fault' or doing it wrong, it's just a common narrative we so often live to – that to love is to overlook ourselves.

## **2 Talk it out**

If you feel hurt by a situation or a person, and are holding those feelings down, you deserve

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to verbalize them and have them heard. Resentment and hurt can fuel this simmering feeling of anger and rage, especially when you feel something unjust has happened to you. Even if that person isn't open to conversation, or the circumstance can't be changed, thrashing those feelings out with someone who is kind and supportive adds validation to your experience and can help you feel heard and justified.

### **3 Identify your feelings and needs**

Much of the anger and rage I experience is down to the fact that I've not met my own needs for a while or have repeatedly swallowed down my feelings so that I can stay calm in challenging moments. I know you likely have a need for space, rest and quiet, which are hard to come by as a new mum and tend to require some support from

others to enable you to get them. But if you overlook needs and feelings, they don't just disappear (as convenient as that would be) – they build.

 **TIP:** 

Find small ways to disperse feelings by verbalizing them, naming them, talking them through. And find small ways to meet and acknowledge your needs so that the pressure cooker doesn't pop.



***See also:***

Hormonal  
Irritable  
Resentful

# *anxious*

## **Anxiety distorts the statistics**



Sometimes it doesn't take much to spark an anxiety tornado in my mind. I could be lying in bed or standing in the kitchen when a twinge in my chest, a news article or a fever take my thoughts from calm to chaos in a split second.

Suddenly, my mind rushes ahead into a future that has not and may never happen. The possibilities play out in cinematic,

high-definition Technicolor in my head. My shoulders tense, my pulse rate climbs and my heart gets dragged along for the ride as it feels waves of loss and fear.

Anxiety, in and of itself, is an incredible process designed purely to save our lives. It makes us hyperalert and fills us with adrenaline so that we can fight or flee. However, the challenge comes when this life-saving alarm system is triggered not by a life-threatening risk but by our thoughts. While our mind is able to rationalize what is and what isn't truly happening, our body responds regardless.

Most of our anxieties are fear-based, and when we're tired and going through times of change and uncertainty, it's harder to coach ourselves and rationalize those thoughts. Plus you add a



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baby into the mix, and the concerns and worries about what could go wrong can feel endless! The stakes seem higher when love is on the line. This is why new mums may feel more anxious than perhaps they used to.

The good thing is, there is so much hope. And there are ways to slow the whirlwind of thoughts. Here are some of my favourites:

- Imagine the anxious part of you as your scared inner child, and try to reassure and comfort her.
- Remind yourself that someone else's story doesn't dictate your outcome. This one is handy for those times you hear something that has happened to someone else and, before you know it, you have put yourself in their shoes and are feeling the weight of fear and heartbreak.

- Know that anxiety distorts statistics. That twinge is most likely caused by a muscle cramp, even though you feel as if it's most certainly something more sinister.
- Ground yourself in the present when your mind is rushing ahead into the uncertainty of the future. Feel the ground under your feet, notice what is around you, the noises, sights, smells, tastes and textures. Name them to bring your awareness back from the future unknowns to the certainty of the present moment.
- Adopt a calming mantra such as 'I will cross that bridge *if* I get to it'. This one can act as a reminder that the majority of the things we fear never happen. It's also an invitation to reflect on the fact that we've crossed many challenging 'bridges' in our lives thus far.

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- Try a breathing exercise that helps you. There are many to experiment with but a simple starter is to breathe in deeply to the count of four, and exhale steadily to a longer count of five or six. It signals to your body that you're safe and helps switch off the fight-or-flight response.

Finally, I want to say that feeling anxious in motherhood is so common. You're not failing, you're feeling. We are wired to protect ourselves and our babies from harm, and there are ways to calm our minds and bodies so that anxious thoughts don't run quite as wild, quite as often. Anxiety is common, but it doesn't need to be your normal.

It can be challenging to reassure yourself that 'the worst probably won't happen' after you've been through a traumatic time when the worst

*did* happen. Please seek support if you feel your anxiety is overwhelming and hard to control. There is so much hope that you can regain control and headspace in time, and you deserve that.

..... **TIP:** .....

Practise using these tools when you don't need them (as you fall asleep is a brilliant time), so that when you feel the anxiety whirlwind picking up, the techniques are familiar and easier to grab.

.....

***See also:***

Intrusive Thoughts

Panicking

Traumatized

**Imagine the**

**anxious**

**part of you as**

**reassure**

**and comfort her.**

**your scared inner  
child,  
and try to**