

# Anger Management

Author: Administrator

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## What is anger?

Anger is a powerful feeling. Anger is a completely normal, usually healthy, human emotion. But when it gets out of control and turns destructive, it can lead to problems; problems at work, in your personal relationships, and in the overall quality of your life and it can make you feel as though you're at the mercy of an unpredictable and powerful emotion. Anger can be defined as "an emotional state that varies in intensity from mild irritation to intense fury and rage". It is accompanied by physiological and biological changes; when you get angry, your heart rate and blood pressure go up, as do the levels of your energy hormones, adrenaline, and noradrenaline.

## Causes of Anger

Some of the most common causes of anger include: hurt; frustration; annoyance; harassment; disappointment; and threats.

Anger can be caused by both external and internal events. You could be angry at a specific person (Such as a coworker or supervisor) or event (a traffic jam, a canceled flight), or your anger could be caused by worrying or brooding about your personal problems. Memories of traumatic or enraging events can also trigger angry feelings.

## Expressing Anger

Anger can be our friend or enemy; it depends on the way in which we choose to express it. Knowing how to recognize and express it appropriately can help us to reach our goals, solve problems, handle emergencies, and protect our health. A failure to recognize and understand one's anger can lead to a variety of personal difficulties.

The instinctive, natural way to express anger is to respond aggressively. Anger is a natural, adaptive response to threats; it inspires powerful, often aggressive, feelings and behaviors, which allow us to fight and to defend ourselves when we are attacked. A certain amount of anger, therefore, is necessary to our survival.

On the other hand, we can't physically lash out at every person or object that irritates or annoys us; laws, social norms, and common sense place limits on how far our anger can take us.

People use a variety of both conscious and unconscious processes to deal with their angry feelings. The three main approaches are expressing, suppressing, and calming. Expressing your angry feelings in an assertive not aggressive manner is the healthiest way to express anger. To do this, you have to learn how to make clear what your needs are, and how to get them met, without hurting others. Being assertive doesn't mean being pushy or demanding; it means being respectful of yourself and others.

Anger can be suppressed, and then converted or redirected. This happens when you hold in your anger, stop thinking about it, and focus on something positive. The aim is to inhibit or suppress your anger and convert it into more constructive behavior. The danger in this type of response is that if it isn't allowed outward expression, your anger can turn inward on yourself. Anger turned inward may cause hypertension, high blood

pressure, or depression.

Unexpressed anger can create other problems. It can lead to pathological expressions of anger, such as passive-aggressive behavior (getting back at people indirectly, without telling them why, rather than confronting them head-on) or a personality that seems perpetually cynical and hostile. People who are constantly putting others down, criticizing everything, and making cynical comments haven't learned how to constructively express their anger. Not surprisingly, they aren't likely to have many successful relationships.

Finally, you can calm down inside. This means not just controlling your outward behavior, but also controlling your internal responses, taking steps to lower your heart rate, calm yourself down, and let the feelings subside.

## **Anger Management - Tips & Techniques**

The goal of anger management is to reduce both your emotional feelings and the physiological arousal that anger causes. You can't get rid of, or avoid, the things or the people that enrage you, nor can you change them, but you can learn to control your reactions.

Some people really are more "hotheaded" than others are; they get angry more easily and more intensely than the average person does. There are also those who don't show their anger in loud spectacular ways but are chronically irritable and grumpy. Easily angered people don't always curse and throw things; sometimes they withdraw socially, sulk, or get physically ill. They have low tolerance for frustration. They can't take things in stride, and they're particularly infuriated if the situation seems somehow unjust: for example, being corrected for a minor mistake.

## **Strategies to keep anger at bay**

Some simple steps that you can try to keep your anger at bay are mentioned below. you can try them to see how much they are helpful in your case.

- Breathe deeply, from your diaphragm; breathing from your chest won't relax you. Picture your breath coming up from your "gut."
- Slowly repeat a calm word or phrase such as "relax," "take it easy." Repeat it to yourself while breathing deeply.
- Use imagery; visualize a relaxing experience, from either your memory or your imagination.
- Nonstrenuous, slow yoga-like exercises can relax your muscles and make you feel much calmer.
- Try replacing exaggerated & overly dramatic thoughts with more rational ones. For instance, instead of telling yourself, "oh, it's awful, it's terrible, everything's ruined, and "tell yourself," it's frustrating, and it's understandable that I'm upset about it, but it's not the end of the world and getting angry is not going to fix it anyhow."
- Be careful of words like "never" or "always" when talking about yourself or someone else. This shows there's no way to solve the problem. It can also alienate and humiliate people who might otherwise be willing to work with you on a solution.
- Remind yourself that getting angry is not going to fix anything, that it won't make you feel better (and may actually make you feel worse).

- Logic defeats anger, because anger, even when it's justified, can quickly become irrational. So use cold hard logic on yourself. Remind yourself that the world is "not out to get you," you're just experiencing some of the rough spots of daily life.

- Do not focus on finding the solution to the problem, but rather on how you handle and face the problem.

- Make a plan, and check your progress along the way. Resolve to give it your best, but also not to punish yourself if an answer doesn't come right away.

- Angry people tend to jump to and act on conclusions, and some of those conclusions can be very inaccurate. The first thing to do if you're in a heated discussion is slow down and think through your responses. Don't say the first thing that comes into your head, but slow down and think carefully about what you want to say. At the same time, listen carefully to what the other person is saying and take your time before answering.

- Timing: If you and your spouse tend to fight when you discuss things at night - perhaps you're tired, or distracted, or maybe it's just habit - try changing the times when you talk about important matters so these talks don't turn into arguments.

- Avoidance: If your child's chaotic room makes you furious every time you walk by it, shut the door. Don't make yourself look at what infuriates you. Don't say, "well, my child should clean up the room so I won't have to be angry!" That's not the point. The point is to keep yourself calm.

- Finding alternatives: If your daily commute through traffic leaves you in a state of rage and frustration, give yourself a project? learn or map out a different route, one that's less congested or more scenic. Or find another alternative, such as a bus or commuter train.

- "Silly humor" can help defuse rage in a number of ways. For one thing, it can help you get a more balanced perspective.

## **Coping with Anger**

- Monitoring your cynical thoughts by maintaining a "hostility log." This will teach you about the frequency and kinds of situations that provoke you.

- Acknowledge any problems in coping with anger.

- Seek the support of important people in your life in coping with your feelings and in changing your behavior patterns.

- By keeping your hostility log you are able to realize when and where you are having aggressive thoughts, so that when you find yourself in these situations, you can utilize such techniques as deep breathing, positive self-talk, or thought stopping, which can help you interrupt the anger cycle.

- Put yourself in the other person's shoes. This will help you gain a different perspective. Keep in mind that we are all humans, subject to making mistakes.

- Learn how to laugh at yourself and see humor in situations.

- Learn how to relax. Although you may have heard that expressing anger is better than keeping it in,

remember that frequent outbursts of anger are often counter-productive and may alienate others.

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It is also important that you practice trusting other people. It's usually easier to be angry than to trust, so by learning how to trust others you are less likely to direct your anger at them.

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Good listening skills improve communication and can facilitate trusting feelings between people. This trust can help you deal with potentially hostile emotions; reducing and possibly eliminating them.

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Learn how to assert yourself. This is a constructive alternative to aggression. When you find yourself angry at another person, try to explain to them what is bothering you about their behavior and why. It takes more words and work to be assertive than it does to let your anger show, but the rewards are worth it.

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If you live each day as if it were your last, you will realize that life is too short to get angry over everything.

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The final step requires forgiving those who have angered you. By letting go of the resentment and relinquishing the goal of retribution, you'll find the weight of anger lifted from your shoulders.