



MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION RESOURCE CENTRE MANITOBA

Tips for Wellness | Understanding Anger

Anger is a normal and necessary emotion which is so often is associated with violence, conflicts or fights. This is especially true if we have grown up in a home where anger was expressed or acted out in negative or hurtful ways. Exposure to uncontrolled expressions of anger over time can lead to over anxiousness and even depression.

Anger is neither good nor bad. It is just one of a range of emotions that communicates to us that something is amiss. If handled appropriately, anger will motivate us to make a change – perhaps to address an injustice or to set a boundary between ourselves and someone who has wronged or hurt us. Anger wakes us up and signals a warning to be aware of danger.

Some people have learned to repress or deny angry feelings early on life because anger is experienced as wrong and unsafe. Anger that is consistently repressed and turned inward can contribute to depression. Alternately, anger that is expressed loudly and aggressively leads to a cycle of anger, remorse, shame and, ultimately, amplified feelings of anger.

Recognizing early signs of anger, which usually start as annoyance or frustration, will help us to tackle problems before they reach a boiling point. We can learn skills to either express our anger in a healthy way or to access buried anger as fuel for making positive changes.



Physical Symptoms of Anger May Include:

- Increased heart rate, blood pressure and adrenalin production
- Breathing faster, pounding heart, hot, flushed face, and headache
- Tensing of the shoulders, hands, jaw or stomach

Understanding Your Anger:

It is helpful to understand the reasons why you are angry. Perhaps as a child it seemed normal when others were violent. Some people who have experienced trauma or high stress may become angry more quickly. Others may not have learned to understand or express their emotions, so they use anger to cover up what they are truly feeling, such as fear or disappointment.

- Be more aware of your emotions. Is it really anger you are feeling or are you using anger to cover how you really feel?
- Let go of your need to control. Learn to listen to others with more patience and tolerance, consciously looking for agreement and compromise.
- Manage your anger triggers. Identify the people, places or situations that trigger your anger and find ways to avoid or manage them more effectively.
- Know your warning signs. Identify how your body feels anger, and look out for those early signs.
- Have a cool-down plan. Find techniques that work to cool you down quickly. Slow, deep breathing or counting, or going for a walk are some suggestions.

Ten Tips for Dealing with Anger:

1. Think before you speak

In the heat of the moment, it's easy to say something you'll later regret. Take a few moments to collect your thoughts before saying anything — and allow others involved in the situation to do the same.

2. Once you are calm, express your anger

As soon as you're thinking clearly, express your frustration in an assertive but non-confrontational way. State your concerns and needs clearly and directly, without hurting others or trying to control them.

3. Get some exercise

Physical activity can help reduce stress that can cause you to become angry. If you feel your anger escalating, go for a brisk walk or run, or spend some time doing other enjoyable physical activities.

4. Take a timeout

Timeouts aren't just for kids. Give yourself short breaks during times of the day that tend to be stressful. A few moments of quiet time might help you feel better prepared to handle what's ahead without getting irritated or angry.

5. Identify possible solutions

Instead of focusing on what made you mad, work on resolving the issue at hand. Does your child's messy room drive you crazy? Close the door. Is your partner late for dinner every night? Schedule meals later in the evening — or agree to eat on your own a few times a week. Remind yourself that anger won't fix anything and might only make it worse.

6. Stick with 'I' statements

To avoid criticizing or placing blame — which might only increase tension — use "I" statements to describe the problem. Be respectful and specific. For example, say, "I'm upset that you left the table without offering to help with the dishes" instead of "You never do any housework."



7. Don't hold a grudge

Forgiveness is a powerful tool. If you allow anger and other negative feelings to crowd out positive feelings, you might find yourself swallowed up by your own bitterness or sense of injustice. But if you can forgive someone who angered you, you might both learn from the situation and strengthen your relationship.

8. Use humor to release tension

Lightening up can help diffuse tension. Use humor to help you face what's making you angry and, possibly, any unrealistic expectations you have for how things should go. Avoid sarcasm, though — it can hurt feelings and make things worse.

9. Practice relaxation skills

When your temper flares, put relaxation skills to work. Practice deep-breathing exercises, imagine a relaxing scene, or repeat a calming word or phrase, such as "Take it easy." You might also listen to music, write in a journal or do a few yoga poses — whatever it takes to encourage relaxation.

10. Know when to seek help

Learning to control anger is a challenge for everyone at times. Seek help for anger issues if your anger seems out of control, causes you to do things you regret or hurts those around you.*

*10 Tips: from Mayo Clinic-online

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/anger-management>

The ANGER & AGRESSION WORKBOOK | Self-assessments, exercises & educational handouts, John J. Liptak, Ester A. Leutenberg, 2007

EMOTIONS! MAKING SENSE OF YOUR FEELINGS

Mary Lamia, 2012

THE DIALECTICAL BEHAVIOR THERAPY SKILLS WORKBOOK FOR ANGER

Using DBT mindfulness and emotion regulation skills to manage anger, Alexander L. Chapman, Kim L. Gratz, 2015

Resources in Community

MSS, PEER TO PEER SUPPORT | 204-786-1616

SENECA WARM LINE | 204-942-9276

<http://www.adam.mb.ca/counselling-resources>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/therapists/anger-management/manitoba>