

Managing Our Own Anger

Four Basic Ways to React to Anger

1. Acknowledge your emotions and deal with them effectively.
2. Repress your feelings, refuse to admit you are angry, or turn your anger inward and beat yourself up.
3. Use anger to mobilize your energy to react in creative and constructive ways, correct a situation, and increase your self-esteem
4. Lash out at others and intimidate them.

Healthy Anger Management Techniques

Physically:

1. Exercise—walk, cycle, jog, ride a bicycle, dance, etc.
2. Get out in nature.
3. Eat properly and get more rest.
4. Use relaxation methods such as deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, and meditation.
5. Play or listen to music.
6. Listen to a relaxation tape.
7. Get a massage, facial, manicure, pedicure, etc.
8. Get away from the other person or the situation for the time being.
9. Go off alone to cool down. Play a game, watch a funny video, or read a funny or inspiring book.
10. Take a vacation or mini-vacation.
11. Distract yourself with pleasurable events or hobbies.

Socially:

1. Spend time with family and/or close friends.
2. Talk with a counselor.
3. Attend a self-help group or support group.
4. Keep communication lines open to help avoid out of control anger.

Emotionally:

1. Write in a journal about the upsetting experience. Getting your thoughts on paper often helps you see the situation more clearly.
2. Take time to process your feelings before taking further action.
3. Find humor in situations to discharge the strong intensity building up.
4. Stop negative and self-angering thoughts.
5. Set boundaries with others.
6. Allow yourself to brood about the incident for a limited time only. When that time is up, put the incident aside.
7. Share feelings: "I feel ____ when you ____."
8. Confront the other person when appropriate.

Intellectually:

1. Develop a more realistic and mature set of expectations so you won't be so upset when things don't go smoothly. Stop thinking the world revolves around you. Why should things have to be the way you want them?
2. Ignore matters that aren't worth the investment of anger. Ask yourself what really matters.
3. Identify how and when your anger surfaces to help eliminate or minimize anger-producing stimuli.
4. Watch your reactions to anger, feelings, and thoughts to learn about yourself instead of blowing up.
5. Problem solve the situation instead of blowing up.
6. Reinterpret the situation in a more positive light. Shift your perspective.
7. Focus on the things about the situation you can control, and don't worry about the things you can't change.
8. Read information on anger management.
9. Look for your part in creating the problem so you can admit it to the other person.
10. Take constructive action. Address the problem as one to be solved.

Spiritually:

1. Pray or meditate.
2. Read and meditate on scripture.
3. Talk with a counselor or spiritual guide.

Unhealthy Anger Management Techniques

Directing Anger Inwardly

1. Running away and not dealing with the problem.
2. Ignoring the problem and not confronting the person
3. Allowing irritability to build up and dwelling on what made you angry and other negative thoughts.
4. Withdrawing and giving others the silent treatment.
5. Denying anger and stuffing your feelings.
6. Pushing your body to fatigue
7. Using alcohol, drugs, food, shopping, excessive work, or excessive TV watching to medicate yourself or calm yourself down.
8. Beating yourself up verbally (calling yourself names, etc.) or cutting or burning yourself.
9. Holding grudges against others.
10. Turning anger inward and becoming depressed.

Directing Anger Outwardly

1. Physically assaulting others.(Ventilation or outbursts of rage pump up the emotional brain's arousal, leaving people feeling more angry, not less.)
2. Verbally abusing or threatening others.
3. Displacing your anger on weaker people or animals instead of addressing it directly.
4. Displacing anger on things—breaking or throwing things.
5. Criticizing others and ignoring your part of the problem.
6. Using your anger to manipulate others.
7. Cursing and calling people names.
8. Using sarcasm or ridicule in a negative way to put someone down.
9. Maintaining an irritable mood and bad attitude.
10. Venting anger at one person by badmouthing him/her to another person.

Expressing Anger Effectively

For people who tend to repress their anger, the specific situation that unleashes their attack is a result of an extended period of stored rage, sometimes even from childhood.

Voicing or expressing anger is more productive. To do that effectively, you must define what is bothering you and be willing to help solve the problem.

1. Watch for early signs of imbalance such as impatience, irritability, resentment, or hostility. Then take steps to restore balance before things get worse.
2. Deal with issues in a timely manner. Don't put off working them out.
3. Pay attention to the bodily sensations associated with anger so that you can stop and consider what to do next instead of automatically striking out. If you don't respond immediately, you can replace your initial reactions with more rational thoughts.
4. Try to determine the emotions behind your anger so you can deal with the real issue and confront it appropriately, such as making a polite but assertive request.
5. Ask yourself how important the current situation really is. Often anger is over trivial matters. Pick your battles.
6. Wait until you are calm to talk to the person involved. Ask questions:
 - What happened?
 - How can we prevent it from happening again?

Establish the positive intent in terms of your own reactions, and allow yourself to see the positive intent in the reactions of other people. Show that you want solutions, not revenge.

5. Phrase your conversation in terms of your own feelings. Instead of saying, "You made me angry," say one of the following:

I am angry.

I am angry about what you did.

I am angry that you laughed when I told you something that matters to me.

I am angry that you said you would do this and you haven't.

6. If you find yourself getting out of control, leave or end the conversation at once. You can say:

I am getting very angry. I need to end this conversation before I say or do something I'll regret.

or

I'm feeling angry at this point, so let's take a break and get back together at (suggest a time). I think we can discuss it more calmly then.

7. When you have completed expressing yourself, say a genuine thank you.
8. Reward yourself for working to break destructive patterns.
9. Accept responsibility for your feelings. If anger is a big problem for you, work on Anger Management Exercises.

After we have been angry in a healthy way, we have more energy and we enlighten ourselves and the person we are talking to. They get accurate information about something that matters to us, and they might change their behavior in response. Even if they don't, just the act of talking about our concerns allows you to release your anger.

Anger Management Exercises

1. For the next two weeks, keep a list of every time you get angry. In this list include:
- The event that made you angry.
 - Your beliefs about the other person's opinion of you in that situation.
 - Relevant aspects of the situation.
 - The beliefs about yourself that the event triggered.
2. Make a list of the people and circumstances that provoke your anger. Then list specific characteristics of these people and situations that provoke anger in you.
3. Anticipate anger-provoking situations and make plans to deal with them before they happen. Think about what you will say, and rehearse the conversation with someone.
4. Select a phrase that you can say to yourself over and over again to help you calm down.

I choose not to be angry.

I will get through this.

I'm in charge here, not my anger.

I'll chill out and take care of myself.

I forgive myself for being angry, and I let it go.

Dealing With Anger When Even Expressing It in a Constructive Way Isn't Appropriate

Sometimes dealing with anger, even in a constructive way, is not appropriate, such as in:

- A staff meeting.
- A client meeting.
- Relationship conflicts when you know the other person is not prepared to be reasonable.

1. Take a mental time-out, even if you cannot physically leave the room at the time.

- Mentally tell yourself, "I'm beginning to feel angry, and I want to take a time-out!"
- Take a deep breath and give yourself positive self-statements.
- Stay calm, and later think out your situation and decide how you'll address it in a constructive manner.

2. If you can physically remove yourself for a period of time, do so to give your body time to cool down and relax.

- Don't think about the anger situation.
- Relax and discharge some of your anger by doing something else.
- Take a walk, jog, read, clean something, or watch television.
- Don't use drugs.
- Call a friend to talk about the problem.

3. Some situations are too volatile to deal with even after a short break. Take as long as you need until you have confidence that you can handle and manage the situation in a productive way.

For information on Anger Management Classes or Coaching, contact:

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