

ANGER MANAGEMENT FACT SHEET

Anger is a completely normal, usually healthy, human emotion. When anger gets out of control, it can lead to problems at work, in your personal relationships and in the overall quality of your life.

Like other emotions, anger is accompanied by physiological and biological changes. When you feel angry, your heart rate and blood pressure go up, as does the level of your energy hormones.

Anger can be caused by both external and internal events. You could be angry with a specific person (such as a coworker or supervisor) or at an event (a traffic jam or a canceled flight), or your anger could be caused by worrying about personal problems.

Some people really are more "hotheaded" than others are; they get angry more easily and more intensely than the average person does. Others are chronically irritable and grumpy. Easily angered people don't always curse and throw things; sometimes they withdraw, sulk or get physically ill.

Express Your Angry Feelings in a Positive Way

You can't get rid of, or avoid things or people that enrage you, nor can you change them, but you can learn to control your emotions. The three main approaches are expressing, suppressing and calming.

1. Expressing your angry feelings in an assertive -not aggressive-manner is the healthiest way to express anger. 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.
2. Suppressing anger and redirecting it. Stop thinking about it and focus on something positive. The danger in this type of response is that your anger can turn inward-which may cause hypertension, high blood pressure or depression.
3. Calming yourself down inside. This means controlling your outward behavior, controlling your internal responses, taking steps to lower your heart rate, and let the feelings subside.

Tips for Controlling Your Anger

Relaxation

Practice these techniques and learn to use them when you're in a tense situation.

Breathe deeply.

Slowly repeat a word or phrase such as "relax," or "take it easy" as you deep breathe.

Visualize a relaxing experience

Try non-strenuous, slow yoga-like exercises to relax your muscles.

Change the Way You Think

Angry people tend to curse, swear or speak in highly colorful terms that reflect their inner thoughts.

Replace irrational thoughts with more rational ones. For instance, instead of telling yourself, "Oh, it's awful, everything's ruined, " tell yourself, "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."

Learn to Problem Solve

Sometimes anger and frustration are caused by unavoidable problems in our lives. Not all anger is misplaced. Often it's a healthy, natural response to difficulties. There is a belief that every problem has a solution. It adds to our frustration to find out that this isn't always the case. It may be better to think about coping with the problem.

Try to Communicate Better

Angry people tend to jump to and act on conclusions. The first thing to do, if you're in a heated discussion, is to slow down. Don't say the first thing that comes into your head. Listen carefully to what the other person is saying and take your time before answering.

Change Your Environment

Sometimes our immediate surroundings give us cause for irritation. Problems and responsibilities can weigh on you and make you feel "trapped. Give yourself a break. Make sure you have some "personal time" scheduled for times that you know are particularly stressful.

Timing: If you and your spouse tend to fight at night (perhaps you' re tired, or distracted, or maybe it's just habit) try changing the times when you talk about important matters.

Avoidance: If your child's chaotic room makes you furious every time you walk by it, shut the door.

Finding Alternatives: If your daily commute through traffic leaves you in a state of frustration, learn or map out a different route, one that's less congested or more scenic, or find another alternative, such as a bus.

Remember, you can't eliminate anger -and it wouldn't be good if you could. Life will always be filled with frustration, pain, loss and the unpredictable actions of others. You can't change that; but can change the way you let such events affect you.

Do You Need Counseling?

If you feel that your anger is out of control and having an impact on your relationships, you might consider counseling. A licensed mental health professional can work with you in developing a range of techniques for changing your thinking and your behavior.

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