

ANGER

Is it Okay to be Angry?

Becoming angry is a normal emotion that involves a combination of physiological changes, mental responses, and expressive behaviours. Depending on how anger is managed, it is an emotion that can have either positive (productive) or negative (destructive) effects on ourselves and others.

Productive and Destructive Functions of Anger

Productive: Anger can be helpful in that it can...

- provide us with energy through adrenaline and blood supply increases to arms, legs and head to take flight or fight against threats to our safety
- serve as a cue that something needs our full attention or needs to be resolved. It may be a signal that something unsafe is happening
- motivate us, if channeled properly, to take charge of a situation or complete difficult tasks
- help us to express tension and negative feelings to others to help resolve conflicts.

Destructive: Anger can be harmful to ourselves and others ...

- when it is used to intimidate or control others
- when it is too frequent or too intense; or, if used as a way to avoid dealing with our other emotions
- when it leads to aggressive behaviour, such as taking our anger out on other people or something
- when it leaves a negative impression on others, such as contempt, fear, avoidance or resentment
- when it is expressed in a way that disturbs work and/or relationships or leads to police intervention
- as it disrupts our thoughts and actions. It is harder to think clearly if angry, and it may lead to acting impulsively without considering the consequences of our behaviour.

How to Manage Anger

The most important step is to recognize that each of us is responsible for how we express our angry feelings. Anger is not caused by anything outside of ourselves. Anger is a response that we make to an event, that is based on our view of that event or situation. We are not victims of our environment. We have the kind of intelligence that allows us to manage our own responses to situations that are not in our control.

The behaviour of others is something that we cannot control. But, how can you manage anger? After accepting responsibility for your angry feelings, you need to become aware of what you do with your angry feelings.

Typical Ways People Deal With Anger

“Stuff it” (also known as Passive): The person basically swallows their anger and holds it inside. Stuffers usually become depressed or withdrawn, or in some cases feel physically ill. This approach avoids conflicts, but the result is often unmet needs and lowered self-esteem

“Hide it” (also known as Passive-Aggressive): The person stuffs their anger and then makes sarcastic comments or seeks revenge at a later point. This approach results again in unmet needs,

unresolved conflicts and increased resentments.

“Vent it” (also known as Aggressive): The person throws their anger at others like an exploding volcano. Usually the person blames others for their anger (you made me angry! it’s your fault!). This approach is usually abusive to others and in some cases may lead to violence that could result in the loss of relationships and/or employment, and in some cases lead to criminal charges.

“Direct it” (also known as Assertive): the person speaks directly to another person and states the **Facts** of the situation (When this happened...), their **Feelings** (I felt...), and makes a **Fair Request** as to how to resolve the conflict (I would prefer that...). The result is that anger is expressed, and often mutually agreeable solutions are reached to resolve a conflict. When this approach is used it places ownership on the person to manage their own anger. It also causes the person to search for a better understanding of how they feel; often other feelings are present besides anger. Anger is often a secondary emotion, which stems from primary emotions such as fear, rejection, guilt, shame, pain, frustration, sadness, powerless or hurt. Knowing how you currently manage anger allows you to better determine whether you need to make changes to direct your anger in an assertive manner using the Facts, Feelings, and Fair Request formula.

Other Techniques to Manage Anger

- 1) Remember it is your choice & responsibility to manage anger
- 2) Become aware of events/ situations that act as anger triggers
- 3) Use time outs or cool downs to calm yourself before trying to talk about something that upsets or angers you.
- 4) Become aware of your anger body cues such as: stomach butterflies, clenched fists/teeth, tense neck, sweating, heart rate increase, headache, faster breathing, pounding head etc. Can head off a blow -up by being aware
- 5) Become aware of thinking Talk Ups that increase your anger such as “I hate this!” “This is going to stop!” Swearing etc. Calm your thoughts with Talk Downs such as “Relax”, “Stay Calm”.
- 6) Stay away from alcohol and drugs to cope or to talk about angry feelings. This usually escalates the problem.

