

Managing My Anger



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How often do you get irritated? Do you become frustrated on a daily basis? Do you find yourself overreacting to minor or petty difficulties? Do you often have a bad day? Would you say that you are good with managing your anger?

Who is prone to getting angry?

You are as well as others have the potential of becoming angry! When you are feeling ill, hungry, fatigued, harried, overwhelmed and worried, and if you believe that becoming angry is normal and okay, then the chances of getting angry increases!

What about you? What are your present circumstances and how is your state of mind? Are you likely to become angry?

Good Anger Managers



Those that are effective anger managers tend to be calm and relaxed; and know how to defuse, and unwind quickly...They also know how to think positively, believe they are in control of their actions, behaviors, thoughts and moods, and can handle difficult situations. Does this describe you or a friend?

Photo Credit: The Web site of the National Cancer Institute (<http://visualsonline.cancer.gov/details.cfm?imageid=8890>)

What is Anger?

Anger is a common feeling, thought and behavior. It is not so much the feeling or the thought that is the trouble- it is *what we do when we are angry that is the issue!*



**Remember that anger may be reduced
but not eliminated!**

**How many options and choices do you give yourself when you are experiencing anger?
Do you have several ways to control your angry feelings, cynical thinking and aggressive
behaviors? Do they work? Do you use them regularly?**

**Here is an opportunity for you to develop and learn new ways to cope with your
anger!**

Are you ready?

Here are some proven strategies for managing your anger. Read on, try them out and practice these techniques!

Laugh



It is hard to laugh and feel, think and act angry at the same time! Use your sense of humor in this situation! Find the comical and humorous aspect of the situation... And most importantly laugh at and with yourself! When was the last time you used your humor to defuse your anger? Try it today...



Cool off & Chill Out "Lose not thy coolth"



If and when your anger system is mobilized, you need to slow down and put the brakes on your anger... Cooling off is critical and important! Overreacting, blowing up and lashing out usually only makes your anger worse, and may harm others, the situation and as well as yourself!

**Remember the Biblical quote-
A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps
himself under control. Proverbs 29:11**

You need several effective and positive ways to unwind, de-stress, and to reduce your anger arousal system. Cooling off offers you the opportunity to do so. Here are a variety of chilling techniques.

Consider some vigorous physical activity- running, cycling, aerobics, or sports as an outlet for your anger reduction...

Exercising is a great way to burn off negative energy and anger and to get back into balance... Even a less intense activity such as walking may help!



Photo Credit: The Web site of the National Cancer Institute (<http://visualsonline.cancer.gov/details.cfm?imageid=2111>)

Think of and engage in some type of exercise when you feel angry. This physical activity can be a good outlet!



Perhaps taking a few minutes to breath may defuse your anger...Take some slow, deep breaths... Slow down your body and your responses. Try using a muscle relaxation technique. Allow all that tension and your frustrations to slide away... Consider moving slower, talking slower... Breathe and relax...

Recall the passage from Proverbs:

*"A soft answer turns away wrath, but
angry words stir up trouble."*

Consider a Time Out! Perhaps you need a few minutes to decompress, wind down and to regroup. Give yourself the time to calm down and to cool off. Distancing until you calm down usually helps! Later you may return when you are composed and thinking clearly.

Often giving yourself a few minutes when you go from one intense activity - such as work, to another busy active place like home, may help ease the transition and gives you time to unwind and prepare for the next challenge. Try it!



Photo Credit: The Web site of the National Cancer Institute
(<http://visualsonline.cancer.gov/details.cfm?imageid=>

Distract

As you probably know, the more that you focus on your anger, and dwell upon it, the angrier you often remain! Your anger is also apt to stick around longer when you hold onto and keep it. So consider some strategies to distract yourself from your anger! This may involve using some positive and pleasant distracters such as reading, listening to music, engaging in a hobby, or watching TV.



Photo Credit: CDC, Amanda Mills

Consider focusing on an upcoming positive activity, or recalling a joyous moment!



"I merely took the energy it takes to point and wrote some blues....."

Duke Ellington

The key is to change your focus... How about thinking about something else! Or focus on a particular object in the room, or another focal point such as a visual image, a word or a tune...Remember that distracting yourself from your anger may help you defuse it before you react poorly or impulsively!



Reason

Typically anger may begin when you talk to yourself. Your self talk may actually exacerbate your anger by increasing your negative feelings, and compounding your hostile and cynical thoughts which then fuels more anger responses. Reflect on how you think, feel, and what you do when you are caught in traffic, a slow moving line, or are waiting for someone who is late...



"I'm the one in control and can think this through"

Now you have an opportunity to do something different and constructive. Take 10 seconds and allow yourself to take in several slow deep breaths... You are now setting the stage for you to review and reason about your anger.



**“He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty”
Proverbs 29:11**

You may now ask yourself three questions that often help to reason with and to defuse your anger-

- 1. Is this really important enough to get angry about?**
- 2. Am I justified in getting angry?**
- 3. Is getting angry likely to make any real difference?**

Give yourself time to really mull over all the possible answers to these questions says Dr. Redford Williams, author of *Anger Kills*. He suggests that the answer to question one (Is it really important enough to get angry about) is often that it is not worth sweating the small stuff, and that most everything is small stuff! Think about it...

Is all this anger really, really worth it to your system? Perhaps saying to yourself that it is just not worth it to get so angry may help... Or getting mad will not help... Perhaps even dropping it now may benefit you!



On question two (Am I justified in getting angry), ask yourself for the evidence and facts for your so-called anger justification. Are you possibly jumping to conclusions? Are your expectations out of whack? Could this be triggered by something from your past? Is it possible that the others involved may have a good reason(s)?

"Anger is never without a reason, but seldom with a good one."

You then have the chance to talk to yourself with this new and additional information. Often we may use words such as *never, always, or should* self-talk statements that tend to keep us angry. Remember what the Psychologist Dr. Lazarus has said- "Should and should nots – the more you have, the angrier you will be." Consider deleting the *shoulds, oughts, and musts* from your vocabulary and your self-talk... See what a difference it makes with your moods, thoughts, behaviors, and relationships!



You may wish to counter or debate your overly generalizing and negative self talk! Consider how you may alter your self-talk... Can you change and modify what you are saying so that you are not so angry? What may you say that will help you? Perhaps something like:

- *I'll stay rational*
- *Some situations do not have good answers*
- *I can stay cool and calm*
- *I will use some other positive coping self-statement(s)*

As for question number three (Will getting angry make any real difference?), Dr. Williams suggests that you ask yourself this question: Does throwing a tantrum or blowing up really help with the outcome? Most people are aware that angry reactions and behaviors serve to maintain the anger - that is to keep you feeling angry and thinking anger. Usually getting mad does not solve the problem. Remember that you can cope with the hassle. Consider some good alternatives to getting angry:

Let Go

“No need to get bent out of shape over this, just relax and let go”

Sometimes the best option for you may be to let go of your anger. You may elect to move on and release the feeling. Consider proceeding without the anger baggage weighing you down - and holding you back. Often going on is the best way to deal with the past! How can you let the anger dissipate now? Perhaps consider the possibility of forgiving as well!



“To be wronged is nothing unless you remember it”

Anger Mistakes

We may have been taught or learned many ineffective, poor and inappropriate ways to deal with our anger. We may have used them growing up, and continue to use

them as an adult... This list is not exhaustive but includes the following blunders, myths and slips, which often lead to more anger-

- **Venting and letting it all hang out is the way to deal with anger**
- **Seeing self as a victim and blaming others for it!**
- **Suppressing anger works**
- **Revenge fantasies are okay**
- **Silent treatment is a good strategy**
- **Thinking angry thoughts is better than blowing up**



These common mistakes have unfortunately been passed down within families and in our culture as suitable means to manage anger. Yet they serve to reinforce and maintain our anger. Is that your goal and intent to remain mad?

Consider whether or not you still endorse and engage in any of these mistaken beliefs and ineffective coping styles... Do you recognize your distorted beliefs and myths? Do they really work in reducing your anger?

Are you ready to let one or two of them go? Now may be a great time to change them!

“No matter what you learned as a child about anger, it is always possible to change how you deal with it today”

Dennis Daley

Let's review some additional strategies to reduce anger!

More Anger Tips



1. Consider developing and practicing new anger control skills! Give yourself some time and experience with it, in order to become a master with the new skill and technique...

2. Often it helps to try and see and understand a situation from another persons' perspective. We may misperceive or misinterpret a situation... Or even jump to conclusions! Look at how your thinking may contribute to the problem. Consider practicing some understanding of another persons' viewpoint...

3. Consider starting and using your own anger diary, log or journal. This log may help you identify the triggers, situations, thoughts and actions that affect your anger... Awareness is often a good first step to understanding some of your patterns! Then consider addressing your anger triggers and high risk situations with some possible problem solving strategies!



Photo Credit: The Web site of the National Cancer Institute
(<http://visualsonline.cancer.gov/details.cfm?imageid=8516>)

4. If you revert to an old angry bad habit, learn from the experience! Ask yourself what you can do differently and better the next time. Be prepared for the next opportunity. Apologize to others, forgive yourself, and move on!

5. Give yourself credit for the positive changes you have made! It may trying at times with making changes in your attitude and behavior, so congratulate and reward yourself for the positives to date!

6. Consider asking others whom you respect, how they constructively deal and control their anger...

7. Begin developing your own anger coping statements.

What are some positive words, phrases, quotes that you may use to help during potentially difficult times? Consider ones that may reduce your anger, help you to stop and reflect, and those that may reinforce your wise decisions! For example, Be patient in _ situations, This too shall pass when I cope, This is an isolated or unusual situation... I can manage this, There is no reason to get bent out of shape, It is not worth it to get angry.

8. Go on a Fantasy trip! When you find your anger temperature rising, consider daydreaming or going on a fantasy trip to a nice place... Select the beach, woods, mountains, or lake as your fantasy spot. Visit for a few minutes.



Anger Management Strategies - Key Points

- **Control your anger by relaxing and using stress reduction techniques.**
- **Find and use a variety of appropriate outlets and cooling off techniques such as exercising, chilling out, distracting, humor, letting go...**
- **Dumping, stuffing and tantruming are not effective anger control strategies.**
- **Time outs are an excellent way to distance yourself until you are calmer...**
- **How you interpret and what you say to yourself are important strategies for anger control. Remember you can debate and modify your self- talk!**
- **Think and reason before responding! Straighten out, and untwist your thinking before you speak and act...**
- **Keep practicing and developing new anger management skills. It is never too late to learn new helpful strategies...**