

# CONTROLLING YOUR ANGER BEFORE IT CONTROLS YOU!

## Myths About Anger

**Myth 1:** *Aggression is the instinctive way of expressing anger.*

REALITY: Aggression is a learned behavior, acted out by individuals who have poor impulse control and have gotten away with it in the past.

**Myth 2:** *Expressing anger releases and gets rid of it.*

REALITY: This is not necessarily true. Constantly venting your anger every time you get upset can actually increase hostility.

**Myth 3:** *Tantrums in childhood are healthy expressions of anger.*

REALITY: Tantrums are a way of controlling parents, and they reinforce the habit of demanding immediate gratification.

**Myth 4:** *You should always express what you feel, including rage and hostility.*

REALITY: It is but not always beneficial to say what you feel. It is important to express your feelings in a considerate and respectful manner, not in thoughtless or destructive ways. In other words, think before you speak or you may blindly hurt someone simply to relieve your anger.



## Why learn to manage your anger?

1. Chronic anger is a strain on your cardiovascular system and can lead to heart disease, heart attack and stroke.
2. Anger doesn't solve problems. By learning to control your anger and channel it into positive coping skills, you will help resolve the problem rather than make it worse.
3. Being more positive and less angry about life and other people will make you a happier person.

## MANAGING ANGER

### 1. Keep a "rage log"

How often during the day do you engage in aggressive actions such as slamming doors, honking your horn, yelling at other motorists, or barking at sales people? How often do you provoke people to yell, scream, or honk their horns at you?

How often do you have negative thoughts about other people? "What a jerk she is!" "I'd like to punch him!" "Why don't these morons move faster!"

How often do you blow your cool? Do you shout angrily, fantasize about physically assaulting someone, or even explicitly threaten violence? How often do you find yourself frowning, impatient, irritable, in a hurry, gritting your teeth?

Take an honest look at your hostility level. Even if you think it is everybody else's fault, make note of the frequency and intensity of your rage.

Once you have kept your rage log for a week or so, you may see that you are angry more often than you thought or you may see a pattern to your anger. This gives you the chance to deal better with your anger and to resolve some of the issues that are keeping you angry.

## **2. Talk to yourself.**

Make a promise with yourself to try to delay getting angry. Don't you have better ways to spend your time than being angry?

Many situations are not worth getting angry over. Your time and your health are much too valuable.

Don't jump to conclusions about the motives of the person who is annoying you. The person who is not moving through the traffic light on schedule is not deliberately trying to keep you from getting to work on time and is probably not a stupid idiot either. He or she is probably just tired and momentarily distracted. Besides, you are probably not going to be late anyway.

## **3. Cool It!**

When you become aware of hostile thoughts or attitudes, tell yourself to "Stop!" or "Cool it!" telling yourself to stop being angry interrupts your anger program, decreasing the chance that you will become angry.

## **4. Distract yourself.**

When you see that you really have created a 'tempest in a teapot', then back off from the situation and find some way to distract yourself. Listen to the radio when you are trapped in traffic or read a book when your plane is late. This will take your mind off of a situation you can't change.

## **5. Decide what you can do about the situation; then do it and let the anger go.**

If whatever is making you angry is important, then do what you can to help change it and then get on with life. Holding on to anger after the event has passed just makes it all worse.

## **6. If you are chronically angry, take a look at yourself.**

Do you keep finding examples of situations where life is unfair? It isn't fair. Life's unfairness is not a new discovery. What's the point of continually getting mad about it? It's also true that some people are jerks. Why bother getting mad about that?

## **7. Avoid over-stimulation. Get plenty of rest and exercise.**

When you are always upset, you are more likely to feel and express hostility. Too little sleep, working under time limits, and too many items on your 'to do' list will keep you nervous and jumpy.

Also, give up or sharply cut back on sweets, caffeine, cigarettes, and alcohol. All of these contribute to overreactions to people and situations.

## **8. Learn to listen.**

Start listening. Don't jump to conclusions. Fight the urge to break in with your own comments. Try to learn something new by listening. Don't turn conversations into cross examinations.

## **9. Assume other people have good intentions.**

If you get angry a lot you probably don't trust other people. You assume the worst of them. Many times your evaluation of their motives may not be correct.

Try to accept other people as they are and not how you want them to be. Try to look at the situation from the other person's perspective.

## **10. Learn to laugh at yourself.**

Learn to laugh at yourself. We all do things that, in hindsight, are an over-reaction to something that is really a very trivial event. Laughing at ourselves helps to get rid of the anger and to keep the event in perspective.