

Anger

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Anger is a normal emotion. When anger gets out of control, it can cause serious problems for you and others. You need to express your anger in a healthy way.

Anger is often a **secondary emotion**, which means that feeling and expressing anger protects you from having to feel and express more vulnerable (primary) emotions such as sadness, fear, loss, embarrassment, emotional hurt or physical pain. Often the anger doesn't go away until the underlying primary emotion is addressed.

Acting out in an explosive way or keeping your feelings inside can cause health problems. Not expressing anger can lead to expressing your anger in other ways (depression, anxiety) unrelated to what actually triggered the anger (fear, frustration).

You may encounter a lot of little things every day that are annoying (computer trouble, undelivered newspaper or heavy traffic) but try to keep things in perspective. It's important to understand and control your anger. If you find you need help controlling your anger, see your health care provider.

Anger Symptoms

Signs of anger can include:

- using sarcasm
- being demanding or procrastinating
- being silent (not talking)
- taking revenge
- eating too much or too little
- being dishonest
- pouting or being disrespectful
- feeling guilt
- breaking the law or rules
- getting into physical and verbal fights
- abusing chemicals (alcohol, illegal drugs or prescription medicines).

Physical symptoms of anger include having a stomachache or headache, gritting your teeth, having muscle tightness or feeling dizzy. You may also feel anxious or feel like lashing out at yourself or others. Anger can lead to heart problems and high blood pressure.

Manage Your Anger

- Learn to recognize the exact behavior that triggered your anger.
- Choose a time to talk that is good for you and the other person. Maintain eye contact and a calm voice while talking.
- Remember to keep appropriate body language.
 - Use direct eye contact.
 - Establish an even eye level with the listener.
 - Maintain personal space.
- Use a firm voice and a moderate tone.
- Avoid blaming, attacking or bringing up other grievances.

(over)

- Use “I” statements: “I feel angry when...” instead of “you” statements: “You never...”
- Try to avoid using the words “always” and “never.”
- You can only control the way you respond, not the other person’s behavior.
- Put yourself in the other person’s shoes. Allow yourself to be “wrong” some of the time.
- Avoid statements and actions you may regret later.
- Don’t drag old issues into the conversation. Stick to the current topic.
- Check for possible compromises.
- Use positive self-talk: “I’m angry, but I can get on with my life or my job.”
- Know your limits. Get counseling if anger continues to be a big problem for you.

Do Relaxation Exercises

Use the following tense-and-release relaxation exercises.

- Find a comfortable position on the floor. Use pillows to support your head and legs.
- Keep all of your joints flexed and supported.
- Do not rest one body part on another.
- Take a deep breath and relax.
- Contract the muscles of your forehead. Release.
- Focus your eyes. Release.
- Clench your teeth. Release.
- Contract your jaw. Release.
- Draw your shoulders up toward your ears. Release.

- Make fists and straighten your elbows. Release
- Take a deep breath, expand your chest and hold. Release.
- Tighten your abdominal muscles. Release.
- Squeeze your buttocks together. Release.
- Tighten your pelvic muscles. Release.
- Tighten your thighs. Release.
- Tighten your calves. Release.
- Point your toes toward your nose. Release.
- Contract everything. Release.
- Let your entire body relax.
- Breathe deeply in a rhythm.
- Rest this way for a few minutes.
- Get up slowly and gently.

Live a Healthy Lifestyle

- Eat well-balanced meals. You may have little time to grab lunch but try to include healthful foods that are also quick and easy to eat on-the-go such as cut-up vegetables, a piece of fresh fruit or unflavored yogurt.
- Do not smoke or chew smokeless tobacco as this will increase your heart rate.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Exercise 3 to 5 times each week to release stored-up stress.
- Take a break. Sit back and take a few deep breaths. Think through your situation.
- Don’t worry about things you can’t change.