

Managing Your Anger

What Is Anger

Anger is a natural human emotion that prepares and enables us to attack a perceived threat. Anger is not a bad emotion, but we must learn to control it. Mismanaged anger is a major cause of conflict in relationships at home and at work. Violence –in the home, at work, and on the road – is the most severe consequence of mismanaged anger.

Controlling A Response

Although aggression is a natural response to the emotion of anger, society requires us to manage it. Many of us do not learn this well while growing up. As a result, anger is often mismanaged in response to life events. We then experience more harm from these events than they would otherwise cause. Fortunately, we can change the way we react to unpleasant events and gain control over anger and rage. Rage is an explosive, violent response to anger and is typically disproportionate to the distress of the precipitating event.

The Nature Of Anger

Anger can emerge from external stimuli or internal thoughts about things that we perceive as threats, whether real or imagined. Memories of traumatic events that caused rage when they originally occurred can also trigger angry feelings. Without life skills to manage anger, it is easy to feel powerless over it.

Getting A Grip On Anger

Most techniques for managing anger fall within three categories: suppression, expression, and intervention. Each has its unique benefits. Suppression is the practice of consciously inhibiting the expression of your anger. Expression entails talking about angry feelings without acting on them, to reduce their intensity. Intervention seeks to reduce anger by changing the way you think or react to anger-producing events.

Do You Need Help?

If you have a problem with anger, you probably already know it. You may:

- Respond to negative situations with uncontrollable rage
- Say or do things that frighten yourself and others
- Have physically hurt someone or come close to doing so
- Not trust yourself to act appropriately and control your temper
- Overuse suppression to prevent feeling anger, and as a result, risk an explosive response to an enraging event
- Experience unpleasant and unhealthy symptoms, such as racing heartbeat, sweating, nausea, headaches or high blood pressure
- Have been told that you are out of control, inappropriately angry, or “losing your temper” too easily

- Have had a run-in with the law or your workplace as a result of becoming angry
- Be experiencing relationship problems because others are uncomfortable or afraid of your anger

Feeling out of control is a sign that more help is needed.

Try This Intervention Tool

The following is a simple intervention tool to help you gain control over your anger in response to a recurring provocative event. Try it to see if it helps.

Instructions: Reproduce the anger management tool 10 times. Each time you experience the event that produces anger, fill out the sections of the tool. As time goes by, you may experience diminishing anger responses to the event.

First sign that I was angry	
What triggered it?	
How did I respond?	
What did I do well?	
What will I do better next time?	

What The EAP Can Do

If you are concerned about the way you manage anger, or have experienced difficulties in relationships at home or at work because of your anger, the EAP can help.

An EAP consultant will meet with you to discuss your experiences with anger, explore the course of angry responses to specific events, and ask how you have attempted to control your response to anger. The EAP will then help you decide what sources of help might work best for you.



This information is not intended to replace the medical advice of your doctor or healthcare provider. Please consult your health care provider or EAP for advice about a personal concern or medical condition.