



Anger

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

Anger is an emotion that ranges from slight irritation to intense rage. Uncontrolled anger can lead to problems in daily living causing strains on the body and on your relationships.

1.1.2 When Does Anger Become a Problem?

Anger creates problems in civilian life when it's too intense, happens too often, or leads to violent behavior. Intense and frequent anger strains the body, causing these health problems:

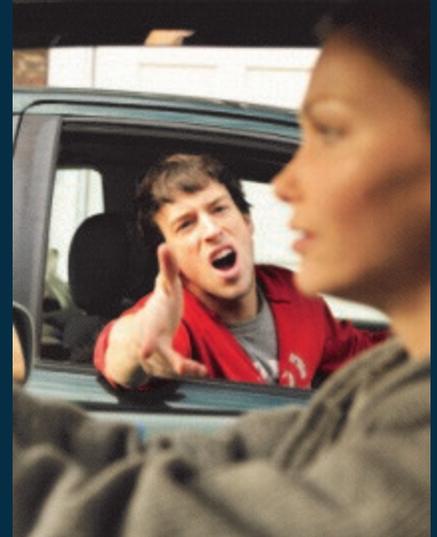
- High blood pressure
- Headaches
- Chronic pain
- Heart disease
- Muscle and joint pain
- Dental problems (from jaw clenching and teeth grinding)
- High cholesterol
- Weak immune system
- Stomach and digestive system problems
- Early death

Aggressive behavior can also cause problems in relationships and at work, producing feelings of shame, guilt, and regret. Left unchecked, anger which has turned into aggression often leads to:

- Frequent arguments
- Strained relationships and divorce
- Injury to self or others
- Domestic violence
- Child and pet abuse
- Work-related problems
- Legal and money problems
- Road rage and traffic tickets
- Jail or prison time

1.1.1 What is Anger?

Anger is an emotion. People get angry when they feel threatened, wronged, or powerless. Some people act impulsively, aggressively, or violently when they are angry. But you can **choose** to express your anger in a healthy way.



1.2 ANGER AND AGGRESSION

People confuse anger with aggression. Anger is an emotion. Aggression is a behavior. Someone can feel angry without behaving aggressively.

Aggressive behavior includes things like verbal threats or physical violence. Aggressive behavior tells people, "My feelings, thoughts, and beliefs are more important than yours." This often hurts relationships with family, friends, and co-workers.

Anger may turn into aggressive behavior unless you find healthy ways to deal with it.

1.2.1 Assertiveness

Assertiveness is also a type of *behavior*. But *assertive people work through their anger without getting aggressive*. Assertive behavior says, “my feelings, thoughts, and beliefs are important. But *your* feelings, thoughts, and beliefs are equally important.”

Assertiveness doesn't mean ignoring your own rights and feelings – that's called *passive behavior*. Assertiveness means standing up for your rights, while respecting the rights of others. Here's how an assertive response to anger differs from an aggressive response.

ANGER: Josie is upset that Karen borrowed her car and dented the bumper.

AGGRESSION: Josie screams at Karen.

ASSERTIVENESS: Josie tells Karen that she's upset but acknowledges the dent was an accident.

The two friends work out a plan to fix Karen's car.

1.2.2 The Pros and Cons Of Aggression

Aggressive behavior may have temporary pay-offs, including:

- Quickly-met demands, thanks to people's fear of verbal or physical threats.
- A feeling of respect from others when they give in to aggressive demands.
- The release of built-up physical or emotional tension.



But the long-term costs of aggression outweigh any short-term benefits. Strained or ruined relationships, property destruction, and legal trouble are all results of long-term aggression.

Example: A father regularly threatens his children to get them to obey. But over time the children begin to fear and dislike their father. The kids also begin to believe threatening behavior is appropriate. The father's short-term gain – obedient children – is nothing compared to the long-term negative impact of his behavior.

1.2.3 The Anger Meter

The Anger Meter makes you more aware of your anger. Crowds, noisy children, strangers acting rudely, or stress can all trigger anger. The Anger Meter pinpoints how these triggers affect anger levels. The Meter features a 0 to 10 scale. A "0" on the scale means calm. A "10" on the scale means rage and aggressive behavior.

1.2.3 The Anger Meter (cont.)

People don't score a "9" or "10" right away. Anger usually starts low and moves up the scale. Some people who hold in their anger may hold steady at a "3" or "4" for a long time, then suddenly spike to a "10."

A "10" on the scale is reserved for aggressive behavior that causes harm.

Example: Ed is at a party when someone spills his drink. The person apologizes, but Ed starts yelling and cursing. When Ed tries to pick a fight with the other partygoer, Ed's friends have to restrain him. Ed has reached a "10" on the Anger Meter scale. Ed's aggressive behavior led to strained relationships and the threat of legal problems.

Everyone's Anger Meter scores are different. In other words, a "5" for one person may be a "7" for someone else. For most, a score above "3" suggests they're less able to think clearly. If your anger level rises above "3," use an anger management tool to lower your anger.

Tip: Carry a copy of the Anger Meter with you so you can monitor your anger level when stressed. Be consistent when scoring how angry you feel.



1.2.4 The Aggression Cycle

1. The Escalation Phase: During the **escalation phase**, anger is building. Scores below "10" on the Anger Meter mean you're in the escalation phase. Even if your anger level is a "9," it's possible to get your anger under control. If not, you'll wind up in the explosion phase.

2. The Explosion Phase: In the **explosion phase**, you express anger with verbal or physical aggression. This may include cursing, breaking or hitting things, or fighting. Releasing anger explosively usually leads to negative results. The explosion phase scores a "10" on the Anger Meter.

3. The Post-Explosion Phase: The **post-explosion phase** is the result of the explosion phase. Post-explosion results include hurt partners or friends, struggles at work, legal problems, and feelings of guilt, shame, or regret.

**Preventing THE explosion PHASE
DEFEATS THE AGGRESSION CYCLE.**

1.2.4 The Aggression Cycle (cont.)

Managing your anger means avoiding the explosion phase. You can manage your anger by:

- Increasing your awareness of your anger **triggers**.
- Watching for cues, or warning signs, that your anger is building.
- Using the Anger Meter to monitor your anger levels.
- Being assertive instead of aggressive.
- Learning how to stop or reverse anger escalation.



1.2.5 What Triggers Anger?

- ▶ The way you **interpret** an event determines your emotional response.

Example: Steve and Bill are two drivers unable to pass a slower car. While Steve wants to get home after a long workday, he realizes he can't pass the slower car without creating a safety hazard. Steve chooses to relax by listening to his favorite talk show on his car radio.

Meanwhile, Bill gets impatient with the slower car. He assumes the slower driver lacks good driving skills. Bill tries to get the driver's attention by honking his horn, flashing his headlights, and screaming out his window. When the slower car doesn't respond, Bill screams even louder.

Steve and Bill interpreted the same event differently. Different **interpretations** led to different behaviors. Steve calmed down while enjoying a radio program. Bill's anger just got worse.

- ▶ Painful or angry memories can trigger anger.

Example: While sitting in a coffee shop, Beth sees someone who looks like a close friend seriously wounded in Iraq. Beth thinks back to the anger she felt seeing her friend in a hospital bed, and realizes she feels angry.

EXAMPLES OF ANGER TRIGGERS

- ▶ Long waits to see a doctor.
- ▶ Traffic jams.
- ▶ Persistent belief that your family or friends don't support you.
- ▶ Crowded places.
- ▶ Insensitive jokes made by others.
- ▶ Friends **NOT** repaying money they owe you.
- ▶ False accusations against you.
- ▶ Messy room or house left by your partner, kids, or friends.
- ▶ Neighbors playing the stereo too loud.
- ▶ Long waits for customer service while on the telephone.
- ▶ Rumors that are untrue or hurtful.
- ▶ Personal property that gets stolen or misplaced.

1.2.6 Anger Cues

Once you recognize your anger triggers, try to identify your response "cues" to them. These cues signal that your anger level is rising. Cues include physical sensations, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

Physical Cues: The way your body responds when you're angry, such as a pounding or racing heart, chest tightness, upset stomach, or feeling hot or flushed.

ANGER CUES INCLUDES PHYSICAL SENSATIONS, THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, AND BEHAVIORS.

Behavioral Cues: Actions you take when you're angry, such as yelling, teeth-clenching, fist-clenching, door-slamming, or loud complaining.

Feeling Cues: Feelings you have when you're angry—embarrassment, powerlessness, frustration, hurt, or fear. You may have underlying feelings that make your anger more intense.

Thought Cues: Thoughts or interpretations that affect your reaction to an event. If you think something is wrong or unfair, you will likely feel angry. Revenge fantasies are also thought cues and a sign of growing anger.

1.2.7 Self-Talk And Anger

Your thoughts are sometimes called "**self-talk.**" It's normal to talk to yourself about your circumstances or situation. Most of us engage in self-talk without knowing it. Self-talk can be positive or negative.

Should statements include words like "should," "shouldn't", "must", "ought", "always", or "need to". You may have strong beliefs about the way things "should" be, or how people "should" act. These beliefs aren't always realistic or helpful.

Example: Danny gets home after a tough workday to find the house a mess, the baby crying, and dinner unmade. Danny believes he "should" expect a clean, quiet home and dinner waiting. So he yells at his wife.

Some things can't be controlled, like people and certain situations. Getting angry and acting out won't help. Exploding in anger just makes things worse. Instead, work to change those things you *can* control. Rather than getting angry, Danny *could* make dinner or help with the baby.

2 TYPES OF NEGATIVE SELF-TALK INCREASE ANGER:

- "Should" Statements
- Blame

When challenging negative self-talk that includes "should" statements,

- You have the right to want things, but others have a right to say "no."
- You must accept some things in life "as is."
- Everyone has needs and priorities, and others may not act the way you expect.

1.2.7 Self-talk And Anger (cont.)

Blaming is the belief that someone else caused physical or emotional pain *on purpose*. People who blame others often assume the worst about situations. They act like they can read other people's minds. They get angry without giving the other person the benefit of the doubt.

Example: "My leader didn't give me the assignment I wanted because he's trying to sabotage my promotion."

To challenge blaming thoughts, remember:

- Jumping to conclusions and assuming the worst is not helpful.
- Reading minds is not possible.
- Blaming others doesn't solve problems. It just creates more stress for everyone.
- Problems are often smaller than they first appear.
- Normally, people don't try to hurt others on purpose.



1.3 ANGER MANAGEMENT TOOLS

In this section you will learn about tools that help you manage your anger and your responses. These techniques keep you from reacting in an aggressive manner and enable you to proceed in a positive manner.

1.3.1 How Can I Prevent Harmful Anger

While you can't control everything or everyone, you can manage your anger and change your response.

1.3.2 Anger Control Plans

Think of your Anger Control Plans as a toolbox for managing anger. Tools in your Anger Control Plan include:

- Helpful Coaches
- Time-Outs
- The Conflict Resolution Model
- Relaxation Techniques
- Challenging Negative Self-talk

As your anger builds, you may find it hard to remember these tools. So keep copies of your Anger Control Plan at home, at work, in the car, and in your wallet or purse. Whenever you start to feel angry, refer to your Anger Control Plan.

<Refer to workshop>

1.3.3 Helpful Coaches

The first tool in the Anger Control Plan is a **helpful coach**—someone you trust with your anger problems. Tell your coach about the thoughts and feelings you had when you were angry. Helpful coaches act as a "third party" when people talk about their anger triggers. Your helpful coach can give you a different point of view on the event that made you angry. You can choose just about anyone to be a helpful coach – a supportive friend, family member, supervisor, teacher, or counselor.

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1.3.4 Time-Outs

Take a time-out as soon as your anger level begins to rise. Time-outs allow you to cool down as you leave a situation or stop a discussion triggering your anger. Time-outs give you time to consider all your options before responding.

EXAMPLES:

1. George is riding on a crowded bus. He is constantly bumped and jostled by other passengers. George realizes he's getting angry and decides to use a time-out. He exits the bus at the next stop and walks the rest of the way home.
2. Susan and Denise have a heated discussion at dinner. Susan recommends a time out, and then walks to the kitchen for a glass of water. After Susan calms down, she returns to her conversation with Denise.

Time-outs are ideal in the "heat of the moment." Though Susan's anger rose quickly on the Anger Meter, the time-out allowed her to walk away before she reached a "10." Time-outs also work well when combined with other anger management tools. George combined his time-out with exercise by exiting the bus and walking home.

Should I Tell Others About My Time-Out?

Yes. Time-outs work best when you set some ground rules with others *before* you get angry. Discuss your time-out ground rules when everyone is calm and there's time to discuss the details. Once everyone knows the ground rules, anyone involved in a situation may use a time-out. The person calling the time-out may leave the situation, if they agree to finish the discussion or resolve the argument later.

Can I ever Use a Time-Out without Setting the Ground Rules First?

Yes. For example, you may need to use a time-out in a public place, such as a store, bank, bar, or restaurant. If you get angry with a stranger, you can use a time-out without talking through the ground rules first.

NOTE: Some time-outs may be inappropriate. For example, taking a time-out when a leader is giving orders might appear disrespectful.

1.3.4 Time-Outs (cont.)

The excuses listed are common and understandable. You may need to coach yourself with self-talk. Below are positive ways to deal with these common excuses:

How Do I Take a Time-Out?

Follow these steps to take a time-out:

STEP 1: When you realize you're getting angry during an argument, say out loud, "I'm beginning to feel really angry, and I need to take a time-out."

STEP 2: Tell the other person your time-out may last about an hour. If possible, leave the situation. During your time-out:

- Do not use alcohol or drugs.
- Do not drive.
- Do something healthy to reduce anger (go for a walk or talk with a helpful coach).
- Use your relaxation skills.
- Take a "mental time-out"—block any thoughts that might fuel your anger.
- Do something with your hands, like cleaning, working in the garage, or gardening.

STEP 3: When the time-out ends, see if the other person is ready to continue the discussion. Don't force them. Some topics may require you to postpone things until you find a "referee." Your first priority is to avoid violence and other aggressive behavior.

STEP 4: When you start the conversation up again, check your anger level.

Time-outs can be tough when people believe their self-respect is on the line. You may want to stay, resolve the situation, or have the last word in the argument. You may think things will never be resolved if you walk away. Unlearning destructive behavior patterns gets easier with time and practice.

**UNLEARNING DESTRUCTIVE
BEHAVIORAL patterns,
GETS easier WITH time AND practice.**

REMEMBER:

TIME-OUTS CAN BE
DIFFICULT —

LIKE ANY NEW
SKILL, LEARNING
TO TAKE TIME-OUTS
REQUIRES
PATIENCE.

1.3.5 Conflict Resolution Model

The **Conflict Resolution Model** is a way to act assertively.

Example: Betty carpools with Joe. Lately, Joe hasn't been ready on time, making Betty late for work. After getting in trouble for being late, Betty is angry at Joe.

Conflict Resolution involves five steps:

STEP 1: *Identify the problem triggering the conflict.*

Be specific. In our example, Joe's lateness creates conflict for Betty.

STEP 2: *Identify the feelings associated with the conflict.*

When Joe causes her to be late, Betty feels annoyed and frustrated.

STEP 3: *Identify the impact(s) of the problem.*

Joe's lateness causes Betty to be late for work.

STEP 4: *Choose whether to "let it go."*

Ask yourself, "*Is this conflict important enough to bring up?*" Betty should ask herself, "*If I don't resolve this issue with Joe, will I continue to get angry?*"

STEP 5: *If not, address and resolve the conflict.*

Agree on a time and place to discuss the conflict and find a solution.

Betty could say to Joe, "*You've been late the last few times I've come to pick you up. I'm starting to get frustrated and feel like I'm being taken for granted. When you run late, it makes me run late, too.*

Please be on time in the future."

The **Conflict Resolution Model** helps even when conflicts can't be resolved. It's likely Betty will feel better about her attempt to solve the problem rather than acting aggressively or doing nothing.

1.3.6 Relaxation Techniques

Anger's physical cues include increased heart rate, feeling hot or flushed, and muscle tension. These physical cues are known as **stress response**. With stress response, the nervous system is aroused or "pumped up." When a person feels "pumped up," their anger level can rise quickly.

But the nervous system also has a **relaxation response** to help deal with stress.

IT IS PHYSICALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO BE BOTH ANGRY AND RELAXED AT THE SAME TIME. WHEN A PERSON RELAXES, THEY CANCEL OUT ANY ANGER OR STRESS RESPONSE.

Deep Breathing

- Slowly breathe in for a count of three, while expanding your belly.
- Slowly breathe out for a count of three.
- Repeat steps 1 and 2 for one minute. If you don't feel relaxed, repeat until you do.

Muscle Relaxation

Muscle relaxation reduces muscle tension. The technique teaches you to feel the difference between a tensed muscle and a relaxed muscle. Over time, relaxing specific muscle groups gets easier, so you can relax your muscles anytime, anywhere.

- Sit or lie in a comfortable position with your feet, hands, arms, and neck supported.
- Take a few deep breaths and think the word "relax".
- Focus on your legs and feet. Tense your legs by flexing your feet and pointing your toes toward your upper body. You'll feel tension spread through your feet and legs.
- Hold for a few seconds and then release. Relax your feet and legs completely, while thinking the word "relax".
- Now focus on your belly. Tense your belly by pulling it in toward your spine.
- Hold for a few seconds then release. Tense your hands and arms by making a tight fist and tensing your forearms, biceps, and triceps.
- Hold for a few seconds and then release. Relax your hands and arms completely, while thinking the word "relax".
- Continue by tensing the following muscle groups:
 - Your shoulders
 - Your jaw
 - The muscles around your eyes
 - Your forehead
- Hold the tension in each muscle group for a few seconds and then release the tension and think the word "relax".

Once you complete this exercise, you should feel more relaxed and your stress level should decrease.



1.3.7 Challenging Negative Self-Talk

When you get angry, challenge any negative self-talk or thoughts that make your anger worse:

- “I’m going to stop thinking these thoughts because they make me feel worse.”
- “I’m just going to take it easy.”
- “I’m going to take a deep breath and count to 10.”
- “I know that getting angry won’t solve this problem.”
- “I can manage this. I will follow my Anger Control Plan.”
- “It’s just not worth it to get angry.”
- “I’m going to let it go.”

**Challenging
negative self-talk
STOPS
ANGRY THOUGHT
PATTERNS
BEFORE
THEY GET OUT
OF CONTROL.**