

In the most general sense, anger is a feeling or emotion that ranges from mild irritation to intense fury and rage. Many people often confuse anger with aggression. Aggression is behavior that is intended to cause harm or injury to another person or damage to property. Anger becomes a problem when it is felt too intensely, is felt too frequently, or is expressed inappropriately. Feeling anger too intensely or frequently places extreme physical strain on the body. Anger can become a routine, familiar, and predictable response to a variety of situations.

Events That Trigger Anger

When you get angry, it is because you have encountered an event in your life that has provoked your anger. Many times, specific events touch on sensitive areas. These sensitive areas or "red flags" usually refer to long-standing issues that can easily lead to anger. In addition to events that you experience in the here and now, you may also recall an event from your past that made you angry. Just thinking about these past events may make you angry now. Here are examples of events or issues that can trigger anger:

- Long waits to see your doctor
- Traffic congestion
- Crowded buses
- Being placed on hold for long periods of time while on the telephone
- Being given wrong directions
- Rumors being spread about you that are not true
- Having money or property stolen from you

Anger Control Plans

The anger control plan refers to strategies to manage and control your anger. An effective set of strategies for controlling anger should include both immediate and preventive strategies. Examples of immediate strategies include timeouts, deep-breathing exercises, and thought stopping. Examples of preventive strategies include developing an exercise program and changing irrational beliefs.

Time-outs

The time-out is a basic anger management strategy that should be in everyone's anger control plan. A time-out can be used formally or informally. In its simplest form, it means taking a few deep breaths and thinking instead of reacting. It may mean leaving the situation that is causing the escalation or stopping the discussion that is provoking your anger. The formal use of a time-out involves our relationships with other people. These relationships may involve family members, friends, and coworkers. The formal use of a timeout involves having an agreement or prearranged plan by which any of the parties involved can call a time-out and to which all parties have agreed in advance. The person calling the time-out can leave the situation, if necessary. It is agreed, however, that he or she will return to finish the discussion or postpone it, depending on whether the parties involved feel they can successfully resolve the issue.

A time-out is important because it can be used effectively in the heat of the moment. A time-out is also effective when used with other strategies. For example, you can take a time-out and go for a walk. You can also take a time-out and call a trusted friend or family member or

write in your journal. These other strategies help you calm down during your time-out period.

Relaxation Through Breathing

Deep breathing is a wonderful relaxation technique. Here are the directions: Find a comfortable position in your chair. If you would like, close your eyes; if not, just gaze down at the floor. Take a few moments to settle yourself. Now become aware of your body. Check for any tension, beginning with your feet, moving upward to your head.

Notice any tension you might have in your legs, stomach, hands and arms, shoulders, neck, and face. Try to let go of any tension. Now, become aware of your breathing. Pay attention to your breath as it enters and leaves your body. This can be very relaxing.

Take a deep breath. Notice your lungs and chest expanding. Now slowly exhale through your nose. Again, take a deep breath. Fill your lungs and your chest. Notice how much air you can take in. Hold it for a second. Now release it and exhale slowly. Inhale slowly and fully one more time. Hold it for a second, and release.

Continue breathing in this way for another couple of minutes. Continue to focus on your breath. With each inhalation and exhalation, feel your body becoming more and more relaxed. Use your breathing to wash away any remaining tension.

Now take another deep breath. Inhale fully, hold it for a second, and release. Inhale again, hold, and release. Continue to be aware of your breath as it fills your lungs. Once more, inhale fully, hold it for a second, and release. When you feel that you are ready, open your eyes.

Ways NOT to Handle Anger

- Denying that you're angry — or not being able to even identify that you're angry — is called **evasion**. But evading anger only increases stress and may lead to such stress-related illnesses as headaches and depression (some counselors believe depression is unexpressed anger turned inward).
 - To know that you are angry but to still keep it inside is called **containment**. Yet boxing up anger only delays its expression. Eventually, anger may lead to stress or stress-related illness or an angry outburst or temper tantrum.
 - **Displacement** occurs when you take your anger out on something or someone other than the object of your anger. A wife who gives away her husband's golf clubs because of something he said or a coworker who sabotages a work project because he's angry over working conditions are examples of displacement.
 - **Indirect expression** occurs if you're angry for a specific reason, but blame your anger on something else. For instance, you may be angry at your teenaged son for his poor study habits, but instead of addressing his study skills as the source of your anger, you pick fights over his use of the phone.
- If you find that you mismanage your anger in any of these ways, remember that anger is a sign that something is wrong. Like an engine light that warns that a car is overheating, anger alerts us to the fact that there is a problem. The faster we take corrective, appropriate action, the less likely we are to "blow a gasket."

Help Is Available

Just talking about your problems sometimes leads to new solutions. If you or someone you know needs information, guidance or help, contact the resource and number listed below or look online for local professionals who can help.

ANGER MANAGEMENT



www.amplifiedlifefnetwork.com
#H-6048 800-453-7733
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