

How to Manage Angry Feelings



What happens when you get angry?

When you are angry, your body reacts just like it does to stress. Your heart beats faster to pump increased oxygen, adrenaline, and sugar into your bloodstream. Your breathing becomes more rapid, your blood pressure rises, and your muscles tense. Your body is energized for action. In looking for way to release tension you might yell or shout, slam things, pound your fist. You might take action to resolve a problem, or you might try to hold your anger in. However, if you do not find a way to release your tension you risk building up your anger to a level that is dangerous and difficult to control.

Cognitively, your thoughts about others may become irrational and you may generate negative self- statements. These negative thoughts usually serve to increase your anger.

What causes you to get angry?

Frustration occurs when you are blocked from doing what you want to do or from going where you want to go. It is a feeling of helplessness and loss of control.

Disappointment occurs when situations, events, or people, including yourself, do not meet the expectations you have for them.

Threat to our sense of security, like doing poorly on an exam, losing your wallet, or encountering a problem you're not prepared to deal with, can leave you feeling vulnerable and angry.

Fear—the fear of consequences—is experienced in many situations. Anger is an emotion of fear. It is a defensive response to the feelings of helplessness and vulnerability that fear produces. While fear is a passive emotion with energy directed inward, anger is an aggressive emotion that allows you to direct energy outwards. Some people get angry because they fear being powerless or being taken advantage of; some believe that being aggressive is an effective way to get their way; many have not learned to deal with conflict assertively; some use anger to displace their feelings of guilt; and some people get angry because they overreact or misinterpret a situation.

We cognitively interpret most of our life experiences; how we interpret a situation influences how much anger we might experience.

(Adapted from Texas State University: <http://www.counseling.txstate.edu/selfHelp/bro/hananger.html>)

Handling your anger

- **Recognize your anger**

Admit to yourself that you are angry. Know how you when you get angry. What are signs?

- **Calm down**

The old adage of "take a deep breath and count to ten" really works. Tell yourself that you can deal with the situation more effectively if you are calm. Decide not to act on the situation until you have calmed down.

- **Use a sounding board**

If there is a neutral person you can talk to about why you are angry, it may help you to determine if you are interpreting the situation accurately.

- **Identify your fears**

What fears has the source of your anger caused?· Reappraise the situation. Give yourself a chance to see if the situation that caused your anger is bad as you first thought.

- **Don't avoid the issue**

Don't allow anger to build up and interfere with later situations or circumstances. After you have reappraised the situation decide to confront it or let it go.

- **Decide how you will respond**

Identify the different ways you might respond to the situation and the potential outcomes that might result. Determine the response that will result in the most positive outcomes for you and others over the long run.

- **Respond assertively rather than aggressively**

Express yourself firmly without making insulting remarks or trying to put someone on the defensive. *Work to resolve the problem rather than to win.*

- **Avoid displacing your anger**

Because the energy of anger wants to be released, there is a tendency to displace anger onto people who are not the source of your anger. This will only make things worse. If you are angry with a business, agency, office or department, ask to talk with someone in charge to express your anger. Avoid displacing your anger onto an unsuspecting clerk.

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