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## Anger Management Tips



### What is Anger?

Anger is a natural emotion. It's nature's way of telling us that something in our lives has gone haywire.

Anger occurs as a defensive response to a perceived attack or threat to our well-being. In addition to psychological changes, like any emotion, anger is accompanied by physiological changes. When you get angry your adrenaline flows, your heart rate increases, and your blood pressure escalates. The phrase, "I'm so mad my blood is boiling" isn't that far from true when you fly into a rage!

Sometimes just our perception of a situation causes anger to ignite and sometimes the threat may be real. Whatever the case, anger isn't the problem. The problem with anger is that many of us don't learn to manage anger effectively. In fact, one out of five people may have an anger management problem.

Domestic abuse, road rage, workplace violence, divorce, and addictions are a few of the external examples of the results of poor anger management. Moreover, anger can lead to physical problems when not properly managed. Long-term anger has been linked to chronic headaches, sleep disorders, digestive problems, high blood pressure, and even heart attack.

Yet, when you learn how to manage anger, it can be an accelerant towards positive change instead of a negative propeller towards disaster.

### The Sequence of Anger

Anger is usually "triggered" by an occurrence, like stubbing your toe on an inanimate object or by something that someone says. Next, you think something like "what did I do to deserve that". However, at this point, emotion takes over your mind and the "pain" of the situation leads you to believe the answer to your question is "Nothing. I didn't deserve that at all!" Feelings of hurt and betrayal further try to override logic and you're ready to act on your anger by either suppressing it or expressing it.

Suppressing your anger may lead you to believe you have it under control. However, suppressing anger doesn't solve your problem and is a dangerous type of anger management. Suppressed anger stays with you over time and can lead to mental health problems like depression, and physical problems like "stress" headaches and high blood pressure. Additionally, continually suppressing your anger can curtail your ability to act in the face of a real threat to your well-being.

Anger needs to be expressed. Yet, aggressive displays of anger can result in violent eruptions that further hurt you socially, mentally, and physically. The goal of anger management is to help you find healthy ways to express your anger and resolve the problems that ignite it. The first step in anger management is learning to define the problem and face it head on!

### Anger Management Tips

#### No. 1: Take a timeout

Counting to 10 isn't just for kids. Before reacting to a tense situation, take a few moments to breathe deeply and count to 10. Slowing down can help defuse your temper. If necessary, take a break from the person or situation until your frustration subsides a bit.

#### No. 2: Once you're calm, express your anger

As soon as you're thinking clearly, express your frustration in an assertive but no confrontational way. State your concerns and needs clearly and directly, without hurting others or trying to control them.

### **No. 3: Get some exercise**

Physical activity can provide an outlet for your emotions, especially if you're about to erupt. If you feel your anger escalating, go for a brisk walk or run, or spend some time doing other favorite physical activities. Physical activity stimulates various brain chemicals that can leave you feeling happier and more relaxed than you were before you worked out.

### **No. 4: Think before you speak**

In the heat of the moment, it's easy to say something you'll later regret. Take a few moments to collect your thoughts before saying anything — and allow others involved in the situation to do the same.

### **No. 5: Identify possible solutions**

Instead of focusing on what made you mad, work on resolving the issue at hand. Does your child's messy room drive you crazy? Close the door. Is your partner late for dinner every night? Schedule meals later in the evening — or agree to eat on your own a few times a week. Remind yourself that anger won't fix anything, and might only make it worse.

### **No. 6: Stick with 'I' statements**

To avoid criticizing or placing blame — which might only increase tension — use "I" statements to describe the problem. Be respectful and specific. For example, say, "I'm upset that you left the table without offering to help with the dishes," instead of, "You never do any housework."

### **No. 7: Don't hold a grudge**

Forgiveness is a powerful tool. If you allow anger and other negative feelings to crowd out positive feelings, you might find yourself swallowed up by your own bitterness or sense of injustice. But if you can forgive someone who angered you, you might both learn from the situation. It's unrealistic to expect everyone to behave exactly as you want at all times.

### **No. 8: Use humor to release tension**

Lightening up can help diffuse tension. Don't use sarcasm, though — it can hurt feelings and make things worse.

### **No. 9: Practice relaxation skills**

When your temper flares, put relaxation skills to work. Practice deep-breathing exercises, imagine a relaxing scene, or repeat a calming word or phrase, such as, "Take it easy." You might also listen to music, write in a journal or do a few yoga poses — whatever it takes to encourage relaxation.

### **No. 10: Know when to seek help**

Learning to control anger is a challenge for everyone at times. Consider seeking help for anger issues if your anger seems out of control, causes you to do things you regret or hurts those around you. You might explore local anger management classes or anger management counseling. With professional help, you can: