

Anger Management



What is Anger?

Anger is a natural emotion. Anger occurs as a defensive response to a perceived attack or threat to our well-being. In addition to psychological changes, 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 how to manage anger effectively. In fact, one out of five Americans has an anger management problem.

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



The Sequence of Anger

Anger is usually "**triggered**" by an occurrence, like stubbing your toe or by something that someone says. Next, you think something like "what did I do to deserve that". At this point, emotion takes over the mind and the "pain" of the situation leads you to believe that the answer "Nothing". Feelings of hurt and betrayal try to override logic and you're ready to act on your anger. You act by either suppressing it or expressing it. Suppressing your anger may lead you to believe that 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 behavior that further hurts 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 cause it. The first step in anger management is learning to define the problem and face it head on.

Anger Management Tips

Yelling at friends or family members, slamming doors, and breaking things won't solve any problem. It can escalate angry situations between people.

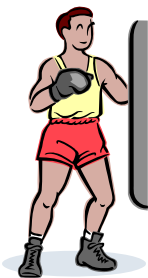
Sometimes you just need to vent. Finding a safe spot to act out your anger can relieve the majority of your stress, calming you enough to solve the real problem.



Ways to vent and/or settle your emotions:

- Go to the basement and scream or scream into a pillow.
- Stomp on aluminum cans or break down cardboard boxes for recycling.
- Throw a tennis ball at the garage or outside wall and catch it.
- Buy a punching bag, jump rope, or lift weights
- Go for a Run/Jog
- Breathe Deep. Taking a few deep breaths calms you, makes you feel stronger, both mentally and physically
- Count to 10. This helps you take a step back from the situation, it gives you time to examine the problem and decide on a rational way to handle it.
- Give yourself a break. It's easier to think when you're calm. Leave the room, take a walk. Come back to the problem, examine it, and solve it.
- Practice Meditation or other relaxation techniques
- Write in a journal or diary

Although reaction to anger is often characterized as exploding or losing control, intense reactions vary from physical violence to depression. Along with punching and smashing things, angry people often yell, cuss, make sarcastic comments, become depressed, shake, feel nauseous, feel dizzy, get headaches, and cry.



The anger management exercise below will help you find your anger triggers, evaluate your anger, and then change your reactions to anger.

1. Think of **five things** that always make you angry or annoy you. These are triggers and they can range from small annoyances to major events. For instance, a trigger may be a neighborhood barking dog, a driver who cuts you off in traffic, or your parents request to do your chores.
2. Rate the five triggers from one to five as to how much they irritate you. With one being the lowest and five being the highest.
3. How do you react to each trigger?

A. Do you get into physical fights with others?

B. Do you punch, hit, or kick objects?

C. Do you frequently slam doors, sometimes to the point of damaging them?

D. Do you throw, break, or destroy objects to relieve your anger?

E. Do you stomp your feet in anger?

F. Do you yell until you're hoarse? Do you often say things that you regret?

G. Do you face confrontation with sarcasm?

H. Do you often say things that you regret later?

I. Do you shy away from confrontation? Keep your feelings to yourself?

J. Do you brood over the unfairness or hopelessness of situations?

K. Do you say, "We'll talk about it later" and never do?

A-B Physical Violence is never the answer. You may want to pursue further help with managing your anger. Classes and counseling are available, please ask Mrs. Pitts for more information. All interaction and information will be kept confidential.

C-E None of these solve what makes us angry, however you can change them and relieve the adrenaline that makes you physically react. Find a safe place and choose an option from the **Ways to Vent/Settle Emotions** (pg. 2). After you're calm, examine what happened and use **Anger Management Strategies** (pg. 4) and **Anger Management Techniques** (pg. 5) to keep it from happening again.

F-H You may find that none of these reactions solve the problems that stir up your anger. Remember the times that you have been yelled at or someone said something hurtful. Did you listen to what that person was saying? Most people tend to stop listening when they are being yelled at or insulted. Think of better ways of communication. Then use **Anger Management Strategies** (pg. 4) and **Anger Management Techniques** (pg. 5) to help you resolve your triggers.

I-K Internalized anger can lead to both physical health problems (such as nausea, headaches, indigestion) and mental health problems like depression. If this is your response, consider taking some assertiveness training or finding help through private counseling. Please ask Mrs. Pitts for more information. All interaction and information will be kept confidential.

Anger management tips can help you keep from blowing up but it's best to address the issue when you're not actively angry. Most experts

agree that in order to learn long-term anger management techniques, you first need to recognize the "triggers" that set off your anger.

But, what do you do if you're angry most of the time?

Anger Management Strategy #1: Changing Your Environment

If you usually spend your day indoors, make a point to spend time outdoors. Work in your yard, take a walk, or sit on a park bench. Fresh air will do you good, both physically and mentally. ☼ If you work mostly outdoors, spend private time indoors. Sit in your favorite chair and read. Put your feet up and relax!

If you spend your day in noise, make sure you get "quiet time". Give yourself a chance to calm down and clear the chaos from your thoughts. ☼ If you spend your day where it is quiet, go home and turn up the volume! Listen to the radio, play a CD, watch some television. Get your mind off your problems!

Anger Management Strategy #2: Learn to Recognize Your Anger Triggers

When you're calm, take a few minutes to examine recent times when your anger flared. Write them down. Don't relive them; just look for what triggered your anger. What started you at a simmer and then when did you boil over? What effect did your temper have on those around you? What resulted from your anger? This is the beginning of your **anger log, journal or diary**.

Each day log the things that triggered your anger. You'll likely find that many of the same things are making you mad every day.

ANGER TRIGGERS



One downfall of anger is that it makes you feel helpless and out of control. Anger management techniques aren't meant to eliminate your anger. They put you in charge

of the situation and teach you how to make anger work for you. Anger management techniques help you learn to express your anger in constructive ways.

Anger Management Technique #1: Focus on the positive.

Example: Your mom or dad is late picking you up from school again and it's making you mad. Use the time to finish homework, reflect on the day's events, or plan the next day's events. Your parent's tardiness just bought you some extra time!

Anger Management Technique #2: Put your anger on hold.

Example: You have to get ready to go to the movies. Your sibling has been hogging the bathroom and is full of reasons why he/she needs more time. You've managed to stay reasonably calm, but you can feel yourself becoming increasingly angry.

You are still in control of your emotions and the situation; that's what's important. Timing is often critical to keeping anger in check. Don't discuss issues when you're tired, stressed, or if the situation has already made you irritable. Choose a time to find solutions to problems; when you can talk rationally and when you can stay in control.

Anger Management Technique #3: Don't react to anger - respond.

Change the way you think and learn how to **respond** to anger instead of **reacting** to it. Reacting to anger is a learned, impulsive behavior that becomes instinctive. Responding to anger allows you to look at the different solutions and gives you the opportunity to choose the one that works the best.

Anger Management Technique #4: Take care of you.

Make time to reflect on issues and consider solutions to problems every single day. Work for balance in your life. We often separate mind and body, but they work together to make each of us unique. Regular exercise, healthy eating, and adequate sleep are essential to your emotional health as well as your physical well-being.

Anger Management Technique #5: Don't look back, move forward.

Yelling at the computer when it is working slowly does not make it work any faster. Screaming at your sister for hogging the bathroom and making you late, doesn't change it and it doesn't make plans for change in the future. When you put the lid on past problems, you free up time to find solutions for current and future problems.

