

Anger is a **normal** and **healthy** emotion but it can become unhealthy when it flares up all the time and spirals out of control. Chronic, explosive anger has serious consequences for your relationships, emotional well-being and physiological and psychological health.

The good news is, with insight about the real reasons for your anger and anger management tools, you can learn to keep your temper from hijacking your life. The goal of anger management is to understand the message behind your angry emotions and to express these feelings in a healthy way without losing control.

## What is anger?

Anger is an emotion that can range from mild annoyance to intense rage. It is a feeling that is accompanied by biological changes in your body. When you get angry, your heart rate and blood pressure rise and stress hormones are released. This can cause you to shake, become hot and sweaty and feel out of control.

Anger is often associated with frustration - things don't always happen the way we want and people don't always behave the way we think they should. Anger is usually linked with other negative emotions or is a response to them. You may be feeling hurt, frightened, disappointed, worried, embarrassed or frustrated, but may express these sorts of feelings as anger.

## Do I have a problem with anger?

- Do you feel angry, irritated or tense a lot of the time?
- Do you seem to get angry more often and more easily than others around you?
- Do you use alcohol or drugs to manage your anger?
- Do you sometimes become so angry that you break things or become violent?
- Have others (e.g. family, friends, co-workers) mentioned that anger may be a problem for you?
- Do you find yourself worrying a lot about your anger, perhaps feeling anxious or depressed about it at times?

## Recognising your warning signs:

While you might feel that you just explode into anger without warning, there are physical warning signs in your body including:

- Tightness in your chest
- Feeling hot, flushed or sweaty
- Grinding your teeth
- Tensing your muscles or clenching your fists
- Pounding or racing heart
- Biting your nails

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## Tips for controlling anger:

- Explore what is really behind your anger – anger problems often stem from what you've learnt as a child.
- Identify the negative thought patterns that trigger your temper e.g. jumping to conclusions, overgeneralising ("you always interrupt me")
- Avoid people, places and situations that bring out the worst in you
- Learn ways to cool down. Some common techniques are deep breathing, exercise, muscle relaxation, counting to 10, walking away and distracting yourself from the situation so you can deal with it when you're more relaxed.

## Give yourself a reality check:

When you start getting upset about something, take a moment to think about the situation and ask yourself:

- How important is it in the grand scheme of things?
- Is it really worth getting angry about?
- Is it worth ruining the rest of my day?
- Is my response appropriate to the situation?
- Is there anything I can do about it?
- Is taking action worth my time?

## Anger myths:

*"Anger, aggression and intimidation help me earn respect and get what I want"*

- People may be afraid of you, but they won't respect you if you can't control yourself or handle opposing viewpoints. Others will be more willing to listen to you if you communicate your perspective in a respectful way.

*"I can't help myself. Anger isn't something you can control"*

- You can't always control the situation you're in, but you can control how you express your anger and emotions. Even when someone is pushing your buttons, you have a choice about how to respond without being physically or verbally abusive.

## Dealing with someone else's anger management problem:

While you can't control another person's anger, you can control how you respond to it:

- Set clear boundaries about what you will and will not tolerate
- Wait for a time when you are both calm to talk to your loved one about the anger problem. Don't bring it up when either of you are already angry.
- Remove yourself from the situation if they do not calm down
- Consider counselling or therapy if you are having a hard time standing up for yourself
- Put your safety first. If you feel unsafe or threatened in any way, get away.

## Know when to seek professional help:

If your anger is spiralling out of control, you're getting into trouble with the law or you're hurting others, you need more help. **Asking for help is not a sign of weakness.**

Therapy is a great way to explore the reasons behind your anger. If you don't know why you are getting angry, it's very hard to control. Therapy provides a safe environment to learn more about your reasons and identifying your triggers for anger. It's a safe place to practice new skills for expressing your anger.