



Understanding and Managing Your Anger

If you have an anger problem you are not alone.

One out of five Americans has an anger management problem. It is the major cause of conflict in our personal and professional relationships. Child abuse, spousal abuse, divorce, addiction, workplace violence and crime are just a few examples of what happens when anger is mismanaged. Additionally, illnesses such as heart disease, some cancers, depression and anxiety are associated with chronic, mismanaged anger.

What can you do if you have a problem with anger?

First, recognize the difference between angry feelings and angry actions. Many people confuse the way they act when they are angry - yelling, crying, blaming, striking or pouting, for example - as anger itself. All of these are behaviors. They are ways of responding to anger, but they are not anger itself. Anger is a feeling.

Separating angry feelings from angry actions is important because we can change angry actions. We can teach ourselves to become aware of our feelings and to choose how we act on them.

How are you feeling right now?

<input type="checkbox"/> Anxious	<input type="checkbox"/> Worthless	<input type="checkbox"/> Hostile	<input type="checkbox"/> Depressed
<input type="checkbox"/> Mean/evil	<input type="checkbox"/> Revengeful	<input type="checkbox"/> Bitchy	<input type="checkbox"/> Bitter
<input type="checkbox"/> Rebellious	<input type="checkbox"/> Paranoid	<input type="checkbox"/> Victimized	<input type="checkbox"/> Numb
<input type="checkbox"/> Sarcastic	<input type="checkbox"/> Resentful	<input type="checkbox"/> Frustrated	<input type="checkbox"/> Destructive

These are some of the names that we give to our feelings of anger. Identifying your feelings of anger will make your anger more specific. This is the first step in resolving an anger problem.

What is causing your anger?

Most people don't want to acknowledge negative feelings. Many don't even recognize that they have them. Yet acknowledging any negative feelings you have is essential to resolving your anger problem. Carrying around repressed anger from our past -

characterized by negative feelings such as those listed above - is the cause of many people's anger.

Until you acknowledge your negative feelings and make an effort to understand them, they will drive your anger and undermine your life. The good news is that you can learn to understand your negative feelings and learn effective and appropriate ways of dealing with anger.

Who or what is making you angry?

It's natural to believe that external events upset you. People often experience anger when they are insulted, irritated, frustrated, treated unfairly or physically confronted. The common expression is, "You made me angry." But, believe it or not, no external person or event can be the cause of your anger. We are not externally controlled by others. We are in charge of how we respond to events and people.

No matter how outrageous or unfair others might appear to you, they do not create your anger, you do. We can't control what others do, but we can control how we respond to others.

How can I control my anger?

You can learn to better manage your anger by following these four basic steps:

Step 1: Acknowledge your anger

The first step in dealing constructively with anger is to admit when you are angry. Trying to cover it up to avoid conflict or pretending that it isn't there will only make it come out in some other way and distance you from other people.

You may have been denying anger for such a long time that it will take some practice to recognize when it's there. But, if you start looking for it, you'll begin to see that many things stir up angry feelings.

Step 2: Explore your anger

Try to identify what it is you are angry about. The cause of anger isn't always obvious. We're so accustomed to shutting off our feelings that we might have to think seriously about the cause of our anger before we can identify it. What made us angry might not be the last thing that happened today, but the first. Or it might have happened yesterday, last week or last month.

If you've identified the cause, think about it before you act. Could it have been avoided? Were you partly responsible for it because of poor communication? Remember, others don't "make" you angry. You are responsible for your own feelings.

Step 3: Express your anger

Communicate your anger in a healthy way. If the anger was caused by something that someone said or did, tell the person how you feel in a calm and respectful manner.

How we talk makes a difference. If the goal of expressing anger is to communicate, we need to find ways of letting off steam without attacking, blaming or accusing the other person. Also, effective communication is a two-way proposition. Both parties need to have their needs and feelings heard.

Step 4: Let go of your anger

Once you've verbalized your anger let it go. Remind yourself that you've done all you can by expressing your feelings in a healthy manner. For many, this can be very difficult. But clinging to the resentment of having been done wrong means continuing to carry the anger inside.

If you or a family member needs help in managing anger, or learning how to better-handle another person's anger problem, your EAP can help you. Your EAP is strictly confidential and staffed with trained counselors who can help you assess your situation, suggest ways to help, and help you determine a plan of action. Why not call today? We're here to help.