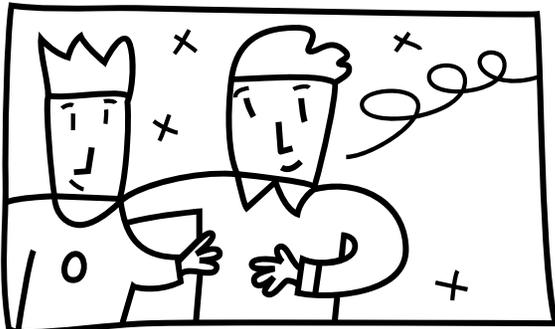


# Anger & Anger Management

## HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN YOU'RE ANGRY?

When people become angry they can experience many different thoughts, feelings, and physical reactions. Some people experience strong feelings of resentment or hostility, raise their voice, curse, or throw things. Other people experience physical symptoms such as headaches, nausea, and increases in heart rate and blood pressure. For some, angry feelings become so overwhelming they feel ready to explode. Others may not know they are angry about a situation but will feel physically ill, guilty, or will overreact to other situations.



## WHEN IS ANGER A PROBLEM?

Sometimes, angry feelings can become overwhelming and can be difficult to handle. Below are some questions to ask yourself in order to determine if you are having difficulty managing your anger.

- When you become angry, do you ever feel out of control?
- When you become angry, have you ever said or done anything you regretted later?
- While angry, have you ever physically attacked someone (i.e., grabbed, shoved, slapped, or punched)?
- Has an angry reaction to a situation ever cost you a relationship or a job?
- Do feelings of anger often make it difficult to concentrate on work or school?
- Do you drink alcohol or use other drugs to calm down and to reduce your angry feelings?
- Have you ever been arrested or faced legal difficulties as a result of your anger?

If you checked one or more of these questions, then you may have difficulty managing anger. If you answered checked most or all of these questions, then you may have a serious anger management problem. This brochure is intended to help those with mild to moderate difficulty managing their anger. Those with more serious anger management problems are strongly encouraged to seek out a counselor to help regulate intense anger.

## ANGER ... MANAGE IT OR IT WILL MANAGE YOU

Anger is a very interesting emotion. It is much like dynamite. A little bit of it can go a long way, but used inappropriately it can backfire and blow up in your face. Anger that is not resolved or dissolved, or inappropriate levels of anger can lead to depression, a higher incident of various types of accidents, broken relationships, and can also be a major contributing factor to heart attacks and strokes in mid and later life. Keeping these thoughts in mind, consider the following thoughts and ideas to both better understand anger and to use it more appropriately.

1. Anger is often a function of frustration. Spend some time thinking about what you're really frustrated about and what actions you might be able to take to handle those frustrations. Remember that, ultimately, you are responsible for your own anger.

While situations may contribute to your anger, someone else doesn't make you angry; at some point you must accept responsibility for choosing anger over other emotions.

2. Speaking of emotions, anger is a basic emotion. There are things that are legitimate and appropriate to be angry about, but responses to anger do not have to be hostile or hurtful. In reality, anger is a way of protecting yourself. Spend some time thinking about what you really want to achieve in situations where you feel anger.
3. Consider to what extent your anger response is learned. Who did you learn it from? In what situations did it work for you in the past, but may not work for you in the present? Realize that for some individuals there may be a genetic predisposition to anger. In knowing this, you can make choices to keep yourself calm.
4. If you are prone to anger, rehearse appropriate and healthy responses that may be more beneficial to your situation.
5. Realize that basic, normal, human behaviors can help you effectively manage your anger. Getting appropriate exercise and making sure you get enough sleep can increase the number of choices and responses you have to situations where you may find yourself feeling upset.
6. Do not abuse alcohol and/or use other drugs. Drugs and alcohol tend to have a major effect on the rational part of your brain. When this part of your brain is anesthetized, raw emotion is more likely to take over.
7. Remember that you are not the content of your emotion; you are the invisible awareness. In other words, don't think of yourself in terms of, "I am angry ...", rather think of yourself as, "Right now I am very aware of the anger I am feeling". When you do this, you can acknowledge your anger and somehow be a bit bigger than the feeling itself. Through your acknowledgement, you can find a way to say, "That's just the way it is, so what choices do I have now?"
8. Remember that anger can be overt, but it also can be covert, or passive-aggressive. Passive-aggressive anger in the form of backstabbing, gossiping about individuals, or baiting others can be as serious as more direct expressions, such as yelling at someone, or confronting someone with overt threats. Either way, these behaviors can damage your long-term goals. Think carefully about how you both directly and indirectly may use anger, not to only hurt others, but also possibly hurt yourself.
9. Know that if you have a serious problem with anger, antidepressant medication and mood stabilizers/anti-seizure medications seems to help individuals gain more appropriate levels of control. You may want to talk with a physician or counselor, if you think medication may be of help to you. Usually, a single consultation should give a professional enough information to help you decide whether medication is something you would like to try.
10. Finally, remember at some level, anger is a choice. At times you may want to pick other words, such as being bothered, upset, irritated. These words may help you get not only at the nature of the difficulty you have, but at possible solutions that may be of help to you.



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Source: Dr. Richard Boyum, [www.selfcounseling.com](http://www.selfcounseling.com)