
Information from your Patient Aligned Care Team

Tips for Managing Anger

How do you know when you are really ANGRY?

Physical:

Increased blood pressure, heart rate, and respiration rate, headaches, tension, and upset stomach.

Emotional:

Feelings of being out of control, enraged, helpless, frustration, etc.

Behavioral:

Actual violence or acts of aggression, excessive images of violence, yelling, increased smoking/drinking, impulse control problems, and social isolation as way of coping.

Can Anger be a good thing?

Yes, sometimes anger, like other strong emotions, can motivate us to make changes in ourselves and our environment.

When does anger become a problem?

Anger becomes a problem when it is felt too intensely, too frequently or when it is expressed inappropriately.

What are some of the consequences of being too angry?

Physical:

Excessive or intense anger can place a significant strain on your body and result in physical conditions such as:

- Increased Blood Pressure
- Increased risk for heart attack/heart disease/stroke
- Headaches
- Diminished immune response
- Decreased digestion/Increased gas and stomach pain

Tips for Managing Anger (continued)

Emotional:

When a person feels angry much of the time, they can begin to develop an overwhelmingly negative view of the world that is likely to affect their interactions with friends, family, co-workers, etc. People who are angry a great deal of the time, tend to feel pessimistic, out of control, enraged, and helpless; they can often feel like victims of society.

Behavioral:

People often turn to or increase maladaptive behaviors or habits to in order to cope with anger. Some of these may include:

- Tobacco Use
- Alcohol Use
- Physical Violence
- Verbal Violence
- Excessive risk taking
- Social isolation

These behaviors can have significant consequences, not only for the person engaging in them, but also those around him/her.

So now that I know I am angry, what can I do about it?

- **Read self-help books**, such as “Why Zebras Don’t Get Ulcers”, “The Anger Trap”, “Taking Charge of Anger”, and “The Dance of Anger”.
- **Try this exercise:**
 - a. Identify your triggers; keep a log of situations that have triggered your anger and the thoughts, feelings and behaviors that surround the incident.
 - b. Develop a plan to deal with anger that you can implement outside of the treatment room. Know what you are going to do when you get angry.
 - c. Accountability; Acknowledge to those most affected by your anger that you have a problem and are working on it. Solicit their support and check-in with them on how you are doing at controlling your anger.
 - d. Relaxation techniques (e.g. diaphragmatic breathing, cue controlled relaxation) to reduce physical arousal level.
 - e. Assertiveness/communication training--being able to appropriately express our feelings in a way that others can actually hear.
- **You can also sign-up for an Anger Management class.** Check with your Behavioral Health Provider for further information about anger management classes.

Tips for Managing Anger (continued)

In the meantime, you can start a self-directed anger management plan. Try a few of these exercises when you begin to feel the first signs of becoming angry:

1. Be able to identify when you are becoming angry by looking for physical, psychological and behavioral triggers. Consider keeping a log or chart of your Physiological, Psychological, and Behavioral responses to anger so that you can better identify them and attempt to reduce/change or respond differently to them in the future.
2. Pay attention to the things you are telling yourself in your mind and determine if they are helping you or hurting you. If they are perpetuating your anger, practice telling yourself something different. It may take time to reset your “word machine”, but if you keep at it, the changes will eventually stick.
3. Know what things increase the likelihood for you becoming angry (e.g. alcohol use, bad day at work, gloomy weather, etc.) and avoid these things in situations where you are likely to be upset (don't borrow trouble!).
4. Utilize relaxation techniques (e.g. diaphragmatic breathing) at the onset of anger symptoms.
5. Take a time-out and regain your cool before go back to a heated situation.
6. Find appropriate and healthy ways to vent your frustrations before they turn into anger (e.g. exercise, painting, talk to a friend, play a musical instrument, meditate, etc.), while avoiding maladaptive responses (e.g. smoking, drinking, violence, isolation, etc.).
7. Reward yourself for being able to handle your anger effectively. Set up a schedule of reinforcement (e.g. for every week that I don't yell at my children, I will spend one hour surfing the internet).

The Center for Integrated Healthcare gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the US Air Force in the preparation of all or part of this informational brochure.