

Managing Your Anger

What is Anger?

Anger is a natural human emotion that prepares and enables us to attack a perceived threat. Anger is not a bad emotion, but we must learn to control it. Mismanaged anger is a major cause of conflict in relationships at home and at work. Violence — in the home, at work, and on the road — is the most severe consequence of mismanaged anger.



Controlling the Response

Although aggression is a natural response to anger, society requires us to manage it. Many of us do not learn this well while growing up. As a result, anger is often mismanaged in response to life events. We then experience more harm from these events than they would otherwise cause. Fortunately, we can change the way we react to unpleasant events and gain control over anger and rage. Rage is an explosive, violent response to anger and is typically disproportionate to the distress of the precipitating event.

The Nature of Anger

Anger can emerge from external stimuli or internal thoughts about things that we perceive as threats, whether real or imagined. Memories of traumatic events that caused rage can also trigger angry feelings. Without life skills to manage anger, it is easy to feel powerless over it.

Getting a Grip on Anger

Most techniques for managing anger fall within three categories: suppression, expression, and intervention. Each has its unique benefits.

Suppression is the practice of consciously inhibiting the expression of your anger. *Expression* entails talking about angry feelings to reduce their intensity. *Intervention*

seeks to reduce anger by changing the way you think or react to anger producing events.

Do You Need Help?

If you have a problem with anger, you probably already know it. You may respond to negative situations with uncontrollable rage. You may say or do things that frighten yourself and others. Perhaps you have physically hurt someone or come close to doing so. You may not trust yourself to act appropriately and control your temper. You may overuse suppression to prevent feeling anger, and as a result, risk an explosive response to an enraging event. Feeling out of control is a sign that more help is needed.

Try this Intervention Tool

The following is a simple intervention tool to help you gain control over your anger in response to a recurring provocative event. Try it to see if it helps.

Instructions: Reproduce the anger management tool 10 times. Each time you experience the event that produces anger, fill out the sections of the tool. As time goes by, you may experience diminishing anger responses to the event.

First sign that I was angry.	
What triggered it?	
How did I respond to this event?	
What did I do well this time?	
What will I do better the next time this event occurs?	

What the EAP Can Do

If you are concerned about the way you manage anger, or have experienced difficulties in relationships at home or at work because of your anger, the EAP may be able to help.

The EAP will meet with you to discuss your experiences with anger, explore the course of angry responses to specific events, and ask how you have attempted to control your response to anger. The EAP will then help you decide what sources of help might work best for you.