



>INFOCUS

## anger MANAGEMENT

### Get control of IT...

Everyone gets angry sometimes. Unfortunately, life can be full of disappointments, frustrations, and losses which naturally provoke upset feelings. But when anger gets out of control and overwhelms our emotions, it can cause problems at home, at work, in our personal relationships, and in all sorts of dealings with other people. By learning how to manage and understand feelings of rage and irritation, we can regain control of our actions and have productive relationships.

#### How Anger Works

Anger can be triggered by outside events, such as driving through heavy traffic, waiting in long lines, or being confronted by another person's actions. Anger can also originate internally – by remembering upsetting events or dwelling on personal problems. When a person becomes angry, his or her body biologically changes. A person's blood pressure and heart rate rise, and he or she releases higher amounts of adrenaline, noradrenaline, and energy hormones.

These bodily changes happen for a reason! Anger makes people want to respond aggressively, and in doing so, it empowers them to defend themselves in dangerous situations, such as when they are attacked. In this way, anger is a perfectly natural human emotion as well as a necessary tool for survival.

However, most frustrating or irritating situations can't be solved by lashing out at other people. In order to live together in communities, people need other ways of dealing with unpleasant emotions. Laws and social norms help us make sure that our anger doesn't regularly lead to aggressive behavior, but some people need further help dealing with their feelings. Learning how to manage anger doesn't mean eliminating anger. It means gaining control of anger, rather than allowing anger to control you.

#### RESOURCES

American Psychological Association  
Provides tips and suggestions for dealing with anger.  
<http://www.apa.org/topics/controlanger.html>

Anger Management Resource Directory  
Offers a state by state listing of certified anger management providers.  
<http://www.anger-management-resources.org>

American Association of Anger Management Provides  
Get links and articles related to anger management as well as a directory of certified professionals.  
<http://www.aaapm.org>



... before it TAKES control of you.

GET YOUR LIFE >INFOCUS

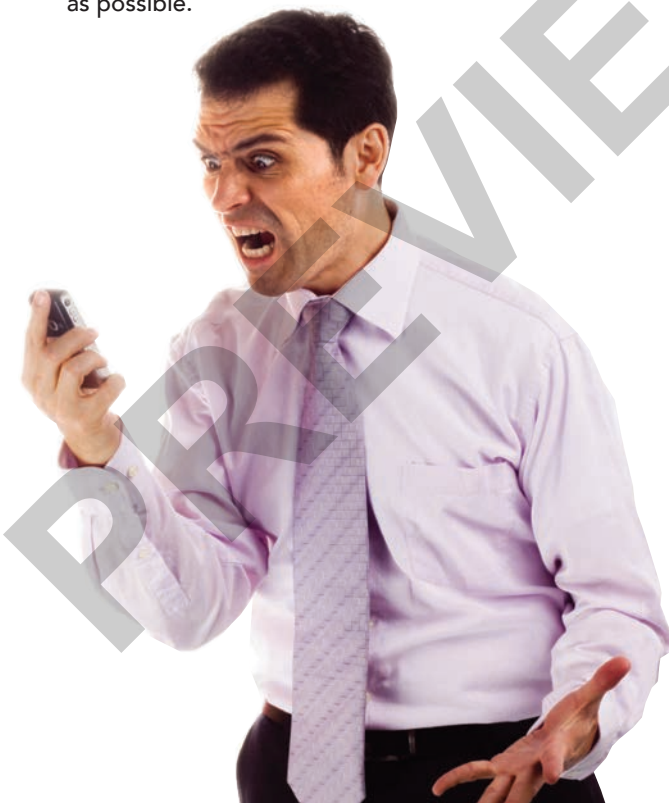
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## Anger Management Techniques

Relaxing is one of the best ways to defuse anger. Breathing deeply – from your belly – and visualizing your breath as it travels through your stomach, chest, and nose is a great way to relax. Try repeating a calm word inside your head, such as “relax” or “easy,” while you release your breath. While you inhale, repeat another word that reflects how you want to feel, such as “peace” or “calm.” Focusing on breathing can take place in any situation – home, work, even while driving in a car.

Visualizing is another relaxation method which can take place nearly anywhere. Picture a calming, peaceful experience – either one from your past or one from your imagination. Allow the feelings of this visualized place to merge with your present feelings. Maintaining a practice of gently stretching your muscles, in a slow, non-strenuous exercise such as yoga, can also train your body to stay calm and relaxed. Practice these techniques as often as possible.



## Anger Management

People deal with anger in a range of conscious and unconscious ways. Expressing angry feelings, suppressing angry feelings, and calming down are the three main strategies for gaining control over anger.

Expressing angry emotions assertively, but non-aggressively, is the healthiest way to communicate how you feel. This involves stating your anger as well as some of the causes for that anger as soon, and as often as possible. It's like slowly letting gas out of a bottle, rather than waiting for it to explode.

The energy created by anger is a powerful thing, and it can be put to positive use! Learning how to temporarily suppress anger and then redirect, or convert it, can take many forms – such as physical exercise, strengthening personal relationships, or improving work performance. However, when anger is suppressed, it must eventually be released. When anger doesn't have a positive, outward expression, it may turn inward and become dangerous.

Suppressed, unreleased anger can lead to high blood pressure, depression, and hypertension. In some situations, unexpressed anger leads to passive-aggressiveness or excessively critical, cynical, or hostile behaviors. In other words, the anger will come out – one way or another. Better that it come out in a healthy, productive manner.

One of the healthiest ways to manage anger is to calm down. Calming down isn't simply a matter of stopping yourself from outwardly displaying aggression. Rather, calming down is an internal exercise. It involves lowering your heart rate and allowing the tight knot of your feelings to loosen and relax.

“ Remind yourself that the world is not against you. Rather, acknowledge that the situation is annoying or exasperating.”

The better trained your body is to relax, the more calm you will stay in tense situations. In addition to relaxation, you can also change the way you think. When you find yourself in frustrating, unfair situations, try to imagine the perspectives of the other people involved. Slow down, and think deeply about what you're hearing, seeing, and feeling.

Avoid cursing, shouting, and speaking in extreme ways about the circumstances. Remind yourself that the world is not against you. Rather, acknowledge that the situation is annoying or exasperating. The way we think and talk about situations affects our emotional state. By encouraging ourselves to think about frustrations and disappointments in a more even, easygoing way, our emotions will often follow suit and become more mild in nature.

If you notice that certain situations regularly make you angry – such as driving through rush hour – try altering your schedule to avoid these situations. It's not always possible to eliminate the things which make us angry, but lessening the problem even a little bit can do a great deal of good. Other ways to alleviate anger include talking (either calmly, to the people immediately involved, or, if your anger is having a large impact on your life, to a counselor or therapist). Humor is another great way to diffuse anger. Gently poking fun at both ourselves and the things which make us angry can release steam, thereby allowing us to face underlying problems more constructively.

## Small Ways to Ease Anger

- Change your surroundings. Go for a walk, lie down for ten minutes, drink a glass of water.
- Alter your routine (to avoid seeing things which anger you or to change the time of day you have challenging conversations).
- Pay attention to the first signs of anger in your body. Learn to recognize these signals, and make a plan for what to do when they begin.
- Make a regular time for yourself to think, read, listen to music, or engage in other activities which relax you.
- Engage in projects (such as gardening, wood working, or other hobbies) which release your angry energy.

We can't eliminate every irritating, enraging circumstance from the world, but we can learn healthy, productive ways of directing our feelings.

