

Managing OUR ANGER

Usually anger is a temporary emotional arousal that is expressed & recedes in a matter of minutes or at most a few hours. As such, it is neither good nor bad.

Feelings of anger are often a response to a perceived threat or a situation that throws us off balance. It is normal for us to be angry at threats to our self-esteem, work overload, loss of status, and pressure.

An optimal amount of anger is healthy and can be used in positive ways. Anger can serve-

- as a signal that something uncomfortable has occurred.
- as a protective function in terms of motivating and mobilizing us to action.
- as an incentive for us to change and to set limits and boundaries.
- to alert us to the interpersonal and environmental conflicts that require our attention.

Indeed, without the arousal of anger, life could be dull and unproductive.

On the other hand, when expressed negatively, anger may affect our judgment, generate irrational fears, and can result in violent behaviours towards others or ourselves. Anger can be used to avoid other feelings and to withdraw. Negatively expressed anger can- damage the opinions others have of us, impede our attempts to resolve a situation, and potentially have long-lasting repercussions.

Even if warranted, angry reactions can impact our job, our relationships, and our health. The goal in managing our anger is to limit the harmful effects while maintaining life's vitality and quality.

Learning Our Triggers

What sets us off? If we know that we get angry and impatient with a fellow employee's slower pace, we have a head start on controlling our anger. Do we make angry sarcastic remarks? Vindictiveness is seldom satisfying. The work environment is small and people's memories are long. If in anger we bad-mouth someone, despite the legitimacy of our claims, we risk turning others off even though most may listen with interest.

Sometimes we use anger out of desperation to get what we want, especially if previous attempts have fallen on deaf ears. In fact, some people initiate legal action to express their anger rather than to legitimately solve an issue. Many times we get angry over things that we will not accept. Often these are things that cannot be changed.



What we all need to learn is to approach matters in more realistic and reasonable ways. This does not mean accepting something that is unjust. However, managing our anger will have a better outcome for us and help us deal with everyday life more effectively and with less stress.

When we react too strongly or let small overreactions (the daily hassles) pile up, we can run into physical and psychological problems. These problems can include: headaches, insomnia, and distress habits (drinking overeating, and smoking).

Situations where we may react with anger include someone saying something that hurts us or blaming us for something we did not do, or our boss criticizing our work that we thought was very creative. In all of these situations we need to directly face the individuals involved. Anger management, assertiveness training, or counselling can help us learn to react in a manner that does not cause more distress.

How To Handle Our Anger

- A good way of dealing with anger is to **chill out**. Allow the arousal to subside. Resist the urge to act impulsively. This means not making statements or acting while still angry. If we are too angry or upset to talk, or are likely to say something we might later regret, we need to take a **time out**. Consider meeting again after a few hours to allow time for both parties to calm down. If we encourage conflict, others are more likely to take a hard line and return our anger. On the other hand, if we learn how to actively listen, we can usually handle the situation effectively, with dignity and civility.

The ability to control our anger and take constructive action in adverse situations makes us a more desirable person, colleague, and employee.

- Another effective way of controlling our anger is to write down our complaints. Put them away and look at them again when we have cooled off. There are occasions when it will take time before the situation that caused our anger can be accepted. Stay in problem-solving mode. We do not need to launch into a defense of ourselves. Ask questions to make sure we know what the other person wants. Explore alternatives. The manner in which we handle a difficult and provoking situation says a lot about us and can increase our chances of settling a situation fairly and moving on.

Thinking before we act and leaving the situation on the best terms that we can is always a good strategy.

- Clinical research shows that survivors cope better if they do not accept the label or identity of a victim. They do not seek blame, they seek resolutions.

Do not allow ourselves to become victims or adopt the victim mentality.

- Our ability to manage our anger can improve as we draw meaning from resolving difficult emotional situations. On the other hand, our failure to do so can cause additional distress.



Healthy anger accurately signals or solves real life problems, and is expressed in ways others can understand. It is temporary and relinquished once the issue is resolved.