

Anger Management

YouthZone Life Skills



Instructions

Cut and paste the following questions into an email. Read the packet, answer the questions and send them back.

Questions

Aggression vs anger

In your own words, take 250 words to describe how anger is different from aggression. What do you think about it?

Triggers

- What type of trigger do you most identify with?
- Describe a time when you experienced a trigger. What was it?
- How did you respond?
- How do you wish you would have responded?

Breathe

- Write a paragraph about how you felt before and after the breathing exercise

Know Thyself

- What does your body feel like when you are getting angry?
- How is it different from how you feel when you are calm or happy?
- What are your three choices when you feel yourself getting mad?
- Think of an argument you have had with someone when they accused you of “always” or “never” doing something. How did this make you feel?

Anger

Anger is one of the most powerful emotions that we feel. While we associate anger with negative emotions, anger is not only bad. Anger becomes a problem when we are unable to manage it. In this packet, you will learn the different types of anger as well as learn some techniques to manage your emotions and give you control.

Anger is a natural response to perceived threats. It causes your body to release adrenaline, your muscles to tighten, and your heart rate and blood pressure to increase.

Your senses might feel more acute and your face and hands flushed¹. This is your body's way of telling you that something needs to be done. Anger can be a motivating force. It can make us push past obstacles to achieve our goals. Anger can be a great motivator for advocating for yourself.

Anger is not rage. Anger is not aggression. These are feelings closely associated but not inherent to anger. Think of anger as a force that needs to be controlled so that it may transform into positive energy and action.

Anger becomes a problem when:

- Is too intense
- Lasts too long
- Occurs too frequently
- Escalates
 - Overreacting to a justified wrong
 - Carries over to other situations (family, school)
- Focuses and blames only "others" – world, situation, anything except self
- Is harmful to self or others
- Leads to aggression or violence
- Destroys personal relationships

Left unchecked, anger becomes aggression. It can be a real problem for everyone involved. It is okay and even healthy to be angry but it is never okay to be aggressive. Aggressive behavior can have serious negative effects. People who let their anger get to aggression risk legal problems as well as a loss of friends and close relationships. In the very worst cases, people can experience long term negative effects that prevent them from living their lives as they wish. Aggressive behaviors include everything from verbal barbs and bullying on social media to throwing things and physically attacking someone.

Individuals who experience aggressive anger are usually aware of their emotions, although they don't always understand the true roots of their ire. In some cases, they redirect violent anger outbursts to scapegoats because it is too difficult to deal with the real problems. Aggressive anger often manifests as volatile or retaliatory anger and can

¹ "Anger management: Your questions answered - Mayo Clinic." <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/anger-management/art-20048149>. Accessed 22 Apr. 2020.

result in physical damages to property and other people. Learning to recognize triggers and manage anger symptoms is essential to dealing positively with this form of anger.²

Triggers

In recent times, the word “trigger” has acquired some negative connotations. It is often used in social media to devalue someone's feelings or accuse them of being weak. In reality, every single human on the planet deals with triggers. There are many common triggers for anger, such as losing your patience, feeling as if your opinion or efforts aren't appreciated, and injustice. Other causes of anger include memories of traumatic or enraging events and worrying about personal problems³. Identifying and naming your triggers gives you the power to manage them rather than live at their mercy.

Some common categories of triggers⁴:

Threat to Independence

When some people perceive that their independence is being taken away, restricted or questioned, they get angry. They do not like to take orders from others and feel as if they should be able to do what they want, regardless of the situation. This might include instances when you are told you can't do something you want to do. Your decisions are not respected or when you feel that you are not being trusted.

Threat to Person or Property

When people perceive that they or their friends and family are being threatened verbally, physically or emotionally, they can get angry. They also get angry when their property, or the property of their friends and family, is being damaged or taken from them. This can include verbal bullying, physical threat and theft.

Threat to Control

Some people are triggered by the perception that they are losing control. They get angry when they perceive that control is being taken from them or that there is a threat that they will lose control. They get angry when their plans are disrupted and do not proceed as they want. They get angry when they have to wait for other people to show up or when others alter their plans.

² "Anger Symptoms, Causes and Effects - PsychGuides.com." <https://www.psychguides.com/anger-management/>. Accessed 22 Apr. 2020.

³ "Anger management: Your questions answered - Mayo Clinic." <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/anger-management/art-20048149>. Accessed 22 Apr. 2020.

⁴ "Aggression & Bullying Workbook Teen - Whole Person" <https://wholeperson.com/pdf/TeenBullying.pdf>. Accessed 22 Apr. 2020.

Threat to Self-Esteem

A common trigger is when someone perceives that their self is viewed negatively. They get angry when they feel like they cannot achieve what they want to achieve, or when they do not do as well on a task as they feel they should. They also get angry when other people view them as weak or inadequate, and they will do things to try and prove that they are worthy.

Threat to Respect

Some get angry when they perceive that they are not being treated as respectfully as they should be. They want people to regard them highly, trust them, listen to them and understand their thoughts and emotions. They get angry when others are unable to do so. They also get angry when others misinterpret and/or ridicule their intentions and/or make light of their opinions.

Know Thyself

When you get angry, your body tends to get very excited. Your heart rate, blood pressure, breathing speed, and body temperature may increase. Your body also releases certain stress hormones that put your body on high alert.

Pay attention to your body when you're angry. Learn your body's anger warning signs. Next time you feel these warnings, you can step away from the situation or try a relaxation technique.

Ultimately, you have three options when you are angry:

- **Expression.** This is the act of conveying your anger. Expression ranges from a reasonable, rational discussion (acceptable) to a violent outburst (never acceptable).
- **Suppression.** This is an attempt to hold in your anger and possibly convert it into more constructive behavior. Suppressing anger is not a healthy route, however, as it can cause you to turn your anger inward on yourself or express your anger through passive-aggressive behavior.

- **Calming down.** This is when you control your outward behavior and your internal responses by calming yourself and letting your feelings subside.⁵

Expression

A common cause of anger is people feeling unheard. It is important to practice asserting yourself in calm ways that get the point across without being aggressive. You have every right to say what is bothering you. People will not always respond in the way you want but if you know that you spoke your truth respectfully and without intentionally inflicting harm.

Take responsibility for your feelings, own what you have done. If you start a hard conversation with what you could have done differently, the person you are speaking to will be more receptive to what you have to say.

Make it clear that you are addressing actions not personality, people are much more receptive if they don't feel that they have to defend their very being. If you *are* addressing something about their personality, take a step back. People can not change who they are, only what they do. If you are annoyed that someone laughs loud or they tell boring stories, it is your problem and you need to figure out why it makes you angry and what you can do to make yourself feel better.

I know you are but what am I?

Often, the things that make us most upset about other people is the things that they do that we see in ourselves and don't like. If you notice that you are mad because someone is a show-off it is highly likely that you don't like it when you find yourself showing off. When something is making you angry, ask yourself why.

Suppression

Do not bottle up your emotions. When people choose to not express their feelings, the feelings do not go away, they build up like a pressure cooker. When someone has bottled their emotions, they become less able to deal with new problems, they are already too full with the other unresolved emotions. They become easily agitated and quick to anger. Eventually, they can no longer hold it all in and then they explode with results that most often hurt the person who has kept their emotions in and those they love. By letting them out in healthy ways, you avoid ever getting to the point.

⁵ "Anger management: Your questions answered - Mayo Clinic." <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/anger-management/art-20048149>. Accessed 22 Apr. 2020.

Calm Down

Calming down is easier said than done. When your body feels like it's in a storm it is sometimes difficult to look for blue sky but it's there. Half of the battle is understanding when you are beginning to become upset and taking steps to keep it from becoming an overwhelming event.

Breathe

It seems almost too simple but slowing your breathing, taking deep breaths and being aware of the air moving through your lungs is one of the fastest and most effective ways to get big, overwhelming feelings under control. Click [here](#) and do the breathing exercise for one minute. Be sure to answer the "before" questions provided at the top before watching.

Get moving

Besides being healthy for your bodily functions, regular exercise is very effective at reducing stress in the body and mind. Try to get some exercise every day to keep stress and anger at bay. For a quick way to manage anger, go for a brisk walk, bike ride, run. Or do some other form of physical activity when you feel anger growing.

Create

Art and music can be great ways to get your emotions out in a healthy way. Write down what you are feeling, paint the color of your current emotion, choreograph a dance expressing what you feel.

Go Outside

Just sitting on a park bench or playing basketball can lower your stress and make you feel more connected.

Change your thinking

Anger can make you feel like things are worse than they really are. Reduce your anger by replacing negative thoughts with more realistic ones. Thoughts are not facts, mentally take one step back from your feelings and observe them without judgment. Ask yourself: Why am I feeling a particular way? Are there other ways I can think of this that will make me feel better?

Try eliminating words such as "always" or "never". By eliminating those words, you give yourself space to see the situation in a more nuanced light. No one is always or never

anything, humans flawed but trying and accusing yourself, others or an event as being “always” or “never” you deny yourself the ability to see a problem clearly.

Other good strategies include keeping a balanced view of the world and turning your angry demands into requests instead.

Avoid dwelling on the same things

You may rehash the same situation that made you upset over and over again, even if the problem is resolved. This is called **dwelling** or **ruminating**. Dwelling allows anger to last and could cause further arguments or other issues.

Try to move past the thing that caused your anger. Your brain can be like a dog with a bone, you are the owner of that dog and can take the bone away. You are in charge of your thoughts. When you notice yourself starting to dwell on a negative memory, try to take a look at the positive parts of the person or situation that made you upset.

Speed Limit Thought Experiment

Psychologist John Riskind⁶, an expert in helping people with seemingly uncontrollable emotions, has come up with techniques to de-escalating anger that is speeding out of control.

Riskind has found that the experience of anger is not as problematic as the belief that the sequence of events triggering that anger is accelerating, that the danger is escalating, and the available window for taking action is quickly disappearing. This sense of impending danger pushes people to do something that might stop the immediate threat but in the longer term will make the situation worse (such as punching the person who cut you off in line at the grocery checkout).

The first step is to check in with yourself frequently to assess whether your anger is increasing, decreasing, or stable in the given situation. For a scrupulous self-examination, use a number and even a few descriptive words to capture the intensity of your anger, as you’ll see in this speedometer example:

90 miles per hour and above: boiling, explosive, violent

⁶ "The Power of Negative Emotion."

https://books.google.com/books?id=mtYXBgAAQBAJ&pg=PT56&lpg=PT56&dq=+John+Riskind+speed+limit&source=bl&ots=RQPFQZQ4vB&sig=ACfU3U236JivT_MbEVw79kCHImf1N9cSrg&hl=en. Accessed 22 Apr. 2020.

85 miles per hour: fuming, outraged
80 miles per hour: infuriated, enraged
75 miles per hour: irate, exasperated
65 miles per hour: bitter, indignant
60 miles per hour: ticked off
55 miles per hour: mad, angry
50 miles per hour: agitated, perturbed
45 miles per hour: annoyed, irritated, frustrated
40 miles per hour: ruffled, displeased
35 miles per hour and below: calm and cool, peaceful, tranquil

If your anger is well above the speed limit, you're going to need more time in order to retain maximum flexibility and control in dealing with the event that provoked or upset you. In this case, consider slowing the speedometer. At this high speed, you probably feel a bit out of control.

Imagine putting on the brakes so that the way you're feeling and acting goes from eighty-five miles per hour to sixty-five, and then from sixty-five to fifty-five. See how the people or event that is agitating you have driven ahead, leaving you space to breathe. Create a visual image of what you would look like and how other people would appear to you. Notice how they no longer seem as physically close to you. Listen carefully to what the other person is saying, and read the underlying message in their body language. Use the lower speed to see whether the person bothering you is open to conversation or closed off. If they are open their "car" will slow down to a speed where you can understand each other. If they are not, then they will continue at 80mph and you need to remove yourself from the situation.

Focusing on the speed that threats are moving, gives us a little more psychological breathing room. Experiment with this tool. The overall objective here is to learn how to work with your anger.

Find what works

Everyone is different and what works for one may not work for the other. Experiment with different things that don't hurt you or anyone else. As long as you're healthy, there is no wrong answer to how you calm yourself and deal with emotions.