

## **ADVANCED Psych Care**

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### **Anger Management**

Strategies to learn to control your anger:

**Recognize your anger** The first step in controlling your anger is to know the early warning signs that you are starting to become angry. Most ugly incidents of out-of-control anger start out by the angry person being “surprised” that they are “suddenly” so angry. If they had paid attention, they would have realized that their anger had been building. Every person’s early warning signs of anger may be a bit different, but there are some common signs, including hands or teeth clenching, hands sweating, feeling the “blood pressure” rising in the head, tension or pain between the shoulder blades, talking louder or faster, increased fidgeting, etc. Once you recognize your anger, then try one or more of the following steps.

**Get away** Walk away from the situation is often the best thing to do, especially if you are afraid you are ready to say or do anything that you’ll regret later. Ask to be left alone or to go to a quiet room if you need to. If you are the one following the person trying to get away, let them go.

**Relax/Soothe your Body** Splash cold water on your face to calm the metabolic fires that flare up with anger. Take a shower or bath (hot or cold). Take a nap, if possible. Eat or drink something (other than alcohol). Take slow deep breaths from the abdomen (not the chest, this will only get you fired up more).

**Discharge your tense/angry feelings** Anger is a physical energy and it is usually helpful to discharge this energy with vigorous physical activity. Squeeze a rubber ball. Throw a nerf ball. Pace or walk fast. Run in place or jog outside. Do pushups. Do jumping jacks. Hit a pillow and scream into it. Punch a punching bag.

**Talk** Talk to someone about what is making you angry (besides the person making you angry). Maybe this is a friend, a co-worker, a spouse, a neighbor, or a therapist. Most of the time when a person gets angry and has a hard time letting the anger go, it is because of looking at the problem from a limited perspective. A concerned and helpful person can sometimes provide this needed perspective.

**Express** your anger in other positive ways, including writing down what happened and how you feel, drawing or painting your “feeling,” or role-playing talking to the person making you angry. Filling out the following questions in an “Anger Log” can be helpful in understanding what is going on.

## Anger Control Log

1. Who made you angry?
2. What happened? What did the other person do?
3. What were you thinking at the time? Did this help solve the problem or conflict, or just make it worse?
4. Did you try to calm yourself down before you reacted? If so, what did you try to do to calm down?
5. If you reacted, what happened then? Did your participation help or hurt the situation or solve the problem?
6. In retrospect, how angry were you?

1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10
<i>Just a little angry Still Calm</i>	<i>Mildly angry Beginning to Get upset</i>	<i>Upset and Angry</i>	<i>Really very Angry</i>	<i>Burning mad Wanting to hurt somebody</i>

7. How do you think you handled yourself?

1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10
<i>Terrible – could have Hurt myself or others</i>	<i>Poorly but didn't Try to hurt myself Or others</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Great</i>

8. What else could you have done to control your anger?

**Think** Think about what you feel like doing versus what you think you should be doing. Use your “Wise mind” – think of the negative things that will happen if you lose control and do what you feel like doing, and then think of the positive things that will happen if you gain control of your anger. What is it that you really want out of this situation? Is it just to get your own way? (we can’t always get that in life). Is it to get respect? Is it just to get someone to listen to your ideas and not dismiss them? Is it to defend your rights as a person, while respecting the rights of others?

**Take direct action** Ask someone for help in controlling your anger. Change something so the situation doesn’t arise again that makes you angry. Apologize for something that you did to hurt or distress someone. Set a time to talk about the conflict later. Rehearse how you can effectively confront the other person after you’ve calmed down. Assertively tell the other person what it is about their behavior that makes you angry – using “I Feel” statements, and avoiding all statements beginning with “you” or blaming.

**Beyond Anger Management** (Stosny approach):

### **HEALING ANGER**

**HEALS** - At the first sign of anger, call up the word “HEALS” in your mind. If a particular person is making you mad, you should actually picture the word “HEALS” on their face.

**EXPLAIN** to yourself your deepest core hurt that lies behind your anger, such as feeling unlovable, disregarded, or powerless.

**ACCESS** your core value. Take an inventory of what makes your life worth living – good deeds you have done, loving relationships or values you want to uphold, like honesty and bravery.

**LOVE** yourself.

**SOLVE** the problem. Address the conflict that underlies your anger.

Ask yourself, which do you prefer, being angry or compassionate?  
Which way do you like yourself better?