

MARCH 2011



Mad March

Understanding & Managing Your Anger

What is Anger?

Anger is a completely normal, and usually health human emotion. It tells us what we like and what we don't. However, what gets people into trouble is how they express feelings of anger. Angry feelings can get out of control and turn destructive, which may lead to problems – problems at work, problems in personal relationships, and even your overall quality of life.

Anger is an emotional state that varies in intensity from mild irritation to intense fury and rage. Like other emotions, it is accompanied by **physiological and biological changes**: when you get angry, your heart rate and blood pressure go up, you can start to sweat, tremble, get dry mouth, nausea, headache, get knots in your stomach, or grind your teeth. Unresolved anger can lead to distractibility, accident proneness, anxiety, broken relationships, and hostility. Uncontrolled anger can also lead to violence and rage.

What Causes Anger?

Anger can be caused by both external and internal events. You could be angry with a specific person (such as a coworker, supervisor, loved one) or an event (a traffic jam, spouse not taking out the trash, etc.). Worrying or brooding about your personal problems could cause your anger as well. Memories of traumatic or enraging events can also trigger angry feelings.

Consequences of Anger...

Positive

- Anger provides energy to solve problems & resolve our differences
- If we learn to recognize lower levels of anger, we can use the feelings as tools to help us act assertively by communicating our feelings calmly & effectively.

Negative

- Can lead to impulsive action, aggressive outbursts, & inaction or passive aggression. Generating everything from hurtful comments, health problems & outbursts of violence.
- It is impossible to think clearly when angry. Communication is less effective & we may send the wrong signals.

Identify & Manage

Look at Yourself

- Identify situations that make you angry. Realize what triggers your anger
- Avoid controlling your thoughts (those beginning with "should," "never," or "must")
- Contact the EAP to discuss your anger if you find it is negatively affecting your relationships or work

Reduce Tension

- Try 3 minute breaks or time-outs to relax
- Take deep breaths to relax your muscles
- Adopt behaviors that promote wellness such as healthy eating and an exercise routine

Communicate Assertively (Not Aggressively)

- Listen to what and how something is said! If you think you may have misunderstood something, ask for clarification - Perception is key
- Make requests, not demands – Try to compromise
- Count to 10 before saying anything – This allows time for you to think about what you want to say and how to best communicate your emotions

Take Control

- Don't let things build up!
- Practice problem solving



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