

Anger Management Pamphlet

Developed By

Student Counselling Career & Development Centre

1. **Defining Anger:**

Anger can be described as a natural human emotion that people experience when they feel hurt; threatened; violated and frustrated. Unlike any other emotion like excitement – anger is a more complex and intense emotion. It is a secondary emotion, in other words Feeling hurt or threatened or violated is the primary emotion that you experience and anger is the result of feeling hurt or the expression thereof.

We often see anger when someone reacts to frustration and mistreatment. In honesty, no matter what personality traits define who you are, we are all destined to face occasions of anger throughout our lives.

So, the next time you find yourself getting angry, stop and ask yourself: What am I threatened or hurt about.

1. **Signs and Symptoms of Anger:**

**2.1 Physical signs of anger include**:

* clenching your jaws or grinding your teeth
* headache
* stomach ache
* increased and rapid heart rate
* sweating, especially your palms
* feeling hot in the neck/face
* shaking or trembling
* dizziness
	1. **Emotionally you may feel:**
* like you want to get away from the situation
* irritated
* sad or depressed
* guilty
* resentful
* anxious
* like striking out verbally or physically
	1. **Other destructive signs to take note of are:**
* rubbing your head
* cupping your fist with your other hand
* pacing up and down
* getting sarcastic
* losing your sense of humor
* acting in an abusive or abrasive manner
* craving a drink, a smoke or other substances that relax you
* raising your voice
* beginning to yell, scream, or cry
1. **INDIRECT METHODS OF EXPRESSING ANGER**

There are **TWO (inappropriate) WAYS OF EXPRESSING ANGER:**

* + Inwardly expressed anger
	+ Outwardly expressed anger

The above ways of expressing anger can put us at a disadvantage in many ways: **HOW?**

* 1. **Inwardly expressed anger** means feeling angry but directing it towards oneself. This can lead to sadness or depression. Examples of such anger:
	+ Bitterness
	+ Depression
	+ Nagging
	+ Gossiping
	+ Sarcasm
	+ Displacement
	+ Withdrawal
	+ Self-criticism
	1. **Outwardly expressed anger** is the anger you would direct towards other persons or things. This can lead to hostility, hatred and revenge. Examples:
	+ Blaming others
	+ Finding fault
	+ Anger outbursts
	+ Drinking / Drugs
	+ Driving too fast
	+ Affairs
	+ Physical; Emotional and/or Psychological abuse
	+ Sexual abuse / Rape
	+ Murder
	+ Self- harm/mutilation
	+ Suicide
* If you are not in touch with your feelings, your mind searches for ‘reasons’ (excuses) so that you can be angry and avoid the true sense of your hurt and end up blaming the other person.
1. **When is anger destructive?**
* When the expression destroys relationships instead of strengthening them.
* When it is not expressed appropriately to the right person and right situation.
* When it leads to verbal and physical abuse (harm to other people)
* When one feels he does not have control over it.
* When it interferes with your studies; employment; family or social life.
* When you lose your confidence; ego; self-esteem; etc.
* When it turns into suicide and/or self-mutilation.
* Anger can also be destructive when it steeps and simmers within you leading to hostility and aggression.

\*Research has indicated that for some people anger can be a health risk as it is regarded as a deadly component in the make-up of heart attack prone people.

1. **Common situations that trigger anger:**
	* A trigger is something that sets off a reaction. For example, when you strike a match, it will ignite into a flame. Common situations that can trigger people are as follows:
* When the achievement of your goals is hindered one way or the other.
* Being degraded personally or belittled.
* Being treated unfairly.
* Someone is being prejudiced.
* One’s authority or feelings are disregarded by others.
* Your property or possession is violated, mishandled or stolen.
* Being ignored, neglected or ill-treated by significant others.
* Being lied to or being fooled by significant others.
* Being abused (verbally, emotionally, physically & psychologically).
1. **WHAT PREVENTS US FROM EXPRESSING ANGER (appropriately)?**
	* Low Self-Esteem / Non-assertiveness
	* Fear of losing control
	* Fear of appearing weak
	* Fear of rejection
	* Fear of retaliation
	* Fear of hurting other person’s feelings
2. **AGGRESSIVENESS vs ASSERTIVENESS:**

**6.1 Aggression:** This involves standing up for your rights in a **hostile** manner.

* Aggression is often directed toward taking advantage of others.
* When people are aggressive, they try to get their needs met by overpowering, belittling, humiliating, or degrading others.
* Using aggression is only an indication that you are concerned only about yourself, in other words when you are aggressive, other people’s rights, needs, and desires don’t matter to you.
* People who often get into the trap of aggression are those who feel threatened, jealous, vulnerable or mistreated.
* For such people, anger often builds up until it is expressed as aggression.
* Aggression unfortunately alienates us from others and turns us into hostile and fearful people.

**6.2 Assertiveness:** This means standing up for your rights and expressing your thoughts and feelings in a direct, honest and appropriate (polite) manner.

* When you are being assertive you show respect for yourself and others.
* On one hand, you are not passive by allowing people to take advantage of you.
* On the other hand, you acknowledge other people’s needs and attempt to relate to them in a tactful manner.
* There are advantages in being assertive:
	+ It provides the best approach for achieving mutually satisfying interpersonal relationships.
	+ It helps boost self-esteem and confidence when interacting with others.
	+ You don’t necessarily remain passive and allow people to take advantage of you.
	+ You sustain dignity and respect for yourself and others.
	+ It gives you the opportunity to express your feelings in a calmer way without offending the other person.

**6.3 Non-assertiveness:**

* To be non-assertive is to be passive, timid and (unnecessarily) apologetic.
* Non-assertiveness gives the message that your needs are not important and that you are willing to go along with what others want, even when what they want is not in your best interest.
* It means a lack of respect for your own needs, and you find yourself being helpful and polite to people all the time.
* You may feel that it is inappropriate or impolite to say what’s on your mind and to stand up for yourself.
* However, you need to remember that if you get into the habit of letting things go by being passive, people might take advantage of you because they know they can get away with anything if they want to and they know you won’t express your disapproval or dissatisfaction towards them.
1. **DEALING WITH FEELINGS OF REVENGFULNESS:**
* Do you associate with any of the following statements:

 “When I am seeking revenge I”:

* + Find it hard to forgive and forget past hurts/offenses.
	+ Try to get back at those who have mistreated or hurt me.
	+ Set up situations where those with whom I am angry get what I believe they have coming to them.
	+ Am reacting to real or imagined hurts/offenses I have received at the hands of others.
	+ Am acting vindictively - seeking just retribution for the wrongs I have suffered.
	+ Am unmerciful and insensitive.
	+ Give my enemies no chance to redeem themselves.
	+ See life as a ``win or lose'' proposition and having ``lost'' to my enemies, I make sure that they lose.
	+ Want to see others suffer like I have.
	+ Get bloodthirsty. I get pleasure seeing my enemies in pain.
	+ Might spend excessive time in trying to ``get even.''
* It is important to deal with some of the wrong thoughts that underlie revenge seeking

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| REVENGEFUL THOUGTS | DO YOU DO THIS? |
| * No one is going to take advantage of me again.
 | YES | NO |
| * I would rather fight than admit I was wrong.
 | YES | NO |
| * They hurt me too badly; I can't forgive and forget.
 | YES | NO |
| * I don't get mad, I just get even.
 | YES | NO |
| * It is better to attack before you are attacked.
 | YES | NO |
| * No one cares about me; I need to protect myself so that no one can take advantage of me again.
 | YES | NO |
| * They are all out to get me.
 | YES | NO |
| * There's no place where I can feel safe, secure, and content.
 | YES | NO |
| * Kill or be killed.
 | YES | NO |
| * The only way to achieve my goal is to be sure that my enemies suffer dearly for their wrong doing.
 | YES | NO |
| * It gives me great pleasure to see him/her in so much pain.
 | YES | NO |
| * Don't cross me or you'll be sorry.
 | YES | NO |

1. [**HOW CAN I OVERCOME MY FEELINGS OF REVENGE?**](http://www.coping.org/anger/resent.htm#overcome#overcome)
* In order to overcome feelings of revenge, I need **“To rid myself of spiteful, revengeful thoughts and behaviour”:**
* Rid myself of the remnants of irrational thinking and replace them with self-enhancing, self-promoting thinking.
* Develop a new way of handling hurts and pain by increasing my ability to be assertive and confront my anger in an appropriate fashion.
* Identify any negative behaviour which is a sign that I’m being revengeful.
* Identify every person against whom I harbour ill feelings.
* Exhaust all underlying issues causing my anger, and then work at forgiveness and forgetting.
* Put past hurts, injuries, and pain behind me; reset my goals and priorities and then concentrate on personal growth.
* Achieve a ``win-win'' philosophy in my relationships.

**10. SELF-ASSESSMENT** (Check your level of anger)



Anger Questionnaire

**Instructions:** The items below refer to how you have behaved during the past year. Please indicate whether each question is TRUE or FALSE as a description of you during the past year.

**Note:** If you suspect that you have an anger management problem you should speak to someone (e.g. a peer helper) or seek help from a counsellor.

1.I don’t show my anger about everything that makes me mad, but when I do - look out.

True False

2.I still get angry when I think of the bad things people did to me in the past.

True False

3.Waiting in line, or waiting for other people, really annoys me.

True False

4.I fly off the handle easily.

True False

5. I often find myself having heated arguments with the people who are closest to me.

True False

6. I sometimes lie awake at night and think about the things that upset me during the day.

True False

7. When someone says or does something that upsets me, I don’t usually say anything at the time, but later spend a lot of time thinking up cutting replies I could and should have made.

True False

8. I find it very hard to forgive someone who has done me wrong.

True False

9. I get angry with myself when I lose control of my emotions.

True False

10. People really irritate me when they don’t behave the way they should, or when they act like they don’t have the good sense of a head of lettuce.

True False

11. If I get really upset about something, I have a tendency to feel sick later, either with a weak spell, headache, upset stomach, or diarrhea.

True False

12. People I've trusted have often let me down, leaving me feeling angry or betrayed.

True False

13. When things don’t go my way, I get depressed.

True False

14. I am apt to take frustration so badly that I cannot put it out of my mind.

True False

15. I've been so angry at times I couldn't remember things I said or did.

True False

16. After arguing with someone, I hate myself.

True False

17. When riled up, I often blurt out things I later regret saying.

True False

18. Some people are afraid of my bad temper.

True False

19. When someone hurts or frustrates me, I want to get even.

True False

20. When I get angry, frustrated or hurt, I comfort myself by eating or using alcohol or other drugs.

True False

21. I've gotten so angry at times that I've become physically violent, hitting other people or breaking things.

True False

22. At times, I've felt angry enough to kill.

True False

23. Sometimes I feel so hurt and alone I feel like committing suicide.

True False

24. I’m a really angry person, and I know I need help learning to control my temper and angry feelings because it has already caused me a lot of problems.

True False

* ***If you answered true to ten or more of these statements, you are seriously prone to anger problems. It's time for a change.***
* ***If you answered true to five questions, you are about average in your angry feelings, but learning some anger management techniques can make you a happier person.***
* ***If you answered true to even one of the last four questions, then your anger has reached a danger level! Perhaps we can help you get your anger under control before it takes your life out of control.***

**11. APPROPRIATE & PRACTICAL WAYS TO MANAGE YOUR ANGER:**

* **Become emotionally aware:**
* First & foremost you need to acknowledge that you are angry before you can be able to take responsibility to change the situation or to control your anger.
* Being emotionally aware and recognizing your emotions should put you in a better position to react appropriately.
* Try to distinguish between primary and secondary emotions, for example, when you feel yourself fuming up check if you are hurt/threatened/violated etc. This will help you realize your anger stems from these underlying feelings and therefore you need to focus on that first.
* **Think Rationally & Logically (Cognitive restructuring):**
* Simply put, this means changing the way you think.
* Logic defeats anger, because anger, even when justified, can quickly become irrational. So use logic on yourself. Using swearing words or sarcasm does not change anything, instead the nasty approach will alienate and humiliate people who might otherwise be willing to work with you on a solution.
* You may be angry as a result of hurt, and the hurt may be a result of your own poor or inappropriate cognitive functioning.
* This basically means, for example if you constantly convince yourself that your goal was unsuccessful as a result of “stupidity” or because you are a “failure”(irrational thought) this may lead to you believing that you are indeed “stupid”/”failure” and ultimately you’ll “believe” that “others” view you that way.
* However, if your project has been unsuccessful, it would be more appropriate to use logical and rational thinking by using positive/self-encouraging self-dialogue. For example: “Perhaps I’ll have to consult with my supervisor to check what adjustments need to be made to improve the content of this proposal. This might better my chances of commencing my project” (logical thinking).
* **Communicate your true feelings clearly:**
* Things will happen that will cause anger; and sometimes it will be justifiable anger. Life will be filled with frustration, pain, loss, and the unpredictable actions of others. You cannot change that; but you can change the way you let such events affect you.
* Proper and clear communication with the other person is therefore very important.
* Before voicing out your feelings, you need to identify the correct person who caused you the anger, then recognise and acknowledge the feelings by using “I” messages.

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| **Example A** | **Example B** |
| “I feel very hurt and angry because you insulted me in front of your friends. If you ever do it again, I’d prefer it if you did it when we are alone”. | “You annoy me when talk like that in front of ever one else” |
| “I get disappointed when you get home so late” | “Your irresponsible behaviour irritates me sometimes” |
| “I feel left out when you spend more time with your friends than with me”. | “You always want to go out with them” |

* The expressions in Example A show that the person is taking responsibility of their feelings (because the person owns their feelings, the receiver feels more respected and more empathic towards her).
* The expressions in Example B may escalate into conflict as they are more accusing and offensive in nature.
* **Self-relaxation:**
* One of the best ways to control your anger or prevent yourself from doing something nasty when you are fumed up, is to use deep-breathing and muscle-relaxation exercises right there on the spot to calm yourself down.
* It is nearly impossible to experience intense feelings while breathing deeply.
* The idea behind relaxing your body is to relax and calm yourself as this will help you think more clearly and hopefully make the situation more manageable. Here are some simple useful techniques:
	+ Take slow deep breaths, while concentrating on (the speed) of your heartbeats.
	+ As you start feeling that the heartbeats are at a slower pace than before, continue with slow deep breaths.
	+ Inhale and hold your breath, count to 5.
	+ Exhale (through small opening of mouth), and count to 5.
	+ Repeat the inhale & exhale stages, until such time you feel your heart rate becoming normal again.
	+ At this stage you are likely to think more rationally in handling the situation, rather than acting on impulse by grabbing a dangerous object and throwing it towards the person who upset you.
* **Robot Technique:**

**\* RED - Stop - calm down-** before you act

**\* ORANGE - Think – Check how do you feel?** Formulate positive goals; think about solutions, what will the consequences be?

**\* Green - Go – i.e.** Put your plan into action.

* Exercise this technique by visualizing the lights on a robot!
* When you find yourself in a situation where you need emotional control, you will be able to see the lights in your imagination, this is a sign to you that it is a potentially dangerous situation.
* It is also an indication that there are other possibilities to consider and only then are you free to react.
* **Visualisation:**
* With practice, this technique can also have positive results.
* You can visualize or imagine yourself coping with the negative feeling, and through this you can prepare yourself to cope with it in a real situation.
* If you feed your brain with positive, successful images, it will function in such a way as to make the images come true.
* You can only visualize successfully if you are in a calm, positive surrounding and you can imagine how it will feel, look, sound, taste and smell when you have coped with the feeling and have reacted to it in the correct way.
* In addition to this, you have to visualize how others will give you feedback: What do they say, how do they behave towards you etc.
* Visualize for about 10 minutes with closed eyes. Practice it in rich detail.
* The more focused and persistent the visualization, the quicker and more effective it will be.
* Remember that visualization is an art and some people find it easier to do than others.
* Put some effort into mastering this skill.
* World-class athletes visualize themselves performing: for example they see it, feel it and experience it before they even begin.
* **Keep a journal of your feelings:**
* When you experience intense feelings, write them down in detail.
* Ensure that you write down their intensity as well: e.g. on a scale of 1 – 10 you can record how intense your anger was at that moment.
* All negatives feelings and thoughts must be written down.
* Keeping a journal gives you a better perspective of your experiences, and you will be able to note what needs to be worked on.
* In addition to this, you need to also write down your progress, i.e. if you are succeeding with the techniques you have learnt, which ones have worked best for you, and which ones are not taking you anywhere.
* Remember what works for somebody else, might not really work for you.
* **Take time out:**
* This basically means removing yourself from the situation that aggravates anger.
* Take time out when you realize that you are going to lose control over your emotions in a difficult situation, especially if your emotions could cost your dignity, or your job.
* Ask to be excused and leave the room/place where the anger started.
* You can stand outside and breath deeply, drink a glass of water or go for a walk.
* While out for a walk, calm yourself and organize your thinking.
* Go back only when you feel in control of your emotions.

NB: **Consult with your counsellor to help you identify those anger symptoms and to deal with the underlying causes!**

 

***NMMU STUDENT COUNSELLING:***

*2nd avenue: 041 – 504 3854*

*George campus: 044 – 801 5051*

*Missionvale: 041 – 504 1106*

*North campus: 041 – 504 3222*

*South campus: 041 – 504 2511*

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