

## Anger Management

*Anger surges up inside us like a raging river. Dammed up, it overpowers and consumes us; directed outwardly, its torrents drive others from us; harnessed and channeled, its energy drives us to greater things.*

Anger is a natural but often misunderstood emotion; its purpose is to protect and serve us, but it all too frequently causes injury and loss. Like other emotions, anger is neither good nor bad, it just is. Despite its skewed reputation, anger is the recognized driving force behind many worthwhile accomplishments. Righteous anger moves individuals to action and provides the impetus to change individual lives, communities, and societies. Frustrated anger often serves to stimulate creativity in overcoming obstacles; it is at the root of innumerable discoveries, inventions, and change.

How we deal with our anger determines whether it will work to benefit or harm those involved. Effective management takes us from initial anger to acknowledgement, and then to understanding. Understanding then leads to acceptable expression of anger followed by resolution and reconciliation. Managed poorly, anger

often escalates to rage and uncontrolled fury, a stage fraught with destructive and devastating power.

To avoid the dangers of unleashed anger, we are encouraged to control it. Unfortunately, we often misinterpret control to mean deny anger and stuff it deep inside. When we do this, anger grows in intensity and pressure. Over time, either this powerful emotion will implode, causing us mental, emotional, or physical harm, or explode, injuring others and wreaking havoc on relationships. Of course, freely venting anger without due thought or restraint can be equally detrimental.

Learning to manage anger in a healthy, productive way is critical to our personal and professional well-being. To better channel the power of anger, follow the *Steps to Success* and take heed of the *Mistakes to Avoid*.

### *Mistakes to Avoid:*

- ***Refuse to acknowledge your anger or deal with its sources.*** Result: Pretend that you do not get angry; call your anger by some other name, and wonder why your life and relationships are in ruins.
- ***Allow your anger to control your attitude and behavior.*** Result: Deny yourself a rewarding, meaningful life and relationships.
- ***Seek to control your anger in ineffective or harmful ways.*** Result: Stuff your anger until, like a volcano, you explode from the pressure.
- ***Express your anger in inappropriate ways.*** Result: Withdraw from others. Sulk and pout, but do not explain your conduct. Expect others to worry, fret, and try to figure out what is wrong. Give them the silent treatment. Get angrier if they ignore you. Do not respond to normal daily occurrences appropriately.
- ***Use angry outbursts to control or manipulate others.*** Result: Rant, rave, bellow, swear, and threaten others. (Note: Seldom are your selected targets or excuses the reason you are mad.)
- ***Refuse to seek professional help for unmanageable anger and rage.*** Result: Ruin personal and professional relationships. Lose control and risk damage to property, harm to self, or physical or emotional injury to others. Bear

the consequences of your actions and suffer reproach and guilt for not obtaining professional help.

- **Allow others to direct their anger at you in inappropriate ways.** Result: Accept physical, verbal, or emotional abuse from others in any form and become the object of escalating abuse. Make excuses for the abuser and enable them to continue.
- **Take yourself or life's situations too seriously.** Result: Choose to live in a state of perpetual anger/resentment over things you cannot control.

## Steps to Success:

1. **Acknowledge your feelings of anger or resentment and identify the source or cause of these feelings.** Questions to ask: Why am I angry? What triggered these feelings? What happened before I became angry? What else is going on in my life that might have contributed to these feelings? Are there underlying unmet expectations? If so, are these expectations realistic? Have I discussed these expectations reasonably with those concerned? How can I best resolve this issue and move beyond my anger?
2. **Let go: Do not dwell on your anger or its causes.** Questions to ask: Have I adequately dealt with my anger and its causes? Do I needlessly hold on to anger for the sake of being a victim? Have I given forgiveness where needed? (Note: Personally granting forgiveness is not always possible, because the person we need to forgive may be beyond our reach or may refuse to accept our forgiveness. For our own sake, we must forgive anyway. Harboring bitterness and resentment hurts us far more than it hurts the other person.) Have I asked for forgiveness from those I have offended or hurt? Where and how can I better spend the energy this anger has cost me?
3. **Restore a sense of control. Choose to channel your frustration and anger into positive and constructive actions or activities.** Questions to ask: How can I disperse this angry energy in a positive way? Is it safe to address the other party at this point, or should I take some time to cool down? Would physical exertion, deep breathing, meditation, or

mental diversion help me vent these feelings safely? How can I respectfully address this issue without resorting to anger? Have I looked for an opportunity to direct my reason for the anger to make a positive change or impact?

**4. Maintain your physical health with proper diet, adequate rest, and regular exercise.** Questions to ask: Do I regularly participate in some form of aerobic exercise to improve or maintain my physical condition? Am I careful about eating a balanced and nutritious diet? Do I avoid destructive behaviors (overeating, smoking, excessive caffeine intake, drinking to excess, etc.) when I am angry or upset? Do I ensure that I am getting adequate sleep? Do I regularly practice some form of meditation or relaxation to strengthen and renew my spirit?

**5. Seek assistance or guidance from a trusted friend or mentor.** Questions to ask: Who has successfully helped me to sort through my feelings in the past? Who will be honest without being judgmental? Who will hear what I have to say and help me to find balance in the situation by exploring other perspectives and choices? Who has a talent for helping me find the humor in a seemingly humorless situation?

**6. Seek professional assistance when necessary to identify, understand, and manage anger and issues.** Questions to ask: Is my behavior or attitude abusive, inexcusable, out of control, or requiring professional help?

1.) What is a big mistake, do you think? Why?

2.) What is a good step to controlling anger? What would be the effect on relationships with your friends + family?

## Fear and Anxiety

*Rational fear stirs us to action, protecting life and well-being: Irrational fear paralyzes us, imperiling that which it is designed to protect.*

Fear causes a natural, protective, physiological response including increased adrenaline, elevated heart and respiratory rates, and heightened mental alertness. This stress response enhances our physical and mental ability to protect ourselves from harm. Once the danger has passed, the stress is relieved and our physiological functions return to normal. However, if we live in a constant state of fear, our bodies remain in a "fight or flight" mode, wreaking havoc on our health and undermining our well-being.

Rational, well-founded fears usually have identifiable sources and are relatively easy to manage. For most, these fears take the form of temporary anxiety. For some, fear resulting from a particularly frightening experience may generalize to include all similar situations. This generalized fear response can range from mild anxiety to complete immobilization. In its extreme form, professional help is needed.