

Put Down your Gloves and Calm Down

Anger and how to deal with it

A Powerful Emotion

We all feel angry at time. Anger is a normal, usually healthy, human emotion which can lead to a positive change in others. It is our physical and mental response to a threat and takes many different forms. The problem with anger is when it gets out of control and turns destructive.

No one person reacts in the same way when controlled by anger as these feelings are influenced by our emotional make-up, how we view the world, what happens around us and our circumstances.

I think, for one, we have to really accept that anger is a normal human emotion that can be a positive force for change.

– *Koren Zailckas*

This booklet outlines how anger works and provides suggestive ways of how to keep your own anger level under control and how to deal with aggression in others.

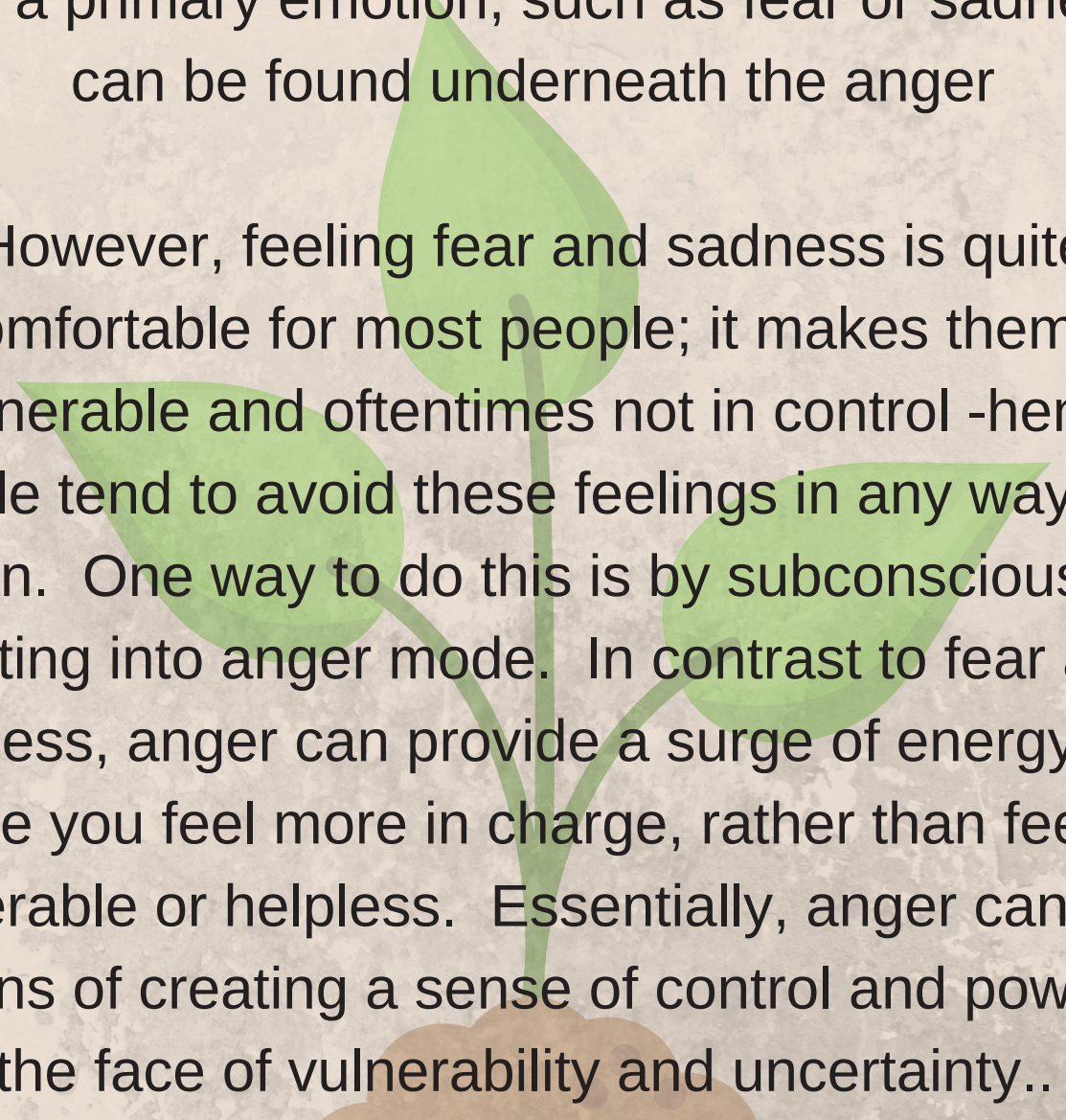
**ANGER IS ONLY ONE
LETTER SHORTER
THAN DANGER**

Where does anger stem from?

Every second of the day we are interpreting our surroundings and situations which influences the way we feel. It is this feeling that determines the way we react in a situation and the emotion we expose. If we analyse a situation in which we feel wronged, we feel angry.

Anger is a secondary emotion, which means that when someone expresses anger, more often than not, a primary emotion, such as fear or sadness, can be found underneath the anger

However, feeling fear and sadness is quite uncomfortable for most people; it makes them feel vulnerable and oftentimes not in control -hence people tend to avoid these feelings in any way they can. One way to do this is by subconsciously shifting into anger mode. In contrast to fear and sadness, anger can provide a surge of energy and make you feel more in charge, rather than feeling vulnerable or helpless. Essentially, anger can be a means of creating a sense of control and power in the face of vulnerability and uncertainty..



Our body's response to anger

1. Many of our emotions are linked to a particular physical response. Anger gets the mind and body ready for action. It arouses the nervous system, increasing the heart rate, blood pressure, blood flow to muscles, blood sugar level and sweating. It also sharpens the senses and increases the production of adrenalin, a hormone produced at times of stress

2. In conjunction to these bodily changes, anger also affects the way we think.

Especially during a threatening situation, we do not waste time weighing up information that doesn't instantly affect our safety or well-being, We usually react on instinct and on the first thought we think of

3. This means that we will most likely act before considering all other relevant details and before making a rational decision about how to react. When this happens and anger gets in the way of rational thinking, we may more likely act aggressively,

Why do you get angry

TRIGGER EVENT

An event that happens right before someone gets angry that serves as a trigger

INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS

Our individual characteristics plays an important role in the way we react towards a situation.

APPRAISAL OF THE SITUATION

Ultimately, whether or not we get angry has to do with how we appraise or evaluate the situation.

Important to keep in mind is the **pre-anger state** of the person - what was the person feeling physiologically and psychologically before the situation. a person with an elevated heart rate is much closer to getting angry than someone with a low heart rate.

No two persons will react the same

While a particular situation may make someone see red with anger it may not even affect others.

People's responses can vary according to their gender, age, ethnicity, religion, social position or family history.

Aggressive behaviour can be **physical or verbal**. It can mean people become violent towards others or even throw things.

Generally, people express their anger verbally by shouting, threatening, using dramatic words or bombarding someone with hostile questions.

Some may develop a cynical attitude and constantly criticise everything rather than addressing problems constructively.

Others may choose to **internalise their anger**.

They may be seething inside but would not show their anger in any way they behave. People who internalise their anger are more susceptible to self-harm.

From just a young age we are taught the way to react towards a situation. These **learnt behaviours** may create a pattern that is hard to break.

What is the problem with being angry?

Anger that is not appropriately expressed can disrupt relationships and affect thinking and behaviour patterns.

People with long term anger problems tend to be poor at making decisions, take more risks than others and more likely to have a substance misuse problem

Research has also proved that anger can be linked the mental health. Suppressed anger can be an underlying cause of anxiety and depression.

Anger is also associated with poorer overall physical health as well with particular conditions such as blood pressure and flu and even more serious to coronary heart disease, stroke and cancer

Managing your anger

1

Calm Down

Before reacting on the anger you are feeling, try pause for a moment and force yourself to calm down. Focus on the consequences of exploding in a rage may be. Only after analysis what made you angry, and what the consequences will be should you choose how to respond. Delaying your response towards a situation could result in dealing with a situation in a calm and constructive manner. It is never too late to just take a deep breathe and start expressing your feelings differently. The following are a few suggestions of actions you can take to allow time and space for rational thinking to kick in:

1. Count to ten before you act
2. Drop your shoulders and breathe deeply to help you relax -
3. If you feel the urge to throw something, move the object out of sight
4. Talk yourself down
5. Go to the bathroom and release some tension
6. Imagine yourself in a relaxing scene

Develop empathetic understanding

2

To reduce your anger towards someone, the first step is to try and see the situation from the other person's point of view. Encourage the other person to speak about underlying assumptions, beliefs or background factors that may have led them to the point of view or behaviour you are upset about. If the type of relationship with the person does not allow for this conversation to happen then try to imagine an understanding scenario that allows you to defuse your anger.

To be able to control our anger despite tragic events, we must each find our own way to deal with the "dark side" of life.

Managing your anger

3

Take time to get to know yourself

Take time to reflect on what makes you angry and analyse the way you react in particular situations. Write them down and speak with someone you trust about them. Ask yourself

- 1) What makes you angry?
- 2) What signs tell you that you're on the brink of uncontrolled anger?
- 3) What works to calm you down?
- 4) Are there any triggers in your daily routine or your environment that you could change?

Being aware of these triggers beforehand and the different behaviours you can adopt to help calm you down might give you a sense of preparedness which can result in managing to calm yourself down.

Keep a good mental health

4

People in good mental health are better at coping when things go wrong. How can you ensure that you have a good mental health?

- 1) Daily exercise
- 2) Eat a balanced diet - certain foods can affect mood in different ways
- 3) Do not turn to drugs or alcohol when angry
- 4) Find support in people who love you and who you trust
- 5) Take time to relax and enjoy yourself
- 6) Accept who you are and do something you're good at
- 7) Care for others

Dealing with angry people

Dealing with angry people requires a combination of strategies and techniques, some of which include communication skills; problem solving skills and relationship-building skills.

below are some tips to avoid the escalation of anger. Remember all the ideas here are legitimate but only some will work for you

Allow the person to talk, don't interrupt

Find a quiet place to speak with the person

Acknowledge the other person's feelings

Be understanding as you possibly can

Maintain eye contact as you listen to them

De-escalation of loud voice and angry gestures

Be empathetic as you possibly can

Find something to agree with them on

Don't take it personally

Respond in a positive self-controlled way

Don't be judgemental

Accept that not all situations can be solved

Further support



If you are worried about your anger issues or any other aspect of your mental health, a GP can be a good place to start to find advice on what to do. They may help suggest ways on how to manage your anger or even refer you to another service for further support.

There are various counselling methods, such as CBT, that can help you explore what makes them angry, work out why anger has become a problem for you and learn how to change the way you respond in a situation that typically makes you angry.



Take an anger management course. These courses usually involve group work with other people with similar problems. You might find comfort knowing that you are not the only one feeling the way you are.

Remember....

Anger can be positive - it can be a force for good. Moral outrage can drive people to campaign for change, right wrongs and enforce the rules that govern our society

Anger can become a problem when it harms us or other people. Anger is the emotion that is most likely to cause problems in all types of relationships

Managing your anger in a healthy way can help you look after your mental and physical health, feel more positive about yourself, solve problems and enjoy relationships with people around you

When left unattended, strong emotions can lead to destructive behaviours. attending to times you feel hurt, let down, disrespected or threatened is key to dealing with anger that often comes from those experiences