

## Managing Anger

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*After an especially exhausting day at work, you come home and the house is a mess, dinner hasn't been prepared, the kids are fighting, the dog needs to go outside, and you find your spouse asleep on the couch. You start to feel your blood boil.*

Anger is a natural and normal reaction that can range from a slight irritation to a strong rage. Biological changes usually accompany feelings of anger: heart rate and blood pressure increase, and stress hormones are released. Everyone handles their anger a bit differently—some tend to suppress it, others express it. However, if anger is not balanced and managed appropriately, it can have a negative effect not only on your life, but also on the lives around you.

Generally, anger management is about identifying what triggers your anger and learning techniques to help you better manage it, such as:

- **Taking a time out:** Just as it sounds, remove yourself from the situation—either mentally or physically. If the situation allows, do something exerting that will help you ‘blow off steam,’ such as jogging or biking. At a minimum, count to 10 and practice relaxation strategies like taking deep breaths, thinking back on a pleasant memory or one that puts things in perspective. Other techniques include carrying a stone, marble or other object that serves as a reminder to ‘keep your cool’ when a situation starts to become heated.
- **Monitoring your behavior:** Learn to recognize your triggers and try to think of some workable solutions. For example, does rush hour traffic send you into a tailspin? Try adjusting your schedule to avoid peak transit hours, or use public transportation so that you can spend the time focusing on something other than driving and traffic.
- **Learning assertiveness skills:** While some people have a tendency to explode when they are angry, other people are just the opposite and internalize the anger. If you fall into the latter group, learn skills that can help you be more assertive with your feelings such as using ‘I’ statements (“I was upset when I didn’t hear from you...”), or mentally picturing yourself resolving your anger in an assertive and effective manner and trying to put it into action.
- **Communicating effectively:** Many times, anger can result from misunderstandings or poor communication. Before you start to express your anger, make sure you fully understand the person you are interacting with by asking a clarifying question (“I want to make sure that I understand correctly. Are you saying that...?”). Also, practice good listening skills by focusing on what the other person is saying while they are speaking—don’t just think about what you want to say.

Resources:

[www.mayoclinic.com/health/anger-management/MH00102](http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/anger-management/MH00102)

[www.apa.org/topics/controlanger.html](http://www.apa.org/topics/controlanger.html)

**To speak with an EAP counselor or make an appointment, call: 800 327-2384**

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