



## Anger

### Normal Anger

Anger is a normal human emotion. Everyone feels annoyed, frustrated, irritated, or even very angry from time to time. Anger can be expressed by shouting, yelling or swearing. In extreme cases it can escalate into physical aggression towards objects (e.g., smashing things) or people (self or others). In some cases, anger might look much more subtle, more of a brooding, silent anger, or withdrawal.

In a controlled manner, some anger can be helpful, motivating us to make positive changes or take constructive action about something we feel is important. But when anger is very intense, or very frequent, it can be harmful in many ways.

### What Causes Anger?

Anger is often connected to some type of frustration – either things didn't turn out the way you planned, you didn't get something you wanted, or other people don't act the way you would like. Often, poor communication and misunderstandings can trigger angry reactions.

Anger usually goes hand-in-hand with other feelings too, such as sadness, shame, hurt, guilt, or fear. Many times, people find it hard to express these feelings, so just the anger comes out.

Sometimes anger is triggered by a particular situation, such as being caught in a traffic jam, or being treated rudely by someone else, or banging your thumb with a hammer while trying to hang a picture-hook.

Other times there is no obvious trigger – some people are more prone to anger than others. Sometimes men and women handle anger differently, but not always.

## Triggers and Early Warning Signs

One of the first steps in managing your anger is to identify the types of situations that usually trigger it. Make a list of the things that usually set you off, for example:

- being cut off in traffic
- running late for an appointment
- other people running late
- your partner not putting away the dishes
- a colleague falling behind on a project

You may be able to avoid some of these situations, such as planning ahead to avoid running late. Other situations are less in your control, such as being cut off in traffic, but what you *can* control is your response.

Once you have finished listing your common trigger situations, make a separate list of warning signs for your anger. What is it that usually happens in your body when you get angry? Becoming aware of your body's alarm bells helps you to spot anger early on, which gives you a better chance of putting other coping strategies into place. Some common warning signs are:

- tightness in the chest
- feeling hot or flushed, sweating
- grinding teeth
- tense muscles or clenched fists
- pounding or racing heart
- biting your nails

## Problems Associated with Anger

Uncontrolled anger can cause problems in a range of areas in your life. It may cause conflict with family, friends, or colleagues, and in extreme situations, it can lead to problems with the law.

Some of the other problem effects of anger may be harder to spot. Often, people who have a problem with anger feel guilty or disappointed with their behaviour, or suffer from low self-esteem, anxiety, or depression.

There are also physical side-effects of extreme or frequent anger such as high blood pressure and heart disease. Some studies suggest that angry people tend to drink more alcohol, which is associated with a wide range of health problems.