



THE COACH
APPROACH

ANGER - SELF HELP GUIDE

Anger is a normal and necessary part of life. It's part of the fight or flight response that kept our ancestors safe from saber-tooth tigers and other predators and, used in a healthy way, it enables you to stand up for yourself and push forward in life, to have the drive to change things for the better.

No-one is suggesting that you should never get angry or that you should never feel frustrated, but when anger becomes your first response to most situations, even trivial ones, there might be more of an issue for you that could affect your relationships and even your own health.

Read on to find out how being 'too' angry can affect you, what the treatments are, and how to help yourself.

What is anger and how can it affect you?

Anger is an emotional state that can range from the smallest feeling of irritation right through to white hot blazing rage, and it can be very destructive, both for you and anyone forced to bear the brunt of your reaction.

Just like with any other emotion, anger causes changes in your body, like increased heart rate, higher blood pressure, increased levels of adrenaline and noradrenaline, and high levels of stress. While feeling angry occasionally won't have any long-term effects on your health, constant feelings of anger and stress can produce hypertension, headaches, fatigue, insomnia, and a greater risk of having a stroke.

Outside of the physical and emotional reactions you experience, if you are regularly losing your temper or always grumpy and ready to lash out, your personal relationships and work relationships are going to suffer. No-one wants to live with someone who rants at them every morning because they squeezed the toothpaste tube in the middle and not at the bottom. And yes, that is a trivial example but, think about it. Every time you get angry, is it really always for something deeply serious, or do you find yourself getting enraged when the coffee machine is empty, when a co-worker borrows your stapler or when the photocopier jams? Be honest.

Massive overreactions to minor events can be a clear signal that there's something wrong and that you might need a little help.

Another possible reaction to anger can be to bottle it up inside and not allow any kind of outward expression. While it's good to stop yourself taking your anger out on other people and inanimate objects, learning to express your reactions in a different way is essential or your anger might turn inward, leading to depression, self-harm, and those other unhealthy physical symptoms we talked about earlier.

If anger isn't expressed and healthy ways aren't found to get all those emotions out, it can lead to personality changes such as being hypercritical of others, always being grumpy and hostile, or even to passive-aggressive behaviour, such as sulking or punishing someone indirectly, instead of simply discussing problems and feelings.

While the causes of anger issues could be anything, including bereavement, job loss, deep trauma or simply not knowing how to deal with feelings, happily, there are many treatments and solutions available to help.

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Treatment methods

First of all, if you really are having problems with anger and stress, you should seek a professional medical opinion, rather than trying to cope on your own.

You might be offered talking treatments, such as counselling, psychotherapy and cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), allowing you to learn more about yourself, discuss how you feel, your past experiences and anger triggers, and find better ways to communicate and deal with your emotions.

Your doctor might suggest an anger management programme, which could involve group therapy, CBT or one-on-one counselling. Depending on your needs, these programmes might take place over a short period of time, such as a weekend, or may last a couple of months.

Taking part in a programme like that might sound intimidating, but everyone who attends is there for the same reason you are – because they want to feel better. And the therapists and counsellors are there to help you, not to embarrass you or make you feel bad.

Depending on your situation, your doctor may also recommend medication to help such as antidepressants, anxiety medication or mood stabilisers, and while they can have some side effects, they can also be highly beneficial in leveling your emotions out and bringing relief from stress.

Your doctor might also suggest things you can do to help yourself, such as exercise, yoga and meditation, and recommend clinical hypnotherapy as a supplementary treatment.

With clinical hypnotherapy, your therapist uses hypnosis to help you unwind and assist you with changing any negative self-talk. Hypnotherapy offers a relaxing session where your therapist works with your conscious and unconscious mind to enable you to control your anger, remove your triggers and help you find a different way to react.

Hypnotherapy can also help with depression and anxiety, so if these feelings are the cause of your anger, a series of sessions with a clinical hypnotherapist can alleviate your symptoms.

Instead of feeling stressed and angry, the sessions give you the chance to relax, and chances are you'll feel calmer and more able to think clearly long after the session is over.

There really are so many ways to deal with anger issues, so don't suffer in silence, and don't be afraid to ask for help.

Self -help

Just wanting to do something about your anger issues is a very positive step. You've already moved forward by reading this guide. Now here are some techniques you can try to help you deal with your emotions and relax:

1. Communication

Often frustration can stem from not feeling heard or understood, and from overreacting to what you think someone said, rather than what they actually meant.

Take the time to listen to people and understand them. If you're not sure, ask them to clarify before you lose your temper.

If you can feel your anger building, take a deep breath, do the oft-suggested count to 10 and take a step back before you react.

Think about how you speak to people and what tone of voice you use. If you know you're going to have a difficult conversation, why not practise it first and think about what you're going to say? Use "I feel" rather than "You did" because it's less likely to make the other person defensive and provoke the situation.

Think about the language you use. Is it often negative or demanding? Do you frequently use 'always' and 'never'? For example, "You always leave the dishes to me," "You never help around the house." Try instead asking for things nicely and telling your partner how that would make you feel and how that could benefit you both. "I'd love it if you could do the dishes before I come home, because then I can cook your favourite."

Think about what other reactions you could have rather than immediately leaping to anger; listen carefully and watch people's body language to make sure you understand, and think about how you can speak to people to create a calmer environment.

2. No more negative and angry self-talk

All of us have negative thoughts every now and again. People sometimes think they're not good enough or they can't do something they want to do, or that someone is better or cleverer than they are. Sometimes they even imagine what people think – that if someone didn't have time to talk it was because they don't like them anymore, not because they've got a deadline they have to meet. But thinking like that isn't helpful and can drag you down into anger and depression.

As with communicating in a new way, try thinking differently, too, and logic that anger out of the way. Is your friend of 10 years really likely to have stopped caring because they can't talk on one occasion, or isn't it more likely that something genuinely came up? Are you really stupid or isn't it more likely that you're just struggling with a new task, and that if you ask for help or learn more about it, you'll pick it up just fine, given time?

Watch your thoughts and try and correct them when you catch yourself being negative. It won't be easy or natural at first, but it will get easier.

3. Use humour

Laughter, as they say, is the best medicine, and it can help defuse your anger and make you feel good. People often recommend imagining people in the audience naked if you have to give a presentation, and you can use that technique yourself to take a breath.

If your boss is pressuring you or a co-worker is getting on your nerves, what if you imagine them as a cartoon character with accompanying silly sound effects? Imagine that cartoon figure sitting in meetings and talking to clients, and their reaction to it.

Find the humour in the situation and that can go a long way towards calming you down, and helping you take yourself and what's happening less seriously.

4. And... relax

Making time for yourself is important and can definitely help to destress you. Take the time to have a long, relaxing shower or a bubble bath, have a regular massage, read a good book, have a night out with friends – whatever makes you feel good. Make sure to do the things that you enjoy on a regular basis and you will feel better. You'll have things to look forward to, people to talk to and time to recharge.

Learn yoga or Pilates if they appeal to you. You'll relax by doing and by breathing and the focus could help you feel calmer and more relaxed in general.

Exercise produces those all-important, feel-good endorphins and is another great way to help you relax. Pick something you enjoy, though. There's no point joining a gym if you hate it, because you won't stick to it. Try belly dancing or Zumba, cycling or running – whatever works for you.

Learn breathing and relaxation techniques, such as meditation or slow, deep breathing. Not only will it help you relax, you'll also have a useful tool you can rely on if you start to feel angry.

5. Get creative

Take up a new hobby or revive an old one you used to enjoy. Crafting, dancing, painting, writing, knitting – all of these hobbies can ease your stress. They're very therapeutic and can almost put you in a meditative state if you get 'in the zone'.

Conclusion

Hopefully you now have more tools to deal with any anger issues and the knowledge of where to find help, if you need it.

Talking really does help, to your doctor and to your family and friends. Take the time to relax and do things for you, think about your thoughts and how you communicate, find other ways of expressing yourself and the tools that work for you to help you deal calmly with things. With time, you could find your anger problems becoming a thing of the past.

If you'd like to find out more about solution focused clinical hypnotherapy and how it can help heal anger issues, please do give me a call or use the booking button on my website. Nothing will happen in our sessions that you aren't comfortable with, and hypnotherapy cannot force you to do things against your will. Just come along to my facility in the beautiful town of Falmouth in Cornwall, and you'll soon find yourself relaxing.

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