

**Student  
Wellbeing  
Centre**

# **Managing Anger and Frustration**

**Virtual self-help guide**



**Anger and frustration are perfectly normal emotions to experience and are often the result of feeling attacked, deceived, hurt or the feeling that you or someone you care about has been treated unfairly.**

**There is a lot of stigma around anger and it is often referred to as a 'bad' or 'negative' emotion. But it can actually be beneficial to us in a variety of ways. It can help us identify problems that need resolving and also motivate us to consider change for improvement.**

**Anger and frustration can become an issue when we express it in a way that can cause significant hurt to both us and others around us, when we begin to demonstrate destructive behaviours and when it is having an overall negative impact on our mental health and wellbeing.**

**Over the next few pages will be some useful tips, suggestions and resources on managing anger and frustration.**

# What is unhelpful angry behaviour?

As already mentioned, anger and frustration are normal emotions to feel, however depending on the way you act as a result, you could be demonstrating unhelpful behaviour.

Anger is a very intense emotion and is often felt in short powerful bursts (not all the time). How we behave when feeling this way depends on our awareness of the emotion and how we have learnt to express it.

Some unhelpful ways of expressing anger, taken from the charity MIND website, include:

## **Outward aggression and violence**

Such as shouting, swearing, slamming doors, hitting or throwing things and being physically violent or verbally abusive and threatening towards others.

## **Inward aggression**

Such as telling yourself that you hate yourself, denying yourself your basic needs (like food, or things that might make you happy), cutting yourself off from the world and self-harming.

## **Non-violent or passive aggression**

Such as ignoring people or refusing to speak to them, refusing to do tasks, or deliberately doing things poorly, late or at the last possible minute, and being sarcastic or sulky while not saying anything explicitly aggressive or angry.

If you struggle to manage feelings of anger, over time, this could impact your mental health and general wellbeing. It can exacerbate existing issues and also lead to low self-esteem, isolation and difficulty forming relationships.

Experiencing anger regularly and for extensive periods can also affect your physical health, therefore it is advisable to seek support if you feel it is becoming an issue.

# The ideology behind anger management

- Anger is a learned behaviour and therefore is something that can be changed with time and effort.
- Our core beliefs affect the way we behave, therefore changing 'should' into 'could' will decrease our potential to get angry.
- If we become more aware of our patterns of thinking, we can then try to challenge or alter them.
- The components of anger are the emotions we feel, the thoughts we have, the physical sensations we experience and the behaviour we then display. If we can become more aware of one component escalating, we can try to do something to reduce the intensity of them all.
- Anger can often be the result of feeling like we have lost control. Therefore it could help to try to tackle one problem at a time, break down large tasks into smaller steps, take action where appropriate and accept the things that we cannot change or influence.
- Anger can develop from a lack of work-life balance. If we do not allow ourselves any pleasure or outlet, we are more likely to feel stressed and tired, and therefore this increases the risk of us feeling frustrated easily in situations.
- Anger can also be constructive as it can motivate us to make active, positive changes.

# Management techniques

## Identify triggers

Are there particular situations that cause you to feel angry or frustrated? If so, are you able to change the way you manage or act in these situations, or is there another way of approaching them? If you do not know your triggers but do find you are getting feelings of anger or frustration quite frequently, consider keeping a mood diary. Jot down when you have an intense emotion, what was happening at the time, who you were with and how long it lasted for. This will help you notice any triggers or patterns in your emotions.

## Take a moment

When you notice yourself starting to feel angry or frustrated, allowing yourself time to process the situation and decide how you want to respond can help prevent you acting in a way you later regret.

If you have the opportunity, stepping away from a situation for a short while can help you gain some perspective and rationalise your thoughts. This can often be called taking a 'helicopter view'. As the helicopter raises higher and higher, the scene below becomes much broader and focuses less on a smaller area, but on the whole image. It's a technique to help you gain perspective.

If you are not able to do this in the moment, if you are not able to do this, simply counting to ten before you react can also be a useful strategy.

## Breathing exercises

Breathing exercises are a way of reducing the intensity of the physical sensations associated with anger (such as feeling tense, heart palpitations, sweating etc.) There are many quick and simple breathing exercise you can use when you notice you are starting to feel frustrated. It is a good idea to practice the breathing exercise daily so you use it effectively when needed. For examples of breathing exercises, click [HERE](#).

## **Express yourself assertively**

Being assertive means having the confidence to express your viewpoints and values, explain your rationale for decisions, and being able to say 'no' in a calm and positive way. Later on in this guide, you will find more information about assertiveness.

## **Have an outlet**

This is more of a long-term solution, but there are many things you can do that can bring down your general stress levels, which in turn may reduce the potential for you to have an intense angry response to a situation. These include regular exercise, creative activities, relaxation or mindfulness (see our separate virtual self-help guide for more info), and taking time out regularly to do things you enjoy.

## **Be aware of the effects of drugs and alcohol**

Alcohol and drugs can create a vicious cycle with anger. Sometimes, people struggle to manage intense emotions such as anger or frustration and therefore resort to substances to help them cope. However, alcohol and drugs cause inhibitions to lower, making it more difficult for the person to express anger in a healthy and safe way.

## **Learn to accept constructive criticism**

By constructive criticism, we mean realistic and valid feedback. Even though constructive, it can be unpleasant to hear initially and can often make us feel uncomfortable and at times, frustrated. If possible, the simplest response would be to accept it and give yourself time to process the information before you respond. You can ask for further clarification or details to help your understanding so that you can try to pick out what positive changes you can make for next time.

## **Talk to people/seek support**

Talking to family members or friends can be extremely helpful as it allows you to gain some perspective and rationalise the situation. If you feel that anger is becoming a problem for you, it may be worth speaking to your GP, or seeking professional support such as counselling (some counsellors will focus specifically on anger management).

## Becoming more assertive

Assertiveness is a particular way of communicating with others. It involves expressing our feelings, thoughts and beliefs in an open and honest way, without violating the rights of other people. It's an alternative to being aggressive in response.

Below are some examples of aggressive responses, and the alternative assertive response.

<b>Aggressive Response</b>	<b>Assertive Response</b>
You had better stop using my saucepans especially as you're dirty and you don't clean up after yourself. You should be buying your own stuff and leaving mine alone.	I would like you to stop using my saucepans. I have noticed that they are often left on the side unwashed which means I am unable to use them when I need to.
I don't want to do that for you, you are always asking me to do things and it's getting frustrating. Don't you know how busy I am?	I cannot help you out with that unfortunately. I have quite a few things myself I need to focus on and get done.
Don't you have any respect for others? I am going to report you to the head of year for disrupting everyone.	I am having difficulty concentrating when you are talking out loud. Please would you stop talking, and pick your conversation up after the session has ended.
I can't believe you are acting this way, don't you realise how you are making me feel. It's so selfish.	What we have just spoken about has upset me for this reason....

# Useful Resources



Click on the video to watch Dr Russel Kolts talk about what anger is, how it can become a problem, and how and why compassion can help someone react differently and appear stronger and more confident.



The WellCast team posted this youtube video on the impact prolonged anger can have on your physical health and also discusses simple anger management techniques.

## MOODJUICE

Click [HERE](#) to access a printable self-help guide on 'Anger' by Moodjuice.



Click [HERE](#) to for MIND's guide on 'How to deal with anger'.



Click [HERE](#) to read the NHS Moodzone guide on 'How to control your anger', available on the NHS Choices website.

# Useful Apps



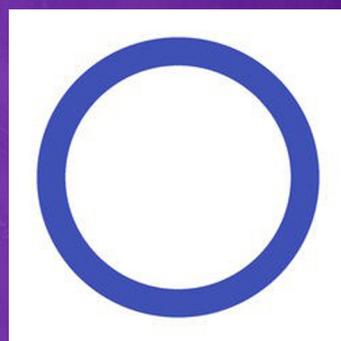
**Headspace (free) - Headspace is a comprehensive meditation app, with guided and unguided meditations to help you through all phases of your life. The free app offers ten sessions, however there is an optional in-app subscription which allows you to access many more hours of extra content. Available on iOS and Android.**

**Anger Management Tips! (free) – This app provides you with lots of simple anger management tips that are easy to follow. It also gives you wise quotes on anger, stress and anxiety by famous people that can help you gain wisdom so you don't have to let anger affect you on a day to day basis. Contains optional in-app purchases. Available on iOS.**



**What's Up? - Mental Health App (free) – This app utilises some of the best CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) and ACT (Acceptance Commitment Therapy) methods to help you cope with Depression, Anxiety, Anger, Stress and more. It includes grounding techniques, ways to challenge negative thinking, motivational quotes and a personal mood diary for you to fill out. Available on iOS and Android.**

**Breathe Easy (free) – Although simplistic, this app is brilliant at helping you practice one of the most important elements of relaxation, meditation or mindfulness; controlling your breathing. Just breathe in and out as the circle continuously grows and shrinks at a regular rate. Available on iOS and Android.**



The background features a pattern of vertical white lines on a teal gradient, representing rain. Overlaid on this are several white, stylized clouds with scalloped edges.

# **Drop-in:**

**Monday-Friday between 12-2pm  
Thursday (term-time) between 5-7pm**

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