

Feeling Angry? You're Not Alone.

A Thrive Worldwide Resource

As the pandemic continues beyond the one-year mark, many of us feel worn-thin. And while I acknowledge that the pandemic hasn't been that bad for everyone, the majority have felt the impact of cumulative stress.

Cumulative stress tends to surface the negative parts of our personalities that we're usually able to keep on top of under normal circumstances. For some this looks like amplified anxiety. For others, worsening sadness or helplessness. I've spoken to many people recently, for whom, anger is bubbling up. If you're wired with a natural propensity towards anger, there's a good chance that it's featuring now.

Like most emotions, anger has a light and dark side to it. Feeling anger is part of the human condition and can be adaptive and helpful. However, when anger 'takes over' with the potential to hurt yourself or others (physically or emotionally), it's time to regain control.

You may have heard it said that anger is a secondary emotion. It's often the result of an overwhelming incident, leading to us put up defences and protect ourselves. The root emotion is usually found in fear, hurt, shame, humiliation or helplessness.

Finding these roots helps to rationally move towards a solution.

So, if you're ebbing in the direction of anger and reacting on impulse, I encourage you to preserve your energy and decide how you want to respond to the situation you find yourself in.

Below is a list of tips, but the first thing to do is acknowledge that circumstances are difficult and be kind with yourself as you think about how to work on your anger.

TIPS

Be curious, do some investigation.

When do you find yourself becoming angry? What are the circumstances? Tiredness? Hunger? Stress / Pressure?

What are the triggering topics or situations? Is there a time of day? What patterns can you find?

Make a plan to mitigate these.

Control your anger before it controls you.

Building from the first point, learn to recognise when you are starting to feel angry and make quick adjustments. A good distraction goes a long way.

If you are feeling rage, count to

10 in sync with your breath.

This helps to slow and contain the rapid thinking as well as cues the autonomic nervous system that you're not under threat and that it's okay to regain calm.



If you're ebbing in the direction of anger ... preserve your energy and decide how you want to respond to the situation

“Stop and think” is a common tool in anger management.

At times we escalate or find ourselves invested in anger. The phrase “Stop and think” gives us permission to take a break from the heightened emotional state and ask our rational mind to come online. “Think” questions might be: “Is this helpful?” “Is this rational?” “Is there another way to see this?” “What can I do to de-escalate?”

Learn assertiveness and express what you need.

Anger can stem from feeling out of control. Being appropriately assertive can help you get what you need. Avoid blaming or name-calling; use “I” statements in explaining your feelings; and practice stating exactly what you need.

Get your body on your side.

Anger is accompanied by intense levels of adrenaline and puts your body in a hyper-vigilant state.

Counteract this by employing happy hormones such as serotonin and endorphins. Think diet, exercise, and pleasurable activities (see link below.)

THINGS TO AVOID

Avoid ongoing withdrawal.

While it may be important to get some time to cool down, make an effort to re-engage and connect with people.

Avoid the addictive escapes.

Avoid resorting to drugs or alcohol. This will not serve you in the long run and often not in the short run either.

Avoid holding resentment.

It takes a lot of energy and is a dead-end road. Releasing

resentment may take place within yourself or with the person you’re in conflict with.

Avoid over-thinking about things that you can’t change.

Become aware of these thoughts cycling around and respond by steering into a direction of your choosing.

Lastly, our anger is usually telling us something important and pointing us to something that needs attention, so avoiding it altogether isn’t helpful.

Unexamined or reactive anger will continue to drain energy, especially if we hold onto it for a long time.

But facing the reality of our anger allows us to draw near to it and find ways of transforming it. To do this, you may need some help in uncovering the source and motivations behind it. If your anger has become worrisome or problematic, get in touch with someone that can help. Consider setting up an appointment with a Thrive Counsellor.

HELPFUL LINKS

- **NHS On Anger**
[www.nhs.uk/conditions/
stress-anxiety-depression/
controlling-anger/](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/controlling-anger/)
- **Mayo Clinic On Preventing Relationship Damage**
[www.mayoclinichealth
system.org/hometown-
health/speaking-of-health/7-
anger-management-tips-to-
prevent-relationship-damage](https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/7-anger-management-tips-to-prevent-relationship-damage)
- **American Psychological Association: Controlling Your Anger**
[www.apa.org/topics/anger/
control](https://www.apa.org/topics/anger/control)
- **Healthline.com: How To Hack Your Hormones For A Better Mood**
[www.healthline.com/health/h
appy-hormone#exercise](https://www.healthline.com/health/happy-hormone#exercise)

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