

Managing Anger



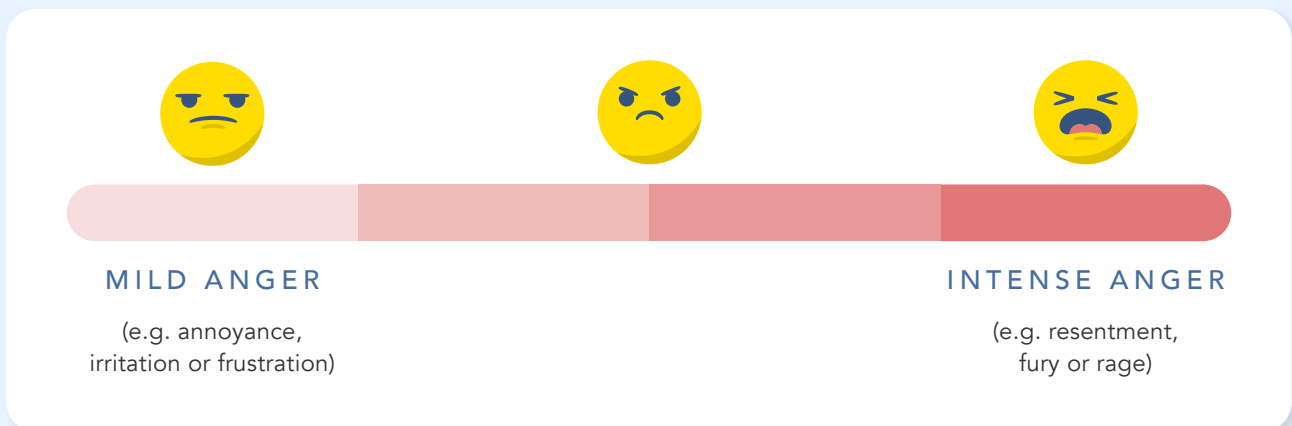
About anger

Anger is one of the basic emotions that we all feel from time-to-time.

We experience anger when we think:

- Something is in the way of what we want (e.g. being stuck in traffic on the way home after a long day)
- We are being treated unfairly (e.g. when someone speaks rudely to us)
- Physically or emotionally under threat (e.g. when someone is trying to hurt us)
- Someone is doing something unjust (e.g. seeing someone be cruel to an animal)

We can experience different levels of anger, such as:



Physically we can feel hot, sweaty, muscle tension, tightness in the chest, fast breathing and heart rate, and clenching of the jaw or fists.



Healthy vs unhealthy anger

It is normal to feel annoyed, frustrated or even angry from time-to-time. It's important for us to know the difference between healthy and unhealthy anger.



HEALTHY ANGER

Anger can help us solve problems in our lives. For example, if we feel frustrated when we get stuck in traffic in the morning, we might then leave a bit earlier in future. If we feel annoyed about how someone has treated us, we can talk directly to the person about the issue. Healthy anger is anger you deal with in an assertive and respectful way.



UNHEALTHY ANGER

Unhealthy anger is anger you deal with in a way that hurts others or ourselves. This can include yelling, screaming, breaking property, getting into physical fights, aggression and violence.

Signs that someone may be struggling with an anger problem include:

- Frequent and intense anger or angry outbursts
- Difficulties controlling anger
- When anger leads to issues at home and/or work
- Constantly feeling regret or shame after being angry

Like any skillset, we can all learn to manage anger in a healthy and respectful way. The information and tips on the following page can help you get started. For extra support, you may want to work with a therapist or be involved in an anger management program.



Identifying anger and other emotions

Before we can express our anger in a healthy way, we first need to recognise what we are feeling.

This can be a tricky thing to do. Sometimes we can experience anger as part of a mixture of emotions. We can think of anger as the tip of the iceberg which is clear to see, with other emotions under the surface. There may be other times where we simply just experience anger.

Being able to name how we are feeling is a key skill for managing our emotions because it helps us:

- Understand why we are angry
- Recognise what we need
- Address issues in our lives

Identifying a trigger, noticing our thoughts and how our body is responding can help us identify when and why we are angry.



Tips for managing anger

It's normal to feel angry at times, but what matters is how we show it. We always have a choice in how we express anger. Here are some tips for managing anger in a healthy way.

1

Know your signs and triggers

- The earlier we can notice we are becoming angry, the easier it is for us to manage it.
- Learn what your early warning signs are (e.g. feeling hot, tightness in chest, heavy breathing) and the triggers that tend to set you off (e.g. certain people, situations, places, memories).

2

Step away and breathe

- Unless we are in immediate danger, we don't need to act on our anger straight away.
- Stepping away from the situation and taking some big deep breaths can give us time to slow down, collect our thoughts, and return to the situation in a calm state.
- Our environment has a big impact on how we feel, so changing our surroundings can help shift how we feel.

3

Identify and communicate

- We need to stop and think about what we are feeling and why before we can communicate this.
- Expressing our frustrations early and often (in a respectful way) helps us resolve issues and stops us from bottling up our emotions and having an angry outburst.
- We can use the sentence: 'I feel [emotion] because [situation]'. For example, 'I feel frustrated because this is the third time you have arrived late and kept me waiting'.

4

Check your thinking

- Sometimes we may misread a situation, which can trigger anger. For example, we may think someone has ignored our opinion, but they may not have heard us.
- We may also make things bigger than they are. For example, when someone says something we don't like. You can ask yourself if you'll be thinking about the issue in one hour, one week, one month or one year to put the issue in perspective.
- Checking our assumptions and the facts of the situation before we act can prevent us from acting on our anger without thinking.



5

Move your body

- Physical movement, such as walking, running, push ups, lifting weights, dancing, can help take our mind off what has happened and help us reduce built up energy and tension from anger.

6

Get it out

- It's not always possible for us to express our anger directly (e.g. if you are angry at your boss, or angry about a situation).
- But we can still let it out in creative ways rather than holding it in. Many people find creating art, playing musical instruments, or writing as useful outlets. Others find doing something physical helps, such as running and lifting something heavy.

7

Take the heat out

- Cooling down our bodies can also cool down our emotions.
- Splashing your face with cold water, having a cold shower, going for a swim, or even holding ice cubes in your hands helps lower our body temperature, heart and breathing rate (and also provides a nice distraction too!).

8

Get to the root

- Emotions are signals, like flashing lights on the dashboard of a car. Their job is to get us to pay attention to something.
- If we are frequently experiencing anger, it may be indicating to us there is something we need to address in our life. Like the lights on the dashboard, they won't stop flashing until we address the problem.

9

Limit use of mood altering substances

- Having bottled up emotions mixed with substance use is not a good combination. It can lead us to express these emotions in unhelpful ways. Keeping the use of mood-altering substances, like alcohol, to a minimum can help reduce the risk of losing control over anger.

10

Make a calm down kit

- Like a having a first kit prepared in your home, we can create a calm down kit. Put together some things that help you calm down and relax, such as tea, fidget spinners, music playlist so it's ready to go ahead of an angry moment.

11

Talk about it

- Talking to someone outside of the situation can help us cool down, make sense of our feelings and the situation, and consider different perspectives before we act.
- If a friend, family member or colleague is not available, you can reach out to a support service via phone or online messaging (see details on the following page).



Get supported

Most people get better at expressing their anger in healthy ways with time, practice and support.



To learn more skills to manage anger and improve emotional wellbeing, you may find our online courses helpful. To learn more, head to: mindspot.org.au/courses

For additional support, we recommend reaching out to your GP, therapist and the following services:

Beyond Blue	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1300 22 4636• Online chat: beyondblue.org.au/support-service/chat• beyondblue.org.au
MensLine Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1300 78 99 78• Online and video chat: mensline.org.au/phone-and-online-counselling• mensline.org.au
Lifeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 13 11 14• Online chat: lifeline.org.au/crisis-chat• Text support: lifeline.org.au/crisis-text
Relationships Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1300 364 277• relationships.org.au
1800 RESPECT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1800 737 732• Online chat: 1800respect.org.au
SANE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1800 187 263• Online chat: sane.org
Headspace	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Online and phone support: headspace.org.au/online-and-phone-support/create-account• headspace.org.au





If you would like to learn more
about MindSpot, please contact us:



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