

These are unwanted basic human reactions, towards avoidable stress. These occurrences are preventable and reversible with positive remedies. We must stand as a pillar of strength for anyone abused, may it be our partners or loved ones whom are going through this unexplained anger.

I. WHAT IS ANGER?

We all feel angry at times – it is part of being human. Anger is a normal, healthy emotion, which we might experience if we feel:

- attacked
- cheated
- discouraged
- invalidated or unfairly treated

It isn't necessarily a 'bad' emotion; in fact it can sometimes be useful. For example, feeling angry about something can:

- help us identify problems or things that are hurting us
- inspire us to create change, achieve our goals and move on
- help us stay safe and defend ourselves in dangerous situations by giving us a burst of energy as part of our fight or flight system

Most people will experience events of anger which feel manageable and don't have a big impact on their lives. Learning healthy ways to recognise, express and deal with anger is important for our mental and physical health.

When is anger a problem?

Anger only becomes a problem when it gets out of control and harms you or people around you. This can happen when:

- you regularly express your anger through not helpful or destructive behaviour
- your anger is having a negative impact on your overall mental and physical health
- anger becomes your go-to emotion, blocking out your ability to feel other emotions
- you haven't developed healthy ways to express your anger

Sometimes I also feel like there's a ball of fire in the middle of my chest that burst out its way straight out of my mouth and burns the people around me.

What is unhelpful angry behaviour?

How you behave when you're angry depends on how well you're able to identify and cope with your feelings, and how you've learned to express them. Not everyone expresses anger in the same way. For example, some unhelpful ways you may have learned to express anger include:

- Outward aggression and violence - such as shouting, cursing, 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, rejecting 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 pay no attention to people or refusing to speak to them, refusing to do tasks, or purposely doing things poorly, late or at the last possible minute, and being cynical or sulky while not saying anything clearly, aggressive or angry.

If you find you express your anger through outward aggression and violence, this can be extremely frightening and damaging for people around you - especially children. And it can have serious concerns: it could mean you lose your family, job and get into trouble with the law.

But even if you're never outwardly violent or aggressive towards others, and never even raise your voice, you might still recognise some of these angry behaviours and feel that they're a problem for you. For example, you turn your anger inwards and self-harm or deny yourself food.

II. Why do I get angry?

Feelings of anger get up due to how we understand and react to certain situations. Everyone has their own causes for what makes them angry, but some common ones include situations in which we feel:

- threatened or attacked
- frustrated or helpless
- like we're being nullified or treated unfairly
- like people are not valuing our feelings or possessions

People can understand situations differently, so a situation that makes you feel very angry may not make someone else feel angry at all (for example, other reactions could include annoyance, hurt or amusement). But just because we can understand things differently, it doesn't mean that you understand things 'wrong' if you get angry.

How you interpret and react to a situation can depend on lots of factors in your life, including:

- your childhood and upbringing
- past experiences
- current circumstances

Whether your anger is about something that happened in the past or something that's going on right now, thinking about how and why we understand and react to situations can help us learn how to cope with our emotions better. It can also help us find fruitful strategies to handle our anger.

Your childhood and upbringing

How we learn to cope with angry feelings is often influenced by our upbringing. Many people are given messages about anger as children that may make it harder to manage it as an adult. For example:

- You may have grown up thinking that it's always okay to act out your anger aggressively or violently, and so you didn't learn how to understand and manage your angry feelings. This could mean you have angry outbursts whenever you don't like the way someone is behaving, or whenever you are in a situation you don't like.

- You may have been brought up to believe that you shouldn't complain, and may have been punished for expressing anger as a child. This could mean that you tend to suppress your anger and it becomes a long-term problem, where you react incorrectly to new situations you're not comfortable with. If you don't feel you can release your anger in a healthy way, you might also turn this inwards on yourself.

- You may have witnessed your parents' or other adults' anger when it was out of control, and learned to think of anger as something that is destructive and terrifying. This could mean that you now feel afraid of your own anger and don't feel safe expressing your feelings when something makes you angry. Those feelings might then surface at another unconnected time, which may feel hard to explain.

Past experiences

If you've experienced particular situations in the past that made you feel angry, such as abuse, trauma or bullying (either as a child or more recently as an adult), and you weren't able to safely express your anger at the time, you might still be coping with those angry feelings now. This might mean that you now find certain situations particularly challenging, and more likely to make you angry.

Sometimes your present feeling of anger may not only be about the current situation but may also be related to a past experience, which can mean that the anger you are feeling in the present is at a level that reflects your past situation. Becoming aware of this can help us to find ways of responding to situations in the present in a safer and less upset way.

Current circumstances

If you're dealing with a lot of other problems in your life right now, you might find yourself feeling angry more easily than usual, or getting angry at unrelated things. If there's a particular situation that's making you feel angry, but you don't feel able to express your anger directly or resolve it, then you might find you express that anger at other times.

Anger can also be a part of grief. If you've lost someone

important to you, it can be hugely difficult to cope with all the conflicting things you might be feeling.

What can I do to manage my anger?

It can be frightening when your anger overpowers you. But there are ways you can learn to manage your anger when you find yourself in difficult situations. You can:

- look out for warning signs
- buy yourself time to think
- try some calming techniques

Look out for warning signs

Anger can cause a rush of adrenaline through your body, so before you recognise the emotion you're feeling you might notice:

- your heart is beating faster
- your breathing is quicker
- your body is becoming tense
- your feet are tapping
- you're tightening your jaw or fists

Recognising these signs gives you the chance to think about how you want to react to a situation before doing anything. This can be difficult in the heat of the moment, but the earlier you notice how you're feeling; the easier it can be to choose how to manage your anger. Breathing techniques have helped me to control my anger. I know that if I take a moment to concentrate on my breathing and not my anger, I'll have something else to focus on.

Buy yourself time to think

Sometimes when we're feeling angry, we just need to walk away from the situation for a while. This can give you time to work out what you're thinking about the situation, decide how you want to react to it and feel more in control. Some ways you can buy yourself time to think is:

- Counting to 10 before you react.
- Taking yourself out of the situation by going for a short walk – even if it's just around your road area.
- Talking to a trusted person who's not connected to the situation, such as a friend, family member, medical expert or peer support group. Expressing your thoughts out loud can help you understand why you're angry and help calm you down

As for me, what helps me usually is getting away from the situation to cool down.

Try some of these techniques to manage your feelings

There are many ways to calm down and let go of angry feelings, depending on what suits you and what's convenient at the time you are angry.

- Breathe slowly – try to breathe out for longer than you breathe in and focus on each breath as you take it.
- Relax your body – if you can feel your body getting tense, try focusing on each part of your body in turn to tense and then relax your muscles.
- Try mindfulness techniques – mindfulness can help you

to be aware of when you're getting angry and can help calm your body and mind down

- Exercise – try to work off your anger through exercise. Sports like running or boxing can be really helpful for releasing bottled-up energy.

- Use up your energy safely in other ways – this can help relieve some of your angry feelings in a way that doesn't hurt yourself or others. For example, you could try tearing up a newspaper or hitting a pillow

- Do something to divert yourself mentally or physically – anything that completely changes your situation or thoughts that can help stop your anger growing. For example, you could try:

- putting on music and dancing
- doing something with your hands, like fixing something or making something
- doing something imaginative like painting or drawing
- writing in a diary
- taking a cold shower

III. How can I control my anger long term?

If you think about how to manage your anger when you're feeling calmer, you can avoid feeling overcome by it in the heat of the moment. In particular, you can:

- learn your causes
- examine your thought patterns
- develop your communication skills
- look at your lifestyle

Learn your causes

Understanding what sort of situations cause your anger means you can develop plans to cope and think about how to react before the situation happens. You might find it useful to keep a diary or make notes about the times you have felt angry. You could record:

- What were the circumstances?
- Did someone say or do something to cause your anger?
- How did you feel?
- How did you behave?
- How did you feel afterwards?

If you do this for a while, you might start to see patterns emerging. You could do this yourself using a mood diary or you could find a professional mental health expert to help you. Over time I have been able to spot certain causes, which then assists me to look at myself and choose a healthier path.

Examine your thought patterns

If you're feeling upset or angry, you might find yourself routinely thinking or saying things like:

- "This is all their fault."
- "They never listen."
- "This always happens to me."
- "Other people should behave better."

But often there are lots of different ways we could interpret a situation. It can make you feel worse if you think in terms of 'always', 'never' and 'should', because in reality things are rarely so 'black and white'. Making an effort to replace these words with softer terms like

'sometimes' or 'could' when thinking about your situation might help you to break up negative thought patterns, reflect more calmly on your situation and find new ways through conflicts.

As for me, the best advice I would give was to stop briefly once I am angry; to ask myself what painful emotion I am feeling in the situation where I became angry. A bit of concern for my own pain often stops me from taking that pain out on others.

Develop your communication skills

Being extremely angry and hostile can get in the way of communicating your feelings and thoughts effectively. People may focus on your anger, and find it hard to listen to what you're saying. On the other hand, if you are able to interpret your anger by talking in a firm, polite way about what has made you angry, then you're more likely to be understood by others.

Being firm means standing up for yourself while still respecting other people and their opinions and it can:

- make communication easier
- stop nervous situations getting out of control
- benefit your relationships and self-confidence

Learning to be forceful might not feel easy to start with, but here are some things to try:

- Think about the outcome you want to achieve. What's making you angry, and what do you want to change? Is it enough just to explain what you are angry about?
- Be specific. For example, you could open your statement with, "I feel angry with you because..." Using the phrase 'I feel' avoids blaming anyone and the other person is less likely to feel attacked.
- Really listen to the other person's response and try to understand their point of view.
- Be prepared for the conversation to go wrong and try to spot when this is happening. If you feel yourself getting angry, you might want to come back to the discussion another time.

Look at your lifestyle

Looking after your wellbeing more generally could make you feel calmer and more in control when things happen that make you feel angry. You might want to:

- Avoid drugs and alcohol. Although you might feel this could help you cope in the short term, alcohol and drugs can both affect your ability to control your emotions and actions, and can be a factor in violence.
- Be more active. Being active can help let out any tension you're feeling, as well as having benefits to your self-confidence. Even gentle exercise like going for a walk can make a difference
- Get good sleep. Not sleeping well can have a huge effect on how we're feeling, and how well we cope with things that happen to us.
- Look at what you're eating and drinking.
- Learn to deal with pressure. We can feel worried or stressed for lots of different reasons, but taking some

time to learn how to deal with heaviness can help us feel more in control of difficult situations.

- Develop your emotional spirit. Emotional spirit helps us feel more able to handle difficult emotions.
- Exercise is the best thing to manage my anger. It changes my mood!

IV. What help is available?

There are various treatments available that can help you with your anger problems, such as:-

- talking therapy and counselling
- anger management programmes
- help for rude and violent behaviour

Talking therapy and counselling

Talking therapy and counselling involves talking about your problems with a trained professional who can help you explore the causes of your anger and ways to manage it. This can help you work through your feelings and improve your responses to situations that make you angry.

There are different types of talking therapies, and some are specifically tailored to anger issues.

- Counselling is usually a short-term treatment where you might talk through a specific issue – such as outbursts of anger with your partner or in the workplace – and try to understand how you could manage those situations differently
- Psychotherapy often lasts longer than counselling and tends to go deeper into past experiences. Your focus here may be on learning more about yourself to help you understand why you express your anger the way you do, or why certain situations make you angry.
- Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is highly structured short-term talking therapy that examines how your thoughts, feelings and behaviours affect each other, and aims to teach you practical skills to change this.

Anger can be a barrier to you getting valuable support. Accessing professional help isn't always straightforward; it can be challenging and sometimes you might experience setbacks or delays. It's understandable that you might sometimes feel frustrated and angry about your situation – especially if you don't feel you're getting the help you want.

But if you express your anger aggressively towards your healthcare professionals, this can cause more problems and delays in getting the help you want. Mental health professionals have a right to feel safe at work; so if your behaviour becomes aggressive or threatening, they may not feel able to help you.

Anger management programmes

These are a specific kind of talking treatment for people who struggle with anger issues. They often involve working in a group, but may involve one-to-one sessions. They may use a mixture of counselling and CBT techniques.

Help for rude and violent behaviour

- If your anger means you're acting in a rude or violent way it's important to get help. You might feel worried that asking for help will get you in trouble, but it is often the most important first step towards changing your behaviour. You can contact your own Medical Doctor or Mental Health Experts in our major Hospitals.

V. What can friends and family do?

It can be very difficult when someone you care about is experiencing problems with anger – especially if they sometimes direct their anger towards you, others close to them, or themselves.

We are all responsible for our own actions, so ultimately it will be up to them to learn how to manage and express their anger appropriately. But there are still lots of things you can do to help support them:

- Stay calm. Although you probably have a lot of difficult feelings of your own, if you can stay calm it can help to stop anger growing.
 - Try to listen to them. If you can, allow them time to communicate their feelings without judging them. Often when someone feels that they are being listened to, they are more able to hear other people's points of view as well. And sometimes just being given permission to communicate angry feelings can be enough to help someone calm down.
 - Give them space. If you notice that continuing the conversation is making it worse, give them space to calm down and think. This could be something like going into another room for a while, or spending a few days apart. It's important to give yourself space as well, so you don't find yourself getting too angry.
 - Set boundaries. While there are lots of reasons why this can be difficult, it's important to set limits and boundaries. Be clear in advance about what sort of behaviour is and isn't acceptable to you, and think about what action you can take if someone crosses the line. You don't have to put up with any behaviour that makes you feel unsafe or seriously affects your own wellbeing.
 - Help them identify their causes. This is something you can try when you're both feeling calm, away from any heated situation. Identifying someone's causes for anger can help you both think about ways you can avoid causing situations, and plan how to handle them and how to communicate when they do arise. But try not to be judgmental, or critical. While it can be useful to give specific examples of when you remember them getting angry, be aware that this is probably upsetting for them to think about.
 - Look after your own wellbeing. It can be difficult at times to support someone else, so make sure you're looking after your own wellbeing too.
- Always remember that the worst thing is for people to tell you to calm down. People listening and accepting your feelings help the most.

What if their behaviour is abusive or violent?

Just because someone seems very angry, it doesn't

necessarily mean that they will become violent or abusive. But if this does happen, the most important thing is to make sure that you are safe.

Don't confront someone who is behaving violently.

If you want to talk to them, wait until the situation has calmed down.

You may want to make a safety plan. This might include:

- Making a list of phone numbers of people, organisations and services that you can call if you are scared.
- Arranging to stay at a friend's or neighbour's house until things are calm. Make sure you take any children or other people at risk with you.
- Having a bag prepared to leave in an emergency.
- You can call the police. If your safety is in danger – or the safety of others in your home, such as children. You might feel worried about getting your loved one in

trouble, but it's important to always put your own safety first.

What if they don't recognise they have a problem?

You might find that the person you are supporting doesn't recognise they have a problem and/or refuses to seek medical support. It's understandable to feel frustrated, distressed and powerless as a result of this. But it's important to accept that they are an individual, and that there are always limits to what you can do to support another person.

You and I come from a loving and caring community that share our love with one and another. We must encourage each other, when one family member goes through a rough patch with believe and trust in your strength.

GOD is your happiness-just open your heart to HIM.

HOW TO COPE WITH MY ANGER

BY DR. AMBI

