

How can I control my anger?

Anger is a natural, healthy emotion. However, it can arise out of proportion to its trigger. In these cases, the emotion can impede a person's decision-making, damage relationships, and otherwise cause harm. Learning to control anger can limit the emotional damage.

Anger is a common response to frustrating or threatening experiences. It can also be a secondary response to sadness, loneliness, or fear. In some cases, the emotion may seem to arise from nowhere.

Feeling angry often and to an extreme degree can impact relationships and a person's psychological well-being and quality of life. Suppressing and storing up anger can also have a damaging and lasting impact.

The journal *CNS Spectrums* reported in 2015 that [7.8 percent](#) [Trusted Source](#) of people in the United States experienced "inappropriate, intense, or poorly controlled" anger. This was more common among adult males.

Tools and techniques can help people come to terms with anger triggers and respond to these in more healthy ways.

In this article, we explore the steps a person can take at home, as well as the therapeutic options available.

What is Anger Management?

Catching anger before it reaches full rage is key to managing it effectively.

Anger management involves a range of skills that can help with recognizing the signs of anger and handling triggers in a positive way.

It requires a person to identify anger at an early stage and to express their needs while remaining calm and in control.

Managing anger does not involve holding it in or avoiding associated feelings.

Coping with anger is an acquired skill — almost anyone can learn to control the feelings with time, patience, and dedication.

When anger is negatively affecting a relationship, and especially if it is leading to violent or otherwise dangerous behavior, a person may benefit from consulting a [mental health](#) professional or attending an anger management class.

However, there are initial, immediate techniques to try. Some people find that they can resolve these issues without seeking professional assistance.

Controlling Anger

Mind, a major mental health charity in the United Kingdom, identifies [three main steps](#) for controlling anger:

1. Recognize the early signs of anger.
2. Give yourself time and space to process the triggers.
3. Apply techniques that can help you control the anger.

Recognizing Anger

In the moment, anger can be difficult to stop in its tracks. However, detecting the emotion early can be key. It can allow a person to redirect their thought process to a more constructive place.

Anger causes a physical reaction in the body. It releases adrenaline, the “fight-or-flight” hormone that prepares a person for conflict or danger.

This can have the following effects:

- a rapid heartbeat
- faster breathing
- tension throughout the body
- restlessness, pacing, and tapping of the feet
- clenched fists and jaw
- sweating and trembling

These physical effects can signal a proportionate response to a situation.

Regardless, recognizing the signals early can help a person assess whether the trigger warrants this physical response.

If necessary, they can then take steps to manage their physical [stress](#).

Taking a step back

Buying some time can be fundamental in limiting an angry response. This can involve simple measures.

When confronted with a trigger, it may help to:

- count to 10
- go for a short walk

- make contact with a person who is not immediately involved, such as a friend, family member, or counselor

It can help to vocally express the thoughts behind the anger to a person who is not the focus of the reaction.

This can help defuse the situation and more clearly identify the cause of the intense feelings.

Anyone in the U.S. who is struggling to voice their anger can contact support groups, such as the [Crisis text line](#), for assistance.

Applying management techniques

These can help calm a person or distract them long enough to process the thoughts in a constructive way.

Different techniques are effective for different people, but finding a method that works can be instrumental in defusing episodes of extreme anger.

Some techniques include:

- Deep, slow breathing: Focus on each breath as it moves in and out, and try to spend more time exhaling than inhaling.
- Easing physical tension: Try tensing each part of the body for a count of 10, then releasing it.
- Mindfulness: Meditation is one example of a mindfulness technique, and these can help shift the mind away from anger during triggering situations, especially after consistent practice.
- Exercise: Physical activity is a great way to use up excess adrenalin. A brisk run or walk or combat sports, such as boxing or martial arts, can be useful outlets for aggressive or confrontational feelings.
- Find alternative channels for anger: It can help to express anger in a way that limits harm to others, such as tearing newspaper, crushing ice cubes over a sink, or punching or screaming into a pillow.

- Create distractions: Distraction techniques, such as dancing to energetic music, taking a relaxing shower, or building, fixing, writing, or drawing, can provide distance from the issue.

When preparing to bring up frustration with a peer, it can help to plan what to say. This can help maintain focus and direction in the conversation and reduce the risk of misguided anger.

Also, focusing on solutions rather than problems increases the chances of a resolution and reduces the likelihood of an angry reaction.

Getting at least 7 hours of quality sleep every night also contributes to mental and physical health. Researchers have linked [sleep deprivation](#) to a number of health problems, including irritability and anger.

Therapy

Group or individual therapy can help a person identify and manage triggers.

Some signs that a person may need professional or medical help include:

- being in trouble with the law
- frequently feeling that they have to hold in their anger
- regularly having intense arguments with family, friends, or colleagues
- getting involved in fights or physical confrontations
- physically assaulting a partner or child
- threatening violence to people or property
- breaking objects during an outburst
- losing their temper when driving and becoming reckless

Anger issues rarely exist in isolation. They can derive from a range of other mental health issues, including:

- alcohol or drug dependence
- [bipolar disorder](#)
- schizotypal [personality disorders](#)
- psychotic disorder
- [borderline personality disorder](#)

Addressing underlying issues can help reduce disproportionate feelings of anger. Sometimes, however, a person needs to control anger on its own terms.

Management therapy can take place in group sessions or one-to-one consultations with a counselor or psychotherapist.

If a person has received a diagnosis for a mental health issue, such as [depression](#), this should influence their anger management.

In anger management training, a person learns to:

- identify triggers
- respond constructively, either in the early stages of anger or beforehand
- handle the triggers
- adjust irrational and extreme thought processes
- return to a calm, peaceful state
- express feelings and needs assertively but calmly in situations that tend to cause anger and frustration
- redirect energy and resources into problem-solving

A therapist or counselor can guide an individual through the following questions:

- How do I know when I am angry?

- What types of people, situations, events, places, and other triggers make me angry?
- How do I respond when I am angry? What do I do?
- What impact does my angry reaction have on other people?

It can help to understand that anger and calmness are not clear-cut emotions. Anger, for example, can range from mild irritation to a full rage.

Learning to recognize the spectrum can help people identify when they are truly angry and when they are reacting severely to more minor frustrations. A key aim of therapy is to help people discover and act on these distinctions.

Keep an anger diary

Recording feelings of anger during an episode and reporting what happened before, during, and afterward may help people anticipate triggers and cope more effectively.

Understanding which control techniques worked and which did not can help an individual develop a better anger management plan.

Do not repress the feelings that drove the anger. Instead, after calming down, express them in an assertive, nonaggressive way. Keeping a journal can be an effective channel for this.

Writing can also help a person identify and alter thoughts that contribute to disproportionate anger.

It can be helpful to change final or catastrophic thought processes so that they become more realistic and constructive.

For example, changing the thought, “Everything is ruined” to, “This is frustrating, but a resolution is possible” can help clarify the situation and increase the chances of finding a solution.

Controlling anger in confrontations

_Going on a short walk can help a person diffuse anger and consider a solution.

Anger often emerges while confronting others about specific problems, situations, or grievances. Learning to address these productively can limit the impact of the anger and help resolve the underlying trigger.

It can help to:

- Avoid words such as “always” or “never,” which can alienate others and prevent a person in the grips of extreme or irrational anger from believing that a situation can change.
- Let go of resentment, as bearing a grudge can fuel anger, making it harder to control.
- Avoid harsh, sarcastic humor, and try focusing on good-natured humor, which can help ease anger and resentment.
- Timing is important — if discussions in the evenings tend to become arguments, due to [tiredness](#), for example, change the times that these talks take place.
- Working toward compromise in a healthy way can encourage positive emotions for everyone involved.

Symptoms

As a person moves from mild irritation to rage, they may experience:

- a desire to exit the situation
- irritation
- sadness or depression
- guilt
- resentment
- [anxiety](#)
- a desire to lash out verbally or physically

The following physical indications can also occur:

- rubbing the face with the hand
- fidgeting, or clasping one hand with the other
- pacing around
- becoming cynical, sarcastic, rude, or abrasive
- losing their sense of humor
- craving substances that the person thinks will instill a sense of calm, such as alcohol, tobacco, or drugs
- raising vocal volume or pitch
- screaming or crying

A person may also experience:

- an [upset stomach](#)
- an elevated heart rate
- sweating
- rapid, shallow breathing
- hot flashes in the face or neck

- trembling hands, lips, or jaws
- dizziness
- tingling in the back of the neck

If a person is able to recognize extreme anger or hurt in the moment, they can use management techniques to control the situation.

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/162035>