

## ANGER OUT OF CONTROL

Everybody gets angry sometimes . It is a normal emotion just like fear, happiness, and sadness. Anger can even mask other emotions at times. Anger is built into your hard wiring and serves a purpose at times. Animals growl and show their teeth when feeling threatened in some way. People growl and yell and sometimes attack when they feel threatened. Normal anger is not the problem. It is the anger that is too frequent or too intense or both that creates problems for everyone. It is the anger that turns quickly into a rage and results in verbal and physical attacks on another person or destruction of property. When it begins to interfere with your relationships, your health and your work it is out of control. to the way you process information



Anger is a process that begins in the brain. It is related to some operations of the brain and the way people talk to themselves in when they are angry . The frontal cortex of the brain that controls impulsive behavior does not do a very good job of regulating the emotional part of the brain for some people and they are more likely to react first and think later. People that are frequently angry also tend to have very aggressive self-talk in certain situations.

Maybe you feel angry when someone speaks to you in a disrespectful way or criticizes you unfairly. If you are blamed for something you did not do you might be angry. If it is too crowded in the store or the line is too long and your temperature starts to boil. Situations that result in your anger reactions are called your *triggers*. Everybody has their unique anger triggers that can start the *anger process*.

Sometimes anger just seems to sneak up on you. You are having a pretty good day and one of those anger triggering situations occur and your entire day seems ruined. It could be something important that upsets you or maybe just one of the regular annoyances you face. Ongoing anger could also be an accumulation of resentments smoldering over time that don't get resolved and seem unfair or unacceptable. Each one may not be a big deal alone but several may pile up in your mind. Even if you *do not* get outwardly aggressive it does not mean that you managed your anger. Many of the minor but frequent annoyances can accumulate until you explode over some minor matter later. These are the daily things that would make some people annoyed at the least and in a rage at the worst. It is not anger that becomes a problem. Managed anger can even serve a useful purpose at times. It can give you energy and motivate you to set goals and accomplish some things that are important to you. It can also lead to disaster.

People have different ways to justify their anger.

- Some people use anger to try and get what they want. They have found that they get their way more often if they “blow up” because others feel intimidated.
- Other angry people say they would not be angry if others did not *provoke* them. This type of person does not want to assume any responsibility for his or her own feelings.
- Perhaps anger covers other unexpressed emotions such as hurt, sadness, depression, embarrassment, or disappointment. It seems easier to get angry than talk about these other feelings.
- In some cases anger and outrage are frequently expressed because it has become a habit, possibly even learned from one’s own family. Yelling becomes a way of making a point.

Unrestrained anger has consequences. It has the social consequences of damaging relationships. It can have medical ones too. When someone gets angry there is an elevation in blood pressure, muscles become tense, heart rate increases, breathing rate increases, adrenaline rushes into your blood stream, and the body is prepared for a battle. Frequent triggering of these responses can result in too much wear and tear on the body and stress on your heart. People who are frequently angry also find that they have occupational and legal consequences. It may be hard to keep a job due to frequent conflicts and legal charges could result for domestic violence or assault.

You may not realize that your anger comes from *you*. Sure, there are some things that make most people angry but anger begins with a situation that triggers a lot of aggressive *self-talk* or distorted thinking. When something happens you may use the *shoulds and should nots* such as, “People should not treat me that way. He should not act like that. She should show more respect.” This is one of the common problems with anger. We tell ourselves that people should or should not act in certain ways and get upset when they do not meet our expectations. Even when you are right, your rigid adherence to this belief and the repetition of this conversation in your head can easily cause you to feel even more indignant and angry. A second common problem is *personalization* of anger. You take the annoying and inconsiderate behavior of others as a personal attack. It feels as if they did it to *you*. In many cases you do not even know the person that offended or irritated you in some way. It just *feels* personal. *Labeling* of others as a bad person based on a behavior allows you to demonize them when they do something you don’t like. This becomes a shortcut to avoid considering other perspectives.

Managing anger does not mean simply controlling your external reactions. It also means reducing the frequency and intensity of your internal reactions or level of arousal. It does not mean accepting all bad behavior. You may need to practice assertiveness in some situations. It may be appropriate to stand up for yourself at times, calmly state your position and how the situation affects you.

Below are some anger prevention and management ideas you can use:

- Learn the power of *accepting* the things that you cannot change.
- Practice relaxation strategies routinely to lower your arousal level.
- Be aware of your inflammatory and distorted self-talk and change it to a more calming self-talk
- Be conscious of your *anger triggers* and learn to either avoid them or *practice* responding more appropriately when you face them.

- Do physical exercise to channel these strong feelings in positive ways. Do not discharge anger physically by hitting things.
- Try to solve problems and change the situations if you can.
- Learn a feeling vocabulary that allows you to express other types of feelings such as disappointment or hurt.
- Practice using assertive, non blaming "I " statements such as "I feel.....when you .....and I would like you to...."

Thinking more about how you want to respond and reacting less may help you to be more effective and should get better results in the long run. It also won't take such a toll on your life, relationships, and health.