

# Learning About Managing Anger

## What causes anger?

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Many things can cause anger. Stress at home or at work can cause anger. Being in stressful social situations can also cause it.

Anger signals your body to prepare for a fight. This reaction is often called "fight or flight." When you get angry, adrenaline and other hormones are released into your blood. Then your blood pressure goes up, your heart beats faster, and you breathe faster.

When you express anger in a healthy way, it can inspire change and make you productive. But if you don't have the skills to express anger in a healthy way, anger can build up. You may hurt others—and yourself—emotionally and even physically. Violent behavior often starts with verbal threats or fairly minor incidents. But over time, it can involve physical harm. It can include physical, verbal, or sexual abuse of an intimate partner (domestic violence), a child (child abuse), or an older adult (elder abuse).

It can also make you sick. Anger and constant hostility keep your blood pressure high. They raise your chances of having other health problems, such as depression, a heart attack, or a stroke. Some people with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) feel angry and on alert all the time.

It may feel like there are no other ways to react when you are angry. But when you learn healthy ways to work with anger, it no longer controls you.

## How can you manage your anger?

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The first step to managing anger is to be more aware of it. Note the thoughts, feelings, and emotions that you have when you get angry. Practice noticing these signs of anger when you are calm. If you are more aware of the signs of anger, you can take steps to manage it. Here are a few tips:

- Think before you act. Take time to stop and cool down when you feel yourself getting angry. Count to 10 while you take slow, steady breaths. Practice some other form of mental relaxation.
- Learn the feelings that lead to angry outbursts. Anger and hostility may be a symptom of unhappy feelings or depression about your job, your relationship, or other aspects of your personal life.
- Try to avoid situations that lead to angry outbursts. If standing in line bothers you, do errands at less busy times.
- Express anger in a healthy way. You might:
  - Go for a short walk or jog.
  - Draw, paint, or listen to music to help release the anger.
  - Write in a journal.
  - Use "I" statements, not "you" statements, to discuss your anger. Say "I don't feel valued when my needs are not being met" instead of "You make me mad when you are so inconsiderate."
- Take care of yourself.
  - Exercise regularly.
  - Eat a variety of healthy foods. Don't skip meals.
  - Try to get 8 hours of sleep each night.
  - Limit your use of alcohol, and avoid using drugs.
  - Practice yoga, meditation, or tai chi to relax.

- Explore other resources that may be available through your job or your community.
  - Contact your human resources department at work. You might be able to get services through an employee assistance program.
  - Contact your local hospital, mental health facility, or health department. Ask what types of programs or support groups are available in your area.
- Do not keep guns in your home. If you must have guns in your home, unload them and lock them up. Lock ammunition in a separate place. Keep guns away from children.

## Where can you find help?

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If anger or stress starts to harm your work or personal relationships, you may want to seek help. You can learn ways to manage your feelings and actions.

- Talk to someone you trust, or find a counselor.
- Learn about groups in your area that can connect you with people to talk to. The following resources can help.
  - **Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator.** This service from the national Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration can help you find local counselors. Search online at [findtreatment.samhsa.gov](https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov) or call 1-800-662-HELP (4357), or TDD 1-800-487-4889.
  - **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI).** You can call the NAMI HelpLine (1-800-950-6264) or go online ([www.nami.org/help](https://www.nami.org/help)) to find resources and chat with a trained volunteer.

### Where can you learn more?

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Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/patiented>

Enter **Z357** in the search box to learn more about "**Learning About Managing Anger**".

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