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## How to Manage Your Anger

Anger is a much-misunderstood emotion. While powerful and often intense, anger also can manifest itself in subtle ways and is often unpredictable, in that you may not always know when you'll get angry. Pent-up anger can lead to physical complications such as cardiovascular disease. Learning how to manage your anger is important, especially if you've noticed you're experiencing this emotion more frequently or intensely. Below are some tips for doing that:

### Slow down and listen - Pause

Let's say you find yourself in a discussion with that starts to get heated. Listen carefully to what the other person is saying. Instead of blurting out an angry retort, hit the pause button. Think of what you're going to say before it comes out of your mouth. Slowing down will also help you figure out what's behind the words — yours and the other person's. If your partner feels like you're not spending enough time with him or her, for example, you can adjust your behavior and your words to recognize this fact and do something about it.

### Say hello to humor

Laughter is a wonderful antidote to negativity and anger. It helps you put things into perspective and helps you not take yourself so seriously. When you feel like you are full to the brim with hostile thoughts and have to stop yourself from saying or doing something out of anger, turn instead to lighter fare. Watch a comedy or visit a website with humorous quotes or jokes. Be sure to avoid sarcastic humor, though, as that is counterproductive.

### Put some relaxation into your life

There's a lot to be said for learning how relaxation can help you deal with anger in a much more proactive and constructive way. Whether you engage in deep breathing exercises, yoga, meditation or a walk in nature, putting relaxation techniques into your daily schedule will loosen you up and help soothe angry feelings.

### Switch your routine or environment

If bottleneck traffic gets you riled up, try driving alternate routes on your regular commute. If you can't stand the mess the kids leave in the living room that greets you when you walk through the door, go in a side door. Sometimes it's also about changing timing. For example, if you and your spouse or partner always argue at night timing discussions differently could help. Arguments could be triggered by exhaustion, because you don't feel well, or are anticipating an argument. Make an appointment to discuss pressing matters at a different time so that your evening can be more enjoyable and relaxing.

### Change the way you think about things

Psychologists call this cognitive restructuring. It is simply reordering the way you think about things. Replace negative thoughts and words with those that are more reasonable. Instead of saying you failed and will never succeed, tell yourself that this was a disappointing result, makes you feel frustrated, but it's not life-threatening. You will have other opportunities to succeed.

### Here are some other tips:

- Words to remove from your vocabulary (and thought processes) include "never" and "always." These are ultimatums that back you into a corner. It's better to give yourself some leeway.
- Be conscious of goals. When you always have something to look forward to, it's a little easier to look beyond an immediate emotion, such as anger. You can take the next step toward accomplishing your goals instead of stewing in anger.
- Remind yourself to be logical. Unpleasant things just happen sometimes. By reminding yourself that this is a temporary rough spot, you'll help to deflate angry feelings before they become unmanageable.

While you can learn how to manage anger, there are some warning signs that should be heeded. You may need help from a psychologist or other mental health professional if your relationships or work begin to suffer as a result of angry outbursts; you're afraid you might hurt others or yourself; or you feel like your anger is getting out of control.

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