

COPING WITH ANGER

We all have times when we become angry. Even though it's natural to feel angry, how we manage our anger is important. Below are some ideas to help at those times when it feels as if your anger might lead to undesirable consequences. Different things work for different people, so experiment to see what works best for you.

Time out: Sometimes the best thing to do when a conversation is becoming heated is to give yourself a time out. This is when you both agree to take a break from the situation until you feel more calm and clear-headed. Physically leaving the situation can help, whether it's taking a walk around the block or shutting your office door for a few minutes.

Avoiding Risky Situations or People: If you find that certain situations or people tend to trigger your anger, it might be a good idea to avoid those as much as possible, just like someone who is a recovering alcoholic might avoid bars. If you can't avoid the situation altogether, try to minimize the time you're there and use the other tools on this sheet to help you cope while you're there.

Calm-Down Strategies: These are tools you can use during an argument or during a time out. You could try:

Deep breathing: It's simple, but taking long, slow, deep breaths usually helps most people physically relax. Focusing on your breathing or repeating a word to yourself (like "relax" or "calm") can help relax your mind.

Changing self-talk: Often, the thoughts that we have when we're angry can keep fueling that anger. Try telling yourself things like "take it easy, this isn't worth losing my cool," "I'm not going to take this personally," "Things will work out better if I stay calm and focused."

Social Support: Getting a problem off your chest can help. Talking with a trusted friend, therapist, family member, or other person can also help you think through the problem.

Changing Expectations: Sometimes we have unrealistic expectations we're unaware of that can lead to anger when they're not met. We're more likely to take things personally when this happens too. Some examples are: "I must be perfect," "I must always be in control," "Others should know what I want," "Everyone is out to pull one over on me." These are unrealistic because they're all-or-nothing. No one can always be right or always be in control, and other people have their own imperfections. Ask yourself if your expectations are realistic.

Self-care: Often other problems fuel anger. If you have ongoing stress, health problems, psychological problems, financial difficulties, or other such problems, make sure to do what you can to address those and ask for help if you need it. Taking care of your mental and physical health can help you feel more calm and able to manage anger when it arises. Talk to your physician or therapist if you feel you need more help managing your anger or if your anger is causing problems in your life.