

Tip Sheet

Managing your anger

Anger is a basic human emotion and feeling angry is OK. It is how we respond to and express that anger that can cause problems.

Expressing anger in an abusive, violent or negative way is unacceptable. Rather than trying to suppress the anger, we need to learn how to manage it in a way that acknowledges the feeling while not harming anyone else.

Questions to ask yourself

- Do you sometimes have trouble controlling your temper?
- Have you ever become angry and regretted it later?
- Have you ever lost control of your anger to the point where you became violent or abusive?
- Has anyone ever commented on your anger?

If you answered 'yes' to any of the questions, here are some initial ideas to help take the strength out of anger.

You can also call our MensLine Australia counsellors on 1300 78 99 78 at any time to talk. They can provide you with specialised tools and information for your situation.

Recognising the warning signs

To control your anger, you first need to be able to recognise the signs that you are getting angry:

- Muscular tightening, especially around the jaw and arms

- A sensation of building pressure in the head
- Sensations of heat and flushing in the face
- Elevated heart rate, breathing or sweating.

These physical signs are all indications that your body is preparing for fight or flight, our primitive response to a threat. Once you recognise that you are getting angry, you have the opportunity to do something to diffuse the situation before it gets out of control. Here are some techniques you can try.

Time out

Stepping away from a situation when you are starting to feel angry gives you space to think clearly and calm down. If things are starting to get heated, try saying something to the other person like: "Listen, I think I need to take a break for a bit. I'll come back, and we can sort this out in half an hour."

Controlled breathing

Slowing and deepening your breath can help diffuse the anger. Try taking five long, slow breaths. Focus on relaxing the muscles in your arms and face.

Talk yourself down not up

Self-talk can influence whether you get more or less angry in an exchange.

Saying things to yourself like, "This person is an idiot!" or "How dare this person talk to me like that?" is likely to increase your feelings of anger. Instead, try calming self-statements such as:

- "Cool it. You can handle this."
- "No point flying off the handle. Let's just take a few breaths."
- "I'm not going to let this get to me."
- "Relax..."

Tips to avoid getting angry in the first place

While these anger management techniques can help you calm down in a crisis, they don't address the causes of excessive anger. Conflict is inevitable in relationships, but this doesn't mean that every disagreement needs to lead to an angry fight.

Relaxation

Anger can be the result of built up, unresolved distress, or it may be masking underlying emotions such as sadness. Learning relaxation skills can help you release the physical tension in your body which can contribute to anger problems.

Changing beliefs that contribute to anger

Some anger problems are related to underlying belief systems about how the world should be. If you have a belief that the world should conform to your expectations, you may experience a lot of frustration and anger when it doesn't.

MensLine Australia is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with professional counsellors providing information and support for all relationship issues. Call us on **1300 78 99 78** or visit mensline.org.au.