

# ANGER LOG

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Describe the event that triggered your anger & how you responded:
  
2. Give a synonym for your anger level (furious, annoyed, enraged, etc.), and rate your anger on a scale of 1 – 10.
  
3. What were the first symptoms of your anger—how did you first notice you were angry?
  - Thoughts/judgments:
  - Body sensations:
  
4. What were the primary emotions that you felt?
  
5. What were your unmet emotional needs?
  
6. What factors made you more prone to anger in this situation?
  
7. What beliefs led you to the anger path in this situation?
  
8. What cognitive distortions did you experience?
  
9. What anger management steps did you apply? What would you like to do next time?
  
10. What amends do you need to make? To yourself? To others?

# Cognitive Distortions

*Cognitive distortions are logical, but they are not rational. They can instigate thought processes that lead to socially and psychologically destructive behavior. How often do you find yourself using these ten common distortions. Rate yourself from one to ten with **one** being low and **ten** being high. Choose one of them to work on. Monitor your thoughts and correct yourself when you get caught up in distorted thinking.*

## Score Cognitive Distortions

1. **ALL-OR-NOTHING THINKING:** You see things in black-and-white categories. If performance falls short of perfect, you see yourself or others as total failures.
2. **OVERGENERALIZATION:** You see a single negative event as a never-ending pattern of defeat. Phrases like "You always ." or "You never ." exemplify overgeneralization.
3. **MENTAL FILTER:** You pick out a single negative detail and obsess on it so that your vision of all reality becomes darkened, like the drop of ink that discolors an entire glass of water.
4. **DISQUALIFYING THE POSITIVE:** You reject positive experiences by insisting they "don't count" for some reason or other. In this way you can maintain a negative belief that is contradicted by your everyday experiences. Often this manifests as making excuses when somebody pays you a compliment.
5. **JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS:** You make a negative interpretation even though there are no definite facts that convincingly support your conclusion. Often a "wait and see" attitude is called for in these situations.  
  
\_ **MIND READING:** You arbitrarily conclude (usually by personalizing their behavior) that someone is reacting negatively to you, and you don't bother to check this out  
  
\_ **THE FORTUNETELLER ERROR:** You often anticipate that things will turn out badly, and you feel convinced that your prediction is an already-established fact.
6. **MAGNIFICATION (CATASTROPHIZING) OR MINIMIZATION:** You exaggerate the importance of things (such as your achievements or someone else's goof up), or you inappropriately shrink things until they appear tiny (your own character defects or other people's acceptable behavior). This is also called the "*binocular trick*."
7. **EMOTIONAL REASONING:** You allow your negative emotions to color how you see the world with an "I feel it, therefore it must be true."
8. **SHOULD STATEMENTS:** You try to motivate yourself or others with should and shouldn't, as if needing be whipped and punished before you could be expected anything. "Musts" and "ought's" are also offenders. The emotional consequences are guilt. When you direct should statements toward others, you feel anger, frustration, and resentment.as do they!
9. **LABELING AND MISLABELING:** This is an extreme form of overgeneralization. Instead of describing your error, you attach a negative label to yourself. "I'm a loser." When someone else's behavior rubs you the wrong way, you attach a negative label to him "He's an dumb jerk!" Mislabeled involves describing an event with language that is highly colored and emotionally loaded, and generally not factually descriptive.
10. **PERSONALIZATION:** You see yourself as the cause of some negative external event, which in fact you were not primarily responsible for.

# Using the Anger Management Log Effectively

- **Date**

Writing the date of the event on your anger log will allow you to track your progress with managing anger over time. Sometimes it can get discouraging when change seems to be coming too slow. But going back and reviewing old logs may show you that you have improved your anger management skills.

- **Describe the event that triggered your anger & how you responded:**

Notice that there isn't much space for this? This is not accidental! It's easy to put a lot of energy into excuses and blame. The purpose of this log is to examine what went wrong so that you can manage your anger better in the future. Just write down enough to remind you of what happened. □

**Give a synonym for your anger (furious, annoyed, enraged, etc.) and rate your anger on a scale of 1 - 10.**

How angry were you? It can be helpful to chart your anger levels on a graph--doing so keeps you conscious and more focused on anger management. There are many possibilities: graph each event, graph the highest/average level for a given day/week/month, or graph the total of your anger levels for each selected time period.

Listing synonyms helps you think of your anger more descriptively. It's an exercise in emotional intelligence. By noticing the synonyms, you use the most frequently, you will learn about your anger style in more depth. Then, you will be able to design more effective anger management strategies for yourself.

- **What were the first symptoms of your anger--how did you first notice that you were angry?**

Since anger activates the body and that activation process can reduce conscious control of our anger response, it's very important to notice the onset of anger as early as possible. The sooner you notice that you're getting angry, the sooner you can begin managing your anger. Thus, knowing your early symptoms of anger is a key to anger management.

- **Thoughts**

What thoughts were you having as you got angry? Rigid thinking can predispose an individual to anger. Is there a pattern in your thinking that leads to anger?

- **Judgments**

Rarely do we get angry without judging that the other person has done "wrong." Did you form any judgments? How did those judgments distort your understanding of the other person?

- **Body Sensations**

What physical cues did you notice as you got angry? A knot in your stomach? A headache? Tension? A feeling of heat? Everybody has different cues. It's important to know what your physical cues are so that you can manage your anger before it gets out of control.

- **What were the primary emotions that you felt?**

Anger is a secondary emotion. Beneath anger lie the primary emotions that trigger it. What was hiding underneath your anger? Learning to identify your primary emotions helps strengthen your emotional intelligence. It also allows you to more clearly communicate how you feel with others. This is a great anger management technique, one that can disarm a fight before it gets started.

- **What were your unmet emotional needs?**

Negative primary emotions result from unmet emotional needs. If you let the emotions progress to anger and then act the anger out, it is unlikely that you will get your emotional needs met. But, if you identify your emotional needs, you can work directly to fulfill them or to soothe yourself if they cannot be immediately gratified. By identifying your emotional needs, you develop strong emotional intelligence and prepare yourself for more powerful anger management next time those needs arise.

- **What factors made you more prone to anger in this situation?**

Sometimes we get angry because we're hungry or tired. Other times, a repetitive situation sets us off. If other factors contributed to your anger, it's a good idea to know about them. Maybe next time you can deal with them and stay calm.

- **What beliefs led you to the anger path in this situation?**

How did your assumptions and interpretations of the situation contribute to your anger? What beliefs was your anger based on? An important step in anger management is noticing beliefs that can lead to justifying anger and challenging them.

- **What cognitive distortions did you experience?**

Identifying your cognitive distortions is an important anger management skill, along with catching "stinking thinking" and redirecting your thoughts into a healthy process.

- **What anger management steps did you apply?**

Keep track of how you practiced anger management. How effective were you? Did it work well, or do you need to try a different approach next time?

- **What would you like to do next time?**

Plan for future anger management. How could you have improved your handling of this situation? What could lead to a better outcome.

- **What amends do you need to make?**

Frequently, our anger harms others, as well as ourselves. What can you do to help heal the situation?

- **To yourself?**

Your anger damages you. What do you need to do to help yourself heal?

- **To others?**

What do you need to do to help others who were either the targets of your anger, or who witnessed it, feel better? Are there relationships that you need to mend? Damage to repair?

➔ In various degrees, each according to his or her own unique nature, we each have a natural **emotional need to feel**:

accepted  
acknowledged  
admired  
appreciated  
approved of  
believed in capable  
challenged clear  
(not confused)  
competent  
confident  
forgiven  
forgiving

free fulfilled  
heard  
helped  
helpful  
important  
in control  
included  
listened to  
loved  
needed  
noticed  
powerful

private      productive /  
useful      reassured  
recognized    respected  
safe / secure  
supported    treated fairly  
                trusted  
understanding  
understood      valued  
                worthy

## Anger / Needs List Exercise

date: \_\_\_\_\_

<p>List the judgments that float most frequently in your head by using the cue:</p> <p><i>I don't like people who are _____</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1.</li><li>2.</li><li>3.</li><li>4.</li><li>5.</li><li>6.</li><li>7.</li><li>8.</li></ol>	<p>For each entry in the other column, answer the question:</p> <p>"What am I needing and not getting?"</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1.</li><li>2.</li><li>3.</li><li>4.</li><li>5.</li><li>6.</li><li>7.</li><li>8.</li></ol>
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## Primary vs. Secondary Feelings

Perhaps the most helpful thing to remember about anger is that it is a secondary emotion. A primary feeling is what is felt immediately before we feel angry. We always feel something else first before we get angry.

We might first feel afraid, attacked, offended, disrespected, forced, trapped, or pressured. If any of these feelings are intense enough, we think of the emotion as anger.

Generally speaking, secondary feelings do not identify the unmet emotional need (UEN). When all I can say is "I feel angry," neither I nor anyone else knows what would help me feel better. A helpful technique, then, is to always identify the primary emotion.

### Anger as a Response to Fear

One of the primitive functions of an animal's response to fear is to frighten away the attacker. But in modern human life, we often frighten away those who we need and care about most. Besides this, prolonged anger has clear health consequences. According to Dr. Herbert Benson, these include heart attacks, hardening of the arteries, strokes, hypertension, high blood pressure, heart rate changes and metabolism, muscle and respiratory problems. (The Relaxation Response, 1975)

### Responding To and Learning From Anger

Anger is an intense emotion. It is evidence that we feel strongly about something. As with every emotion, it has a lesson for us. It can teach us what we value, what we need, what we lack, what we believe and what our insecurities are. It can help us become more aware of what we feel strongly about, and which emotional needs are important to us. One way to learn from anger is shown in the example below:

Instead of saying,

*She never should have done that. I can't believe how irresponsible, insensitive and inconsiderate she is. What a cold-hearted, evil witch she is.*

A more productive response is:

*I am really upset by this. Why does it bother me so much? What specifically am I feeling? What are my primary feelings? What need do I have that is not being met? What principles of mine have been violated?*