

BODHI LIFE BALANCE

Anger: What It Is, What It Wants, What To Do

Understand it • Slow it down • Choose your next move



Pause • Breathe • Respond
Anger is information. You still get to choose.

A practical workbook for understanding anger,
calming the body, and choosing what happens next.

*** Workbook Edition ***

Part One: Understanding anger

A simple guide before the practice pages.

What is anger?

Anger is your brain and body trying to protect you. Sometimes anger is useful because it shows that something feels unfair, unsafe, disrespectful, frustrating, or out of your control. Anger is not bad by itself. It becomes a problem when it starts driving your words, choices, body, or relationships.

What anger can look like

Body signs	Thought signs	Action signs
fast heartbeat clenched fists hot face tight jaw shaky hands	This is not fair They are disrespecting me I cannot take this I need to win I need to get out	yelling arguing shutting down pacing slamming or leaving

Important reminder

Anger is a signal, not a command. You can listen to the signal without obeying every urge that comes with it.

Circle or check what you notice most: ☐ body ☐ thoughts ☐ voice ☐ hands ☐ face ☐ breathing ☐ mood

What anger wants

Anger usually has a need hiding inside it.

The question behind the anger

Instead of asking, "How do I make this anger disappear?" try asking, "What is this anger trying to protect, prove, or explain?" That question gives you more control.

Anger may want...	What that can mean	Helpful next move
Respect	I feel talked down to, ignored, or dismissed.	Use a clear sentence about what you need.
Space	I feel crowded, pressured, or overwhelmed.	Ask for a short break before talking more.
Safety	I feel threatened, trapped, or unsafe.	Move toward a safe adult, staff, or support person.
Fairness	I feel something is wrong or unjust.	Name the issue without attacking the person.
Control	I feel powerless or forced into something.	Find one choice you can make right now.
To be heard	I feel like no one understands me.	Slow your voice and say the main point once.

Try this sentence

"My anger is telling me I need _____, but I can ask for it without making things worse."

What anger can hide

Anger can be the loud emotion on top of quieter pain underneath.

The iceberg idea

Anger is sometimes the part people can see. Under the surface, there may be hurt, fear, shame, grief, embarrassment, rejection, loneliness, or feeling powerless.

If anger says...	The feeling underneath might be...	A more honest sentence could be...
"Leave me alone."	I feel overwhelmed or embarrassed.	"I need a few minutes before I can talk."
"You do not care."	I feel rejected or unimportant.	"I need to feel like I matter right now."
"This is stupid."	I feel nervous, ashamed, or unsure.	"I do not know how to handle this yet."
"I hate everyone."	I feel hurt, lonely, or disappointed.	"I am hurt and I do not know what to do with it."
"I am done."	I feel tired and powerless.	"I need help slowing this down."

What does your anger usually hide? ☐ hurt ☐ fear ☐ sadness ☐ shame ☐ rejection ☐ loneliness ☐ grief ☐ stress

The anger cycle

Once you know the pattern, you can interrupt it.

Anger usually moves in a loop

Most anger does not come out of nowhere. It starts with a trigger, moves into the body, creates thoughts, builds an urge, turns into an action, and leaves a consequence. The consequence can become the next trigger if nothing changes.

Step	What happens	Example
1. Trigger	Something starts the reaction.	Someone makes a comment, changes a plan, says no, or ignores you.
2. Body reaction	Your body prepares to fight, leave, freeze, or shut down.	Your jaw tightens and your heart speeds up.
3. Thoughts	Your brain explains the threat.	"They are disrespecting me."
4. Urge	You feel pushed to act right now.	You want to yell, text, leave, slam, or prove a point.
5. Action	You do something with the anger.	You raise your voice or walk away without explaining.
6. Consequence	The result either helps or makes things worse.	You feel relief for one minute, then regret, conflict, or distance.

Skill target

You do not have to catch anger at the beginning every time. Catching it anywhere in the cycle is progress.

Healthy anger and harmful anger



Anger can protect you or it can take over.

Healthy anger	Harmful anger
Helps you speak up.	Attacks, threatens, or humiliates people.
Names the problem clearly.	Turns one problem into a whole-person judgment.
Uses boundaries.	Uses control, fear, or intimidation.
Takes a pause when needed.	Refuses to pause because winning feels urgent.
Protects safety and dignity.	Breaks trust, damages property, or creates fear.
Allows repair after conflict.	Blames everyone else and avoids responsibility.

Boundary reminder

A boundary tells people what you will do to stay safe and respectful. A threat tells people what you will do to punish them. The difference matters.

One healthy anger skill I want to use more: ☐ pause ☐ walk away safely ☐ use words ☐ ask for help ☐ repair ☐ breathe

What to do when anger gets loud

Calm the body first, then choose your response.

Why body skills matter

When anger is intense, the thinking part of the brain may not lead well. Calming the body first gives your brain a better chance to make a choice you will respect later.

Skill	How to use it	Why it helps
S.T.O.P.	Stop. Take a breath. Observe what is happening. Proceed with care.	It creates a pause between feeling and action.
Slow breathing	Breathe in for 4. Breathe out for 6. Repeat 4 times.	Longer exhales tell the body it can stand down.
Urge surfing	Notice the urge without obeying it right away. Watch it rise and fall.	Most urges peak and drop if you do not feed them.
Grounding	Name 5 things you see, 4 you feel, 3 you hear, 2 you smell, and 1 you taste.	It brings the brain back to the present moment.
Safe exit	Say, "I need a few minutes. I will come back."	It protects the relationship while you cool down.

Get help right away

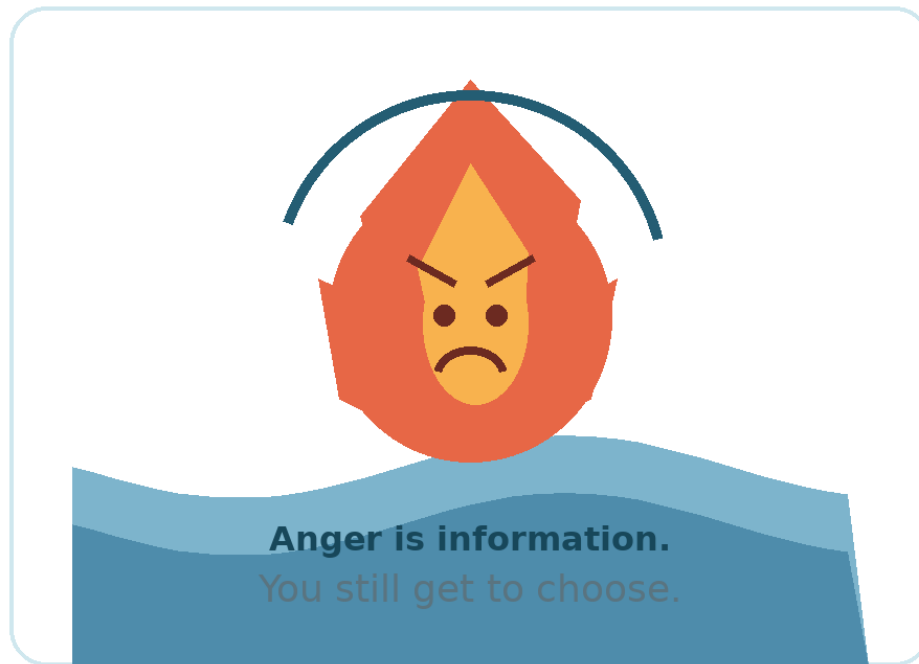
If anger feels like you may hurt yourself, hurt someone else, break something, lose control, or make an unsafe choice, get support immediately. Call 988 for crisis support or 911 for immediate danger.

Part Two: Worksheets and practice

Use short answers. One word answers are okay.

How to use these pages

You do not have to complete every worksheet at once. Pick the page that matches the moment. If anger is happening right now, start with calming the body. If the anger has passed, use the reflection pages to understand the pattern.



When to use it	Best worksheet
Before anger gets big	My anger warning signs or My anger safety plan.
During anger	Pause before I react or Calm my body first.
After anger	What triggered me, My anger cycle, or Repair after anger.
When helping someone else	Say it better or Anger safety plan with an adult/staff member.

Worksheet 1: My anger warning signs

Notice anger early, before it takes over.

My body usually tells me first by...	
My face, hands, or voice may change by...	
My thoughts usually sound like...	
Other people may notice that I...	
A small sign that anger is growing is...	
A big sign that I need help or space is...	

Warning sign reminder

Early warning signs are not weakness. They are information that helps you act sooner.

Worksheet 2: What triggered me?

Break down the moment without blaming or defending.

What happened?	
Who was involved?	
What did I hear, see, or think?	
What felt unfair, unsafe, disrespectful, or out of control?	
What did my body do?	
What did I want to do right away?	
What did I actually do?	

Trigger note

A trigger explains the start of the reaction. It does not excuse unsafe behavior.

Worksheet 3: What is my anger trying to tell me?

Look for the need inside the feeling.

Need	Check if this fits	What I could ask for
Respect	[]	I need to be spoken to differently.
Space	[]	I need a few minutes before I keep talking.
Safety	[]	I need to move closer to support.
Fairness	[]	I need to explain what feels unfair.
Control	[]	I need one choice I can make right now.
To be heard	[]	I need someone to listen without interrupting.

My anger is probably trying to protect...	
The need underneath my anger is...	
A respectful way to ask for that need is...	

Worksheet 4: What is under my anger?

Find the quieter feeling under the loud one.

Check what may be underneath today: ☐ hurt ☐ fear ☐ sadness ☐ shame ☐ embarrassment ☐ grief

Check more if needed: ☐ rejection ☐ loneliness ☐ stress ☐ powerless ☐ tired ☐ hungry

The loud feeling is...	
The quieter feeling underneath might be...	
I know this because...	
What I wish someone understood is...	
One kind thing I can say to myself is...	

Underneath note

Naming the feeling under anger does not make you weak. It gives you more accurate information.

Worksheet 5: My anger cycle

Map the loop so you can interrupt it next time.

1. Trigger	What started it?
2. Body reaction	What happened in your body?
3. Thoughts	What did your brain say?
4. Urge	What did anger push you to do?
5. Action	What did you do?
6. Consequence	What happened after?

Interrupt point

Next time, I can interrupt the cycle at step ____ by doing _____.

Worksheet 6: Pause before I react

Use this when anger says, "Do something right now."

Step	What I will do
1. Stop	I will freeze my body for one breath before I speak or move.
2. Take a breath	I will breathe in for 4 and out for 6.
3. Observe	I will ask, "What is happening in my body, thoughts, and urge?"
4. Pick a safe action	I will choose words, a break, water, grounding, or asking for help.

The reaction I want to avoid is...	
My pause sentence will be...	
A safe place or person I can move toward is...	
After I pause, my next right action is...	

Worksheet 7: Calm my body first

Pick one body skill and give it a few minutes.

Body skill	Try it	Check when used
Slow breathing	Breathe in for 4. Breathe out for 6. Repeat 4 times.	[]
Cold water	Splash cold water on your face or hold a cold drink.	[]
Feet on floor	Press both feet down and notice the ground holding you.	[]
Release tension	Unclench your jaw, drop your shoulders, open your hands.	[]
Quiet movement	Walk safely, stretch, or shake out your hands.	[]
One spot focus	Look at one calm spot and describe it silently.	[]

Anger level before	After 2 minutes	After 5 minutes
[] 10 [] 8 [] 6 [] 4 [] 2	[] 10 [] 8 [] 6 [] 4 [] 2	[] 10 [] 8 [] 6 [] 4 [] 2

Body note

Even a small drop in intensity means your body is responding. That is progress.

Worksheet 8: Say it better

Turn anger into a clear sentence that can be heard.

Angry sentence	Clearer sentence
"You never listen."	"I need you to let me finish before you respond."
"This is stupid."	"I do not understand this yet, and I am frustrated."
"Leave me alone."	"I need a few minutes, then I can talk."
"You do not care."	"I need reassurance that this matters to you."

The angry sentence I want to say is...	
What I really need is...	
A clearer sentence could be...	
My voice needs to sound...	
If I cannot say it safely, I can...	

Worksheet 9: Repair after anger

Repair does not erase what happened. It helps rebuild trust.

What repair means

Repair means you take responsibility for your part, name what happened, respect the other person, and make a plan to do better. Repair is not the same as blaming yourself for everything.

What happened?	
What part belongs to me?	
What part does not belong to me?	
Who may have been affected?	
A responsible apology could sound like...	
Next time, I will try...	
Support I may need is...	

Worksheet 10: My anger safety plan

Make a plan before anger gets too big.

When my anger is at a 4 out of 10, I will...	
When my anger is at a 7 out of 10, I will...	
When my anger is at a 9 or 10, I need to...	
People or places that help me stay safe are...	
Things I should move away from are...	
My emergency support plan is...	

Safety reminder

If anger feels like it could become violence, self-harm, unsafe driving, property damage, or losing control, get help immediately. Call 988 for crisis support or 911 for immediate danger.

Quick check and reflection

Use this after a hard moment, during a calm moment, or at the end of the day.

One thing I learned about anger today	
One body sign I notice early	
One thought I can slow down	
One calming tool I will use	
One need my anger might be showing me	
One person I can ask for support	
One way I can repair after anger	
My promise to myself	

Final reminder

You do not have to handle anger alone. Anger gets safer when you notice it early, calm your body, tell the truth clearly, and ask for support before the moment gets too big.