

Get a Grip with 10 Anger Management Tools

Do you fume when someone cuts you off in traffic? Does your blood pressure rocket when your spouse is late? Anger is a normal and even healthy emotion — but it's important to deal with it in a positive way. Uncontrolled anger can take a toll on both your health and your relationships. Practice these tools for self-control.

1. Think before you speak

In the heat of the moment, it's easy to say something you'll later regret. Take a few moments to collect your thoughts before saying anything — and allow others involved in the situation to do the same.

2. Once you're calm, express your anger

As soon as you're thinking clearly, express your frustration in an assertive but non-confrontational way. State your concerns and needs clearly and directly, without hurting others or trying to control them.

3. Get some exercise

Physical activity can help reduce stress that can cause you to become angry. If you feel your anger escalating, go for a brisk walk or run, or spend some time doing other enjoyable physical activities.

4. Take a timeout

Timeouts aren't just for kids. Give yourself short breaks during times of the day that tend to be stressful. A few moments of quiet time might help you feel better prepared to handle what's ahead without getting irritated or angry.

5. Identify possible solutions

Instead of focusing on what made you mad, work on resolving the issue at hand. Brain storm and problem solve. Does your child's messy room drive you crazy? Close the door sometimes. Is your partner late for dinner every night? Schedule meals later in the evening — or agree to eat on your own a few times a week. Discuss how he or she can leave work earlier. Remind yourself that anger alone won't fix anything and might only make it worse.

6. Stick with 'I' statements

To avoid criticizing or placing blame — which might only increase tension — use "I" statements to describe the problem. Be respectful and specific. For example, say, "I'm upset that you left the table without offering to help with the dishes," instead of, "You never do any housework."

7. Don't hold a grudge

Forgiveness is a powerful tool. If you allow anger and other negative feelings to crowd out positive feelings, you might find yourself swallowed up by your own bitterness or sense of injustice. But if you can forgive someone who angered you, you might both learn from the situation. It's unrealistic to expect everyone to behave exactly as you want at all times.

8. Use humor to release tension

Lightening up can help diffuse tension. Use humor to help you face what's making you angry and, possibly, any unrealistic expectations you have for how things should go. Avoid sarcasm, though — it can hurt feelings and make things worse.

9. Practice relaxation skills

When your temper flares, put relaxation skills to work. Practice deep-breathing exercises, imagine a relaxing scene, or repeat a calming word or phrase, such as, "Take it easy." You might also listen to music, write in a journal or do a few yoga poses or stretching — whatever it takes to encourage relaxation.

10. You choose—or you lose

To "lose your temper" is a cop-out. You don't lose your temper like you lose your car keys. You don't lose your temper—you choose your temper. You choose your tempers, attitudes, actions and words. Choose to master your emotion of anger. This one emotion can wreak havoc on relationships; especially with the ones you love the most. Do yourself and them a favor, get a grip. Choose self-control. Choose your temper and your words.