

Anger Control Skills

1. When we prepare for a difficult situation, we are more likely to be successful. We can prepare by thinking about the problem or practicing how to deal with it in our heads and/or with others.
2. Stay calm. Here are two skills that are helpful in staying calm. A. Taking a few deep breaths helps us relax, concentrate, and think clearly. Many professional basketball players take a few deep breaths at the foul line to relax and improve their concentration before they take their shot. You can actually see the players do this on TV. This skill is useful when someone is trying to get you to respond in an angry way. It helps you think clearly about the likely results before taking action in anger. B. Counting backwards from 20 is another way of staying calm and preventing yourself from getting angry without thinking about it. Counting postpones action and gives you a chance to think.
3. Knowing how you are feeling helps us understand what's going on and leads us to decide whether we should feel that way. For example, if we are angry over a mean comment that someone made, it is a good idea to reconsider. Maybe the comment only deserves slight annoyance instead of a strong anger reaction.
4. Using self-reminders helps us stay calm and make good decisions. By using self-reminders we are really talking to ourselves to guide ourselves.

Examples of self-reminders are:

- "He's only trying to make me mad."
- "Stay calm."
- "Ignore this."
- "Remember to be assertive, but not aggressive."
- "I don't care what he says about me."

5. Understanding helps us figure out why the trigger is happening. If we know why a person is doing something to make us react in an angry way, then we can figure out the best decision to make. We need to ask ourselves “Why is he/she doing this to me?”
6. Thinking ahead about results looks into the future. We are satisfied that we like what we think will happen. If not, we will do something else. For each possible action, ask, “What will happen if I do it?” Unfortunately, many angry people act so fast that they do not take the time to consider what will happen.
7. Making a decision is a very important step in dealing with difficult situations. A common mistake is to let our anger make the decision for us. When this happens we try to harm others without ever really deciding to do it. The chain reaction can carry us along to a possible violent conclusion. It is important to take charge, think, and make the decision.
8. Ignoring a trigger sounds easy, but it is difficult. It is often the best solution.
9. Being assertive is important. A person who is assertive stands up for his/her rights, and respects the rights of others. The person who is aggressive stands up for his/her rights, but does not respect the rights of others. By being assertive, but not aggressive, we stand up for our rights without using threats or violence. The results if being assertive are almost always better than aggression.
10. Giving yourself feedback is the way we improve how we handle situations. It is no different from a football team. After the game, win or lose, the coach and the players discuss what to do differently next time.