

ANGER
A WORKBOOK
FOR UNDERSTANDING AND DEALING WITH

ANGER

ANGER

My soul grips the chains
I cannot move to rip
I wish to tear, to gash, to break
My anger engulfs me
Empowers me to destroy all
Rage boils inside
Am I demon or man

My anger rescues me
empowers me to protect my own
to keep me safe
to meet the challenge
I cannot be me without my anger
It powers the engine of enlightenment
It keeps me out of the dungeons of ignorance

My anger frightens me
its power seems uncontrollable
How can I tame its strength
without unleashing its destructive force

Anger

Our greatest gift
Our greatest challenge
To tame the mighty river of anger
is to tap into tremendous energy and power

Power to heal
Power to protect
Power to correct injustice
Power to create

Use your anger wisely
It can destroy you
It can free you
It's your choice

Letter writing: One of the best ways to get feelings out of your body is to put them on paper in the form of a letter. This can help you organize your thoughts and clarify your feelings. You can write letters to parents, siblings, perpetrators, God, etc. It's helpful to write the letter without the intention of ever sending it. This makes it less likely that you will hold back or edit your true feelings out of fear or guilt. Letters can be rewritten many times. Some people do actually send the letters to the people with whom they are angry. This practice is beneficial if you have a clear realization of the potential consequences of such a letter. The main purpose of such a letter is for the writer to get in touch with and release his/her anger and pain. It's not meant to be a vehicle for revenge. The letter should be as focused as possible on one person or event, avoiding generalities (i.e., "I'm just mad at the world").

Empty chair work: One of the most powerful methods of anger reduction is the empty chair technique. This work is typically done with a therapist (although you can do this on your own once you get the hang of it) and involves imagining the person with whom you are angry in a chair in front of you. You are given permission to say anything you want to as though the person were right there in front of you. This gives people the chance to say all the things they were never able to say and often leads to fairly intense emotional release. There are many variations of the empty chair technique that a well trained therapist will use in guiding the person through this work to maximize the expression and understanding of the emotion. This work should be focused on one person at a time and should deal with specific issues.

Bataka work: A bataka is a bat-like instrument that is often used to help a person get a more intense emotional release of anger. A person uses the bataka to hit a chair or foam cube. The bataka is necessary for some people to help them get in touch with the physical aspects of their anger and to intensify the release. If you have any physical problems with your back, arms, shoulders or neck, you should not use the bataka. Once again, the bataka is best used under the supervision of a trained clinician due to the intensity of the emotion that can be evoked. This type of work is most helpful if specific issues are being dealt with rather than general feelings of anger.

Sharing with others: A helpful method of anger reduction for child-within anger is to share those things you are angry about with a support group, close friend or therapist, from whom you can get validation for your anger.

SUMMARY

Anger can kill us or anger can save us. Healthy, appropriate anger can be one of our most powerful allies. Our anger can motivate us and keep others from using us, hurting us or taking advantage of us. It can become a powerful weapon in the arsenal of the tools we use to set boundaries and to protect ourselves in life-affirming ways.

Six Anger Styles

STUFFERS

Butt out one conflict avoider, people who deny or bury their anger, that mode is "peace at any price." They often have lots of tension under the surface. The underlying problem is never addressed and therefore can't be solved. People who stuff their anger so much they become depressed, or they may become physically ill, with stomachaches, or headaches, or other physical complaints. Tense who have parents who stuff their anger don't have the opportunity to learn how to problem-solve.

WITHDRAWERS

Sometimes the withdrawer just blames the mood by her withdrawal. The form passive-aggressive means expressing anger in subtle, indirect ways. Some husbands are passive-aggressive; they don't talk to their wives for days when they are angry. Some men who are angry about a divorce express their anger by letting their grades go down. Or some men who are angry at their parents grow their anger by not doing their chores or by not doing what they are told. These are subtle, not obvious, ways to show anger.

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BLAMERS

Blamers express their anger by blaming their problems on other people, by name calling, by attacking, or by putting other people down. Tense often blame their problems on their parents, their siblings, their parents, or their teachers. Parents often blame their problems on their children, their spouse, their own parents, or their work situation. Tense in families where one or both parents are blamers may have low self-esteem because they begin to believe what they are told. They may feel guilty and responsible for the family problems. Or they may become blamers, too, and never take responsibility for their own behavior.

TRIANGULERS

Trianglers express their anger in devious and manipulative ways. Instead of expressing their anger directly, they put someone else in, or they try to get someone else to be angry. For instance, a mother who is angry at her husband may tell her son what the husband has done, so the son will be angry at his husband too. Adolescents often use triangling. For example, Jenny might be angry because her best friend, Stephanie, said something to hurt her. Jenny might be mad at Stephanie too. In families where there are trianglers, a lot of tension may be below the surface. Kids may have the feeling that they or someone else has done something wrong, but they don't know what.

EXPLODERS

Explosives use violence to express anger. This may range from pushing, shoving, locking, and slapping to hitting, punching, choking, using a weapon, or even killing. There are all kinds of behaviors. Tense who grow up in violent families are often scared that they or someone else is going to get hurt. They often witness in order to rescue one parent, and sometimes the parent get hurt as well. Sometimes violent parents get angry at tense who try to help. If a teenage daughter is very close to a mother who is beaten by the father, the girl might believe her father is beaten, too, and may not be able to tell her mother when the storm is coming. Children in violent families worry about divorce; they also worry that someone will be hurt badly and that the violent parent will go to jail. Violent parents are often unpredictable in their violence. Their children never know what to expect. They are often hyperactive, constantly assuming the mood of the violent parent, or of the family, to help them predict whether this is a safe time. Sometimes other violent fights with each other, the parents might get mad at the children, ignoring them, sending them to their room, or taking their anger out on them. Sometimes the parent directs the violence to the oldest son or daughter. The parent may beat the son or daughter, sometimes with the other parent watching. Tense in that position often wonder why their mother stands by and allows them to be beaten by their father. Tense in violent families often feel that their families are different and with which they could be the other someone had outgrown of their families, and outgrown of themselves, thinking something is the matter with them.

PROBLEM SOLVERS

Problem solvers can admit that they are angry and then look at why they are angry. They put thinking between their feelings and their behavior. They see if they are angry about a problem they can solve; if so, they use their anger to give them power to change their behavior. Problem solvers use their problem-solving skills in anger situations. Problem solvers have a problem they can't solve, they effort. Problem solvers have a problem they can't solve, they effort.

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How to make the most of this workbook

The material in this workbook is meant to provide information on understanding and dealing with anger. It's an attempt to provide much needed information about the emotion of anger as well as specific tools to help you deal with anger. This workbook is not a substitute for counseling and therapy. It's meant to be used as a tool to enhance healing and facilitate growth. Application of any treatment approach or technique outlined in the workbook is the sole responsibility of the reader. Whenever possible review this material with your counselor, therapist or physician before taking specific action.

If you would like to read about anger in more depth, the following books are recommended:

Weisinger, Hendrie. *Dr. Weisinger's Anger Workbook*. New York: Quill, 1985.

Lerner, Harriet Goldhor. *The Dance of Anger*. New York: Bantam, 1987.

they are afraid about what other might think of them. Most of the anger that people feel is not violent or difficult to control. It is irritation or annoyance which is the usual response to everyday disappointments.

Anger, like anxiety is an emotion that feels like nervousness on the inside of your body, is a reaction to hurt or loss. How does anger result from being hurt? Any emotional injury drains you energy by creating a negative feeling that has to be resolved in some way. Have you ever had a really strong emotion that lasts for a very long time? Did you notice that at the end of the day you're really tired and exhausted? That's what being "drained of energy" feels like. The natural reaction is to redirect that negative feeling outside of your mind and body at whatever it was that caused the hurt. But it is not quite as simple as it seems, because the cause of the hurt is not always identifiable. Sometimes we really can't put our finger on the cause of our anger.

One example might be a like when a young boy's dog is killed by a car. The boy feels a great loss. It hurts too much to even cry, the pain of the loss is so great that the youngster can't express any of it directly. All of his energy seems to be used up by trying to contain the hurt and pain (keeps it all inside). He is angry the dog had died but whom should he be angry at? He might go from being angry at the person who drove the car to being a little mad at himself. The boy might be saying things in his head like "If only I had been watching him, then the car wouldn't have killed him." Or maybe the boy is mad at his dog for being stupid enough to run in front of the car. Emotions don't heal by keeping them inside. We need to express them so they can get out. The trick is finding a way to express anger appropriately and at the right thing that started the anger build-up without hurting someone else or ourselves.

Trouble comes when the direct source of the hurt is unavailable or not there to express our feelings appropriately. When this happens, people tend to just "stuff" the anger feeling deep inside and pretend like it's not there anymore. But when you "stuff" enough anger is starts to sneak out in all sorts of inappropriate ways.

Think about a time or situation when you were angry or hurt and couldn't tell that person because they were gone or unavailable. Fill in the blanks to this sentence:

There was this one time I was angry/hurt because

I expressed my anger to _____
even though they weren't the person I was really angry/hurt at.

Start by just writing down what happened to you and who you are angry at. Take your time. Let all the details you can think out on paper. It could be just one event or countless events. You may be angry at one or many people. Say everything you what to say (or have always wanted to say). If you are nervous that this will be read by someone other than your counselor or Doctor here at St. Luke's, tell them so they can process your tears with you and chose an option for confidentiality.

Because of experiences like these, no one can tell you that you are imagining your pain. No one can tell you that you have no reason for disliking (or even hating) that someone who hurt you.

People also suffer not only from truly vicious things, but also from accidental or thoughtless things that others do to us. Some teenagers have had deep wounds from stupid remarks parents or teacher said only one time to them. Other teenagers suffer because even though they know they were loved by their parents, they didn't feel loved deeply enough.

Let's start by admitting this: One or more people have probably done things to you that you should really not like them for. Teenagers have told horror stories about what other people have done to them. Every school has teenagers who have been beaten down by family and/or friends. Every school has teenagers who have been sexually, emotionally, and/or physically abused for years (or even just once). Every school counts numbers of teenagers with deep emotional scars from terrible things other people have done to them.

DESTRUCTIVE ANGER AT OTHERS

One of the first steps at resolving anger is to admit to ourselves or someone else (like a counselor, parent, teacher, friend) that we have been hurt or offended.

1. The problem never gets resolved.
2. Unexpressed or resolved anger builds up over time and then starts to sneak out in all sorts of wrong ways.
3. Unexpressed anger sometimes turns into depression.
4. Someone who you care about or love might make one little mistake and you dump all your anger on them, which they don't deserve (you know that saying "The straw that broke the camels back", well, if you dealt with each "straw" as it came, the camels' back would never get broken).
5. We might start making bad choices in our lives. For example: getting even at the world, doing drugs to numb feelings, joining gangs, being disrespectful to adults and friends, quitting school, etc.

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2.

1.

Experience/Practice:

2.

1.

Modeling:

Give 2 examples of "modeling" and "experience/practice" in your life:

The technical term for this type of learning is called "operant learning." People act in certain ways that produce certain results. We try out a behavior and then see what happens next. If the response we make happens is good, then we'll probably keep doing it. If the results of our actions are unwanted, we stop doing it, or do something different.

EXPERIENCE/PRACTICE

Because we are not born with any clue how to get angry (other than have a tantrum or cry when we're hungry or need our diaper changed), we watch people as to how they do it. Modeling, as you can guess, is when you copy or do what others do. When we are children, we watch everyone. Have you ever had little kids/brothers/sisters follow you around, dress or talk like you, copy you, do whatever you're doing? Well...they're "modeling" you. Thus, they are learning ways to do things.

MODELING

- There are 2 ways of learning:
- 1. Modeling.
- 2. Experience/practice.

emotions, are learned

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What types of people make you the most angry?

What types of situations make you the most angry?

From TV, video games, video movies:

From Magazines:

From Sports:

From your friends:

From your sister(s):

From you brother(s):

When your parents argued:

From Father/Stepfather:

From Mother/Stepmother:

after she had a bad day at work. OR She never showed me how to get angry because I never saw her get mad.

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If you could describe what your anger *looked like*, what would it look like? Write a detailed description and/or draw a picture.

Describe what your anger looks like and draw a picture.

To your mother/stepmother:

To your father/stepfather

To other adults:

To your brother(s):

To your sister(s):

To other family members (specify who they are):

To your neighbors:

To your friends:

To your animals:

To Yourself:

How do you feel when/If you express anger toward inanimate (not real) objects? What inanimate objects are they?

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Give an example in your life how you use "adaptive anger."

Anger is a normal, healthy aspect of being human and anger serves many functional adaptive purposes. Anger is a source of strength and energy. It helps us to change those things in our lives that are destructive or unjust and protects our boundaries and assures that our rights are not violated. Anger energizes us and gives us enough adrenaline to get us through a difficult time. It serves to keep the body mobilized, ready to defend ourselves and others. Anger helps us resolve conflict and removes tension and resentment that can build up in relationships. Anger can signal frustrations, injustices and distress. Anger can increase our determination not to settle for less than we deserve and actually helps us meet our goals.

ADAPTIVE ANGER

The feeling of anger needs to be examined separately from the expression of anger. There are countless ways to express anger, some constructive and some destructive. Many people believe that violence and anger are the same thing. It is, however, important to realize that positive aspects of anger and then to look at some of the healthy methods of expressing anger that do not hurt others, self or property.

Anger is one of the most misunderstood emotions. It also can be one of the most damaging to self and to others. Anger is defined as "a strong feeling of displeasure and of antagonism" and "emotional excitement induced by intense displeasure." Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 1980). Rage is defined as "violent and uncontrollable anger, a fit of violent wrath" (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 1980). Rage is an extreme version of anger which often involves loss of control and violence.

DEFINITION

- adoptive anger
- maladaptive anger
- primary anger
- secondary anger
- child-within anger
- the pressure cooker

They are:

There are many types of anger.

- clenching jaws or fists
- knots in stomach/stomach aches
- tightness in chest
- headaches/migraines
- tense muscles (especially neck, shoulders, back)
- physical tension

(Circle the one's you get when you're angry):

Physical Signs of Anger

One of the first steps to dealing with anger is to recognize the signals our bodies give us when we experience anger. Some of the signals are internal reactions (IN our body) and some are behavioral reactions.

ANGER SIGNALS

- you get frustrated easily
- you never get angry
- you get disappointed easily
- you are irritable or impatient much of the time
- you use sarcasm and cynicism excessively
- you are depressed frequently
- you experience apathy (don't care about anything)
- you feel powerless to change your life
- you procrastinate (wait and wait to do stuff) regularly
- you are resentful and passive-aggressive
- you eat compulsively
- you are frequently bored

that you have experienced):

SIGNALS THAT INDICATE POTENTIAL ANGER PROBLEMS (Circle the ones

Anger occurs unadaptively when it is not healthy. It's maladaptive when it hurts yourself or others. Anger also can be maladaptive when it interferes with our thought processes and decision making abilities. Anger often leads to confused thinking and impulsive behavior that is acted out without regard to the consequences of such behaviors. Anger may be used to cover up other emotions such as fear or hurt. In this case, the anger is a camouflage or cover which hides our true feelings and keeps us from dealing with them.

Often, that release is a poorly controlled outburst of aggression or hostility. Anger is maladaptive when it occurs frequently, is excessively intense and lasts longer than necessary. When anger disrupts work and relationships it is not healthy. It's maladaptive when it hurts yourself or others. Anger also can be maladaptive when it interferes with our thought processes and decision making abilities. Anger often leads to confused thinking and impulsive behavior that is acted out without regard to the consequences of such behaviors. Anger may be used to cover up other emotions such as fear or hurt. In this case, the anger is a camouflage or cover which hides our true feelings and keeps us from dealing with them.

If the answer is "yes" then the anger is probably justified and should be expressed and dealt with appropriately. If the answer is "no" then the anger is unjustified.

"Is my anger directed toward someone who has knowingly, intentionally and unnecessarily acted in a hurtful manner?"

the following question to see if their anger is justified or not.

Dr. Weisinger's *Anger Work-Out Book* encourages his readers to ask themselves

Anger is a primary emotion when it is a realistic reaction to a threat. This primary anger can help us to protect ourselves and others from harm. Primary anger is not caused by distorted thinking nor is it the result of repressed childhood anger. This anger helps us maintain our boundaries and rights and can be triggered when our boundaries are violated.

PRIMARY ANGER

- increased sweating
 - dry mouth
 - increased heart rate
 - racing thought
 - shortness of breath
 - trembling
 - increased tiredness, fatigue, low energy
 - finger tapping
 - foot tapping
 - inappropriate laughter
 - refusing eye contact
 - fidgeting
 - rise in voice pitch
 - frequent sighing
 - procrastination
 - being late or absent
 - inability to concentrate
- Behavior Signs of Anger**
(Circle the behaviors you have):

EXAMPLE: I saw my boyfriend talking to this girl at school and my first thought was "He's cheating on me!" I had no proof because I just saw them talking. When I really think about it, he has never cheated on me before and he is a good guy, maybe I got a little jealous and my mind went a little haywire.

Write down 5 thoughts you've had over the past week that represent "secondary anger." (Remember that "secondary anger" is when you think yourself into being mad but don't have any real proof.)

- *he did that to me on-purpose
- *that jerk cut me off, nobody does that to me and gets away with it
- *she should never disagree with me
- *why can't he see things my way?
- *he was making fun of me
- *he embarrassed me on-purpose
- *she is constantly picking on me

EXAMPLES OF THOUGHT THAT MAY TRIGGER SECONDARY ANGER.

Anger typically is a result of one's appraisal or interpretation of his/her environment. Sometimes those interpretations will be accurate and the subsequent anger justified and appropriate. At other times our interpretations may be distorted by irrational or illogical thinking. Anger that is triggered by such thinking is typically unjustified, inappropriate, and can become problematic. We can talk ourselves into angry feelings by creating all sorts of negative images, thoughts or scenarios in our minds. Anger triggered by such thinking is real and often just as powerful as primary anger, yet it is often irrational, illogical, and distorted.

SECONDARY ANGER

All of these incidents cause anger and that anger would be an understandable reaction. The appropriate response to primary anger, once it is recognized, is to find a healthy and appropriate way to express it.

- *a friend betraying you
- *someone abusing you
- *someone breaking a promise
- *someone breaking a commitment or contract

If you were emotionally, physically, or sexually abused, you most likely have a great deal of repressed or hidden anger. Traumas like these are threatening and as children we usually don't have an outlet for this kind of anger so we are forced to repress or stuff such feelings. Messages, spoken or unspoken, from our caretakers that anger was not an acceptable emotion serve to get in the way of dealing with such feelings in a healthy way. Identifying and confronting these messages is an important step in the process of working with anger.

Anger that has never been dealt with or healed from childhood will continue to bubble up and have a negative effect on current functioning. Sometimes we have unspoken rules in our families telling us how to express emotions (i.e.: In my family, we don't talk about our feelings; Men don't cry). Many people have no clue about these messages because it may just be how things are, your mom, dad or whoever never sat you down and explained the "rules" in your family. If these types of unspoken rules and early learning experiences were in your family of origin (the one you were raised in) then you probably have had some negative consequences for trying to express emotions, especially anger. This usually lead to repression of anger (stuffing it deep down inside). If your parents modeled repression of anger, there's a good chance you have repressed anger also.

CHILD-WITHIN ANGER

When a feeling is recognized as having been triggered by a thought or a belief, it is important to begin the process of re-thinking (technical term is called cognitive restructuring)

- 5.
- 4.
- 3.
- 2.

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What are some messages or early learning experiences in your family about expressing anger that were never actually "taught" to you but everyone does it?

- * Anger is bad
- * It's a sin to feel angry
- * You cannot love someone and be angry with them
- * People will leave you if you get angry with them
- * If you get angry you will lose control and hurt someone
- * Anger is the only acceptable emotion
- * When you are angry you should hit people, shout or break something
- * When you are angry you should attack as quickly as possible so that the other person won't get you first
- * You're a bad person if you get angry
- * You are a weak person if you get angry
- * When you're angry anything goes, even hitting below the belt
- * Good girls (and boys) don't get angry

It's not fun to lose angry

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- | | | | |
|-------|----------------------------|-------|--------------------|
| _____ | blame others | _____ | sarcastic |
| _____ | isolate | _____ | rebellious |
| _____ | pout | _____ | be stubborn |
| _____ | pretend your not angry | _____ | lie |
| _____ | suicidal thoughts/attempts | _____ | complain |
| _____ | rip up things | _____ | silent treatment |
| _____ | be defiant | _____ | scream |
| _____ | self mutilate | _____ | yell |
| _____ | runaway | _____ | passive/aggressive |
| _____ | cigarettes | _____ | cry |
| _____ | alcohol | _____ | eat |
| _____ | drugs | _____ | sleep |
| _____ | profanity (cuss, swear) | _____ | hurt animals |
| _____ | insult people | _____ | hit people |
| _____ | assertively | _____ | hit things |

If you do express anger, how do you go about it? Check those below that apply.

We typically create complex defenses and rituals to avoid the repressed child-within anger. So many of us have been programmed to be afraid of our anger, either because we grew up with uncontrolled anger or we never saw people get angry. It's common to have fears of losing control when angry because anger can be a very intense feeling. It's also common to fear that others will leave us if we express our anger.

Internal explosions involve turning the anger toward the self and converting it into something less threatening. This is often called "acting in" as opposed to "acting out." The anger gets converted into self hate, self-criticism, excess guilt, bitterness, depression and physical illness, i.e.: cancer, arthritis, and high blood pressure. It's as though the hidden anger eats away at one's spirit and body, causing all sorts of physiological and psychological problems.

External explosion involves inappropriate expressions of anger or "acting out." This includes blaming, fault finding, temper tantrums, hostility, aggression, fighting, rage attack, passive-aggressive behavior, murder and destruction of property. External explosions are primitive attempts to relieve the tremendous tension felt inside when anger builds. The focus is outward. The release is often quite intense and quick. The anger often is not directed at the source of the anger, but rather at innocent victims, i.e.: father is angry at the boss and comes home and kicks the dog.

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There are two avenues through which unexpressed anger is released. The first is in different ways, some very similar to a pot breaking into a thousand pieces, some more subtle. There are two avenues through which unexpressed anger is released. The first is an external explosion, the second is an internal explosion.

external explosion, the second is an internal explosion.

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4. Who I talked to:
What did they say?
3. Who I talked to:
What did they say?
2. Who I talked to:
What did they say?
1. Who I talked to:
What did they say?

Ask 4 people (friends or family) how they can tell if you're angry or getting angry.

HOMWORK

What do you know about you non-verbal cues that you're angry? (For example: I clench my fists when I'm angry, I turn red in the face when I'm mad, etc.).

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C. Circumstances that seem to make my anger harder to handle (i.e.: sick, exhausted):

B. Types of people (or specific people) who trigger my anger are:

A. Some of my anger buttons are:

- *begin to notice your anger buttons - those things that happen to trigger your anger
- *notice if certain types of people trigger your anger
- *notice if you get angry more when you are tired, overworked, stressed or sick
- *ask yourself "What about this particular situation triggers anger within me?"

Note your anger buttons or triggers:

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List as many anger arousal cues as you can think of.
(i.e.: when I'm stressed out because I've been studying for finals and my parents try to make conversation with me, I get snappy with them and say mean things. I know it's not their fault but I took my anger and frustration out on them, they were only trying to be friendly)

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Early warning cues that tell me I'm beginning to get angry are:

At the grocery store clerk who's going to slow:

At courtdors:

At teachers:

By yourself:

At school:

With friends:

With siblings:

At home:

With parents:

Make a list of the anger coping skills you can use in these situations. (at least 3 each)

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Ways in which I can safely and physically discharge my anger may include:

- *hit a pillow or bed with your fist
- *hit a punching bag (use gloves)
- *tear or rip paper or cardboard (or phone books)
- *engage in vigorous physical activity (weight lifting, racquetball, basketball, running, etc.)

We frequently need to release intense anger in safe, non-destructive ways before talking about it. It's important to find ways of doing this that are safe for you which do not hurt others or damage property.

FOUND SAFE WAYS TO HAVE A PHYSICAL RELEASE

My cool-down strategy will include:

- *take a time-out/leave arousing situations for 1-5-60 minutes
- *never drive a motorized vehicle while angry - take a walk or run instead
- *drink cold water, not beer
- *blow off some steam and burn off some energy by exercising, clean, take a walk, talk to someone

Some common ways to cool down your anger might include the following:

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Behavioral changes I can make when my anger arousal is too strong:

- *change your posture to a non-aggressive one (sit down or lean back with hands at side)
 - *talk slowly if possible
 - *maintain eye contact
 - *keep your voice from getting loud
- When we're angry and notice early warning signs, we can make behavioral changes to help lower our anger arousal.

BEHAVIORAL CHANGES

- 3.
- 2.
- 1.

List 3 ways you can try to reduce tension:

- *massage - including Swedish massage, acupressure, and deep muscle massage
- *relaxation - progressive muscle relaxation and guided imagery/relaxation
- *meditation - traditional meditation/prayer as well as yoga, tai chi, aikido
- *deep breathing - this by itself is a powerful tension reducer
- *biofeedback
- *vigorous exercise

Anger arousal causes tremendous tension build-up. It is important to develop some tension reduction strategies to help lower overall levels of tension. These might include:

It's important to express the anger in an assertive manner. The four ways to express anger are: 1) assertive, 2) aggressive, 3) passive-aggressive and 4) passive.

1) Assertive - This type of anger expression involves owning one's feelings of anger and expressing the anger using "I" statements. "I" statements allow us to take responsibility for our emotions while at the same time letting others know that something they did triggered our anger.

EXAMPLES:

"I felt angry when you did not show up for our date."
"I felt angry when you do not listen to me."
"I felt angry when you threaten to leave me."
"I feel angry when you lie to me."

2) Aggressive - This type of anger expression involves blaming others for your feelings and typically involves "you" statements. Aggression often involves attempts to control, assault, yelling, blame and rage. Hitting, punching, choking, yelling, screaming, cursing, sexual assault and other forms of violence always involve aggressive expressions of anger.

EXAMPLES:

"You make me so mad I could hurt you."
"You made me lose control and become violent."

3) Passive-Aggressive - This type of anger expression involves finding indirect way of getting back at the person with whom you are angry. This can involve talking behind the other person's back, spreading rumors, the silent treatment, and pouting.

EXAMPLES:

-You "accidentally" spill your drink all over her nice dress because she got the good grade and you didn't.
-You don't talk to your friend for hours or days because you want to "get back at her" for talking behind your back.

4) Passive - This type of anger expression involves non-expression. The passive person goes out of his way to avoid all types of anger and anger expression. He/she will deny his needs or rationalize them to avoid having to confront someone with his anger. He typically denies this anger stating "I don't ever get angry."

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Review this statement frequently. Put it in a place where you will see it everyday as a reminder.

"I am responsible for my anger and how I express it. No one else is the cause of OR to blame for my feelings. The more I own my anger, the less it can control me."

It is important to take responsibility for your anger. So many of us blame everyone but ourselves. We seem to believe that there is always a reason outside of ourselves on which to blame our anger (even the weather). Practice saying the following statement to yourself.

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR ANGER

3. List some of your typical anger messages using "I" statements.

2. How does your main anger style affect others in your life?

1. Recognize and allow yourself to believe that anger is a natural, healthy, non-evil human feeling. Everyone feels it. We just don't all express it. You needn't fear your anger.

2. Remember that you are responsible for your own feelings. You get angry at what happened; the other person didn't make you angry.

3. Remember that anger and aggression are NOT the same thing. Anger can be expressed assertively.

4. Get to know yourself. Recognize those events and behaviors which trigger your anger. As some say: "Find your own buttons so you'll know when they've been pushed!"

5. Don't set yourself up to get angry. If your temperature rises when you must wait in a slow line in the store, work at alternative ways to get you shopping done i.e.: go shopping at slow times of the day.

6. Learn to relax. If you have developed the skill of relaxing yourself, learn to apply this response when your anger is triggered.

7. Develop several coping strategies for handling your anger, including relaxation, physical exercise, working out, resolution within yourself. Focus on relationship goals and assertive methods.

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1. Be assertive. I feel ... when you ... I want ...
2. State a problem and three possible solutions.
3. Make a positive self-statement.
4. Make an emotional need known.
5. Ask for or give a hug.
6. Express a feeling.
7. Socialize.
8. Count to 10 or 20.
9. Take 10 slow, deep breaths.
10. Reframe negative thinking (example: Make something negative into something positive.)
11. Visualize inner peace, being at a comfortable/safe place.
12. Progressive relaxation techniques.
13. Utilize humor. Read comics. Watch a comedian, tell a joke.
14. Look at pros and cons before making a decision.
15. Try something new or different.
16. Give yourself credit for trying, making the attempt.
17. Set a realistic goal and accomplish it.
18. Set realistic expectations for yourself. (Perfection does not exist).
19. Be an active listener - look at the person talking to you, use paraphrase skills to repeat back what they said to make sure you heard the person correctly.
20. Utilize positive self-talk - "I can handle this" "I can do it."
21. Join a community, take a class, follow through with leisure activities.
22. Pat yourself on the back. Ask for support.
23. Focus on the here and now - say "STOP" when thinking about the past or the future.
24. Ask for feedback.
25. Say "I love you" to someone you care about but don't readily express yourself to.
26. Plan your day - incorporate work, fun, socialization, quiet/personal time.
27. Go to educational lectures - check newspaper, religious organizations, public library, local mental health centers.
28. Keep a journal - thoughts, feelings, accomplishments, special moments.
29. Take a time-out.
30. Smile - work those facial muscles.
31. Exercise.
32. Other.
33. Other.
34. Other.
35. Other.

When we get upset, we usually feel anger at first. The best way to handle anger is to let it out in constructive ways, rather than destructive ways. When you can let anger out in a constructive way, you ALWAYS end up the winner in any kind of situation.

Here are some ways to let out your anger in a positive way:

1. The time to ask yourself what you want and/or need.
2. Rip up old newspapers or magazines. (Keep a supply just for this purpose)
3. Bat up a used cardboard box to shreds.
4. Walk, ride your bike, skateboard until you anger lessons.
5. Punch a punching bag, pillow, beat a laundry basket (with permission), punch clay, or bean bag chair.
6. Soar into a pillow. Don't scream things that will get you into more trouble.
7. Go outside and throw a basketball until your anger lessens.
8. Shout, "I'm so angry right now!"
9. Count to ten or twenty.
10. Take a shower or bath to calm down.
11. Pound on a mattress.
12. Draw a picture of who you're angry with, throw darts at it and then crumple it up.
13. Color a huge piece of paper of the colors of your anger.
14. Blow up balloons and draw a picture of the person you're angry with on it, then pop the balloons.
15. Pull weeds with all your strength.
16. Decide: Is this really worth my getting angry over?
17. Decide to thank: Resolve the problem by looking at your choices.
18. Decide: What do I have to gain by getting upset with everyone? Usually the person who is provoking you WANTS you to get mad, that is why they're bugging you!
19. Remember: Anger usually covers up some other feeling like rejection, fear, guilt, jealousy, hurt and embarrassment.
20. Once you're done LETTING OUT the anger, then work through the problem by expressing your feelings, and coming up with a solution or compromise — anger won't get you what you want every time.

Circle the number of the anger technique you're going to try next time you're angry.