

Counseling Capsule

An information service from the UTEP Counseling Center

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CONTROLLING ANGER - BEFORE IT CONTROLS YOU

Anger is a normal, usually healthy, human emotion. But when it gets out of control and turns destructive, it can lead to problems: problems at school, at work, in your personal relationships and in the overall quality of your life.

WHAT IS ANGER?

- Anger is an emotional state that can range from mild irritation to intense fury and rage.
- Like other emotions, anger is accompanied by changes in your body. When you get angry, your heart rate and blood pressure go up, as do the levels of your energy hormones - adrenaline and noradrenalin.
- Anger can be caused by both external and internal events. You can become angry at a specific person or situation, or your anger can be a reaction to worrying about your personal problems.
- Memories of painful or enraging events can also trigger angry feelings.
- Anger inspires powerful, often aggressive, feelings and behaviors, which allow us to fight and to defend ourselves when we are attacked. A certain amount of anger, therefore, is necessary to our survival.
- On the other hand, we can't physically lash out at every person or object that irritates or annoys us. Laws, social norms and common sense place limits on how far our anger can take us.

STRATEGIES FOR KEEPING ANGER UNDER CONTROL

You can't eliminate the things or people that irritate you, but you can learn to control your reactions. Anger management techniques reduce both your emotional feelings and the physical arousal that anger causes.

- **Relaxation:** Simple relaxation tools such as deep breathing and soothing images can help calm down angry feelings.
- **New Thought Patterns:** When you're angry, your thinking can get exaggerated and overly dramatic. Try replacing these thoughts with more rational ones.
- **Problem-Solving.** Approach your problems with your best intentions and efforts, and make a serious attempt to face them head-on.
- **Better Communication:** Think carefully about what you want to say and listen carefully to what the other person is saying. Take your time before answering.
- **Using Humor:** "Silly humor" can defuse anger and help you gain a more balanced perspective.
- **Changing Your Environment:** Give yourself a break. Make sure you have some "personal time" scheduled for times of the day that you know are particularly stressful.

HELP! WHERE TO FIND IT:

UTEP Counseling Center
202 West Union 8-7 M-T / 8-5 W-F