

Managing anger

Anger is a basic human emotion from not having our needs met. We are programmed with the ability to express our anger from birth as a baby may scream waiting to be fed. Although it is a healthy, normal emotion it is probably also the most complex. It can be a creative force for change or to right an injustice.

Societies and families hold different views on how it can be used and by whom. It is often poorly managed and can be destructive when it is out of control and turns to aggression. If anger cannot be expressed it can lead to physical problems, depression and anxiety and can cause relationships to wither.

Anger, like all the emotions, involves physiological and chemical changes in the body. Heart rates and adrenaline levels are affected as the body experiences anger. For some people these surges can become addictive and destructive. There is a fine line between acknowledging anger and venting it until it is out of control.

What are the symptoms of an anger problem?

- Explosive outbursts that cannot be controlled
- Domestic Violence and controlling behaviour
- Rages when driving or at work
- Depression or anxiety may indicate introverted anger
- Alcohol or drug dependence may cover an anger problem

Causes

There are many reasons why people are unable to control their anger; often it is a family or cultural pattern that has never been questioned. In some families women are not allowed to express anger; in others being angry is unacceptable and a sign of failure for all. Tiredness, stress, pain and hormonal imbalances can all contribute to the problem. We all have 'hooks' for our anger whether it is a person pushing in front of a queue or being ignored. Understanding what they are and re-examining our thoughts around them can be among the first steps to managing anger.

How counselling 'anger management' may help:

- Examining the 'hooks' for our anger and understanding them
- Looking at our own unhealthy beliefs attached to our anger
- Reassessing some of the unhelpful beliefs about anger in our family
- Understanding how anger affects our close relationships
- Taking responsibility for our own arousal to anger

Anger can be:

- Used effectively to sort out injustices and grievances
- Disowned and take on a life of its own – as in aggressive behaviour
- Disconnected and projected into those around us
- Turned inwards, initially for safety, resulting in depression

The goal of anger management is to reduce the feelings and arousal that anger creates.

adapted from Content written/edited by [Denise Pickup BACP \(Accred\)](#) in 2008. The content is for general information only and may or may not relate to your individual situation..