



How to Tame Your Temper



THE CHALLENGE

“I screamed at my sister and swung the door so hard that the hook on the back of it went through the wall. The hole was a constant reminder of how childish I had behaved.”
—Diane.*

“I shouted, ‘You’re a horrible dad!’ and slammed the door. But before it closed, I saw the hurt look on my dad’s face, and I immediately wanted to go back in time and swallow my words.”—Lauren.

Can you relate to Lauren and Diane? If so, this article can help you.

* Some names in this article have been changed.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

Outbursts hurt your reputation. “I used to think that others just had to accept my bad temper,” says Briana, now 21. “But then I began to notice that people look foolish when they don’t control themselves, and it hit me—that’s how *I* appeared to *others*!”

The Bible says: “The one who is quick to anger acts foolishly.”—Proverbs 14:17.

Your anger could cause people to avoid you. “When you lose your temper,” says 18-year-old Daniel, “you also lose your dignity and the respect of those around you.” Elaine, also 18, would agree. “Displaying a bad temper isn’t attractive,” she says. “It just makes people scared of you.”

The Bible says: “Do not keep company with a hot-tempered man or get involved with one disposed to rage.”—Proverbs 22:24.

You can improve. “You can’t always control how a situation makes you feel,” says 15-year-old Sara, “but you *can* control how you *express* your feelings. You don’t have to explode.”

The Bible says: “The one slow to anger is better than a mighty man, and the one controlling his temper than one conquering a city.”—Proverbs 16:32.



People will run from an erupting volcano; likewise, they will avoid anyone with an explosive temper



WHAT YOU CAN DO

Make a goal. Instead of saying, “That’s just the way I am,” strive to improve within a specified time period—perhaps six months. During that period, keep a record of your progress. Each time you lose your temper, write down (1) what happened, (2) how you reacted, and (3) how you could have reacted better—and why. Then make it your goal to use that better reaction the next time you are provoked. Tip: Keep track of your successes too! Write about how *good* you feel after showing self-control.—*Bible principle: Colossians 3:8.*

Wait before reacting. When someone or something angers you, do not say the first thing that comes to your mind. Instead, wait. Take a deep breath if necessary. “When I breathe,” says 15-year-old Erik, “it gives me time to think before I do or say something I will later regret.”—*Bible principle: Proverbs 21:23.*

Expand your view. Sometimes you might become angry because you see only one aspect of the issue—the part that affects *you*. Try to consider the other side of the story. “Even when people are downright rude,” says a young woman named Jessica, “there’s usually an explanation that can help me show a little understanding.”—*Bible principle: Proverbs 19:11.*

If necessary, walk away. The Bible says: “Before the quarrel breaks out, take your leave.” (Proverbs 17:14) As that scripture indicates, sometimes it is best simply to walk away from a volatile situation. Then, rather than stewing over the matter and letting your anger build even more, get active. “I find that exercise can relieve my stress and keep me from losing my temper,” says a young woman named Danielle.

Learn to let go. The Bible says: “Be agitated, but do not sin. Have your say in your heart, . . . and keep silent.” (Psalm 4:4) Note that there is nothing wrong with *feeling* agitated. The question is, What will happen next? “If you allow others to provoke you,” says a young man named Richard, “it gives them power over you. Why not try to be mature and overlook the matter?” If you do, you will be controlling your anger rather than letting your anger control you. ■

KEY SCRIPTURES

“Put them all away from you: wrath, anger, badness, abusive speech.”
—Colossians 3:8.

“The one guarding his mouth and his tongue keeps himself out of trouble.”—Proverbs 21:23.

“The insight of a man certainly slows down his anger.”—Proverbs 19:11.



DANIEL

“Eat nutritious food, and drink plenty of water. I’ve noticed that there’s a direct relationship between my temperament and what I choose to eat.”



NATALIE

“Learning to control your temper is part of leaving childhood and becoming an adult. Children tend to argue and bicker, but mature adults know how to discuss things calmly.”