

## Hints for managing anger well

- Recognise your first signs of anger.
- Use the first feelings of anger as a warning sign to watch for elevated anger and your trigger thoughts.
- If experiencing elevated anger, Stop! Try to relax and allow yourself time to re-evaluate your thoughts and your response.
- It is often easier at first to remove yourself from the situation if you feel excessive anger coming on. This is not to say run from your problems; it is an initial response that allows you to regain your composure.
- Explore your anger response and try to understand what specifically is the cause of the problem.
- Express your anger appropriately – ask yourself “what response will I get if I say or do this?”.
- Not all anger is wrong. Anger can be a most useful emotion, especially as a protection mechanism against a perceived threat.
- Remember, decisions and actions made in anger are more likely to be unproductive and regrettable.

You have ultimate control over your emotions and, if you work at it, you can control over-the-top or inappropriate anger responses. Seek professional help if you find you cannot do it alone – it's worth the effort because your relationships and life in general will seem to get easier.

The ideas and strategies outlined in this brochure are often beneficial, but are not comprehensive. Assistance from a professional counsellor may help you to make quicker progress. Remember to use your workplace EAP is a resource.



*Gryphon Psychology provide a free professional, independent and confidential counselling and consulting service. This service assists employees in both the private and public sectors to find solutions to any work or personal / family problems that are affecting their quality of life and which may be impacting on their effectiveness at work. If needed, our counsellors can make referrals to specialist agencies for particular problems, or for ongoing support.*

***Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP)  
is completely confidential,  
and provided by your employer  
at no cost to you.***



# Anger Management



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**A**nger is a naturally occurring emotion that is experienced by all people. It is the body's way of letting you and others know that something is not quite right. The way we express our emotions is usually learned when we are children. Children learn from those around them how a display of emotions can gain them attention or what they want.

### **Recognise if you have a problem**

We are not born with good anger management skills. As with many problems, half the battle is recognising that you have a problem and then trying to understand what triggers the feeling of anger in you. By observing your own anger and identifying the causes of it, you can then set about managing it more effectively.

### **Problems begin when ...**

Anger only becomes a problem when it is:

- denied, which can lead to depression and some physical symptoms
- held in and not expressed, which can lead to unexpected, inappropriate outbursts later
- directed at something or someone other than the true object of your anger
- expressed in verbally or physically violent ways, and
- your standard response to every difficult situation or person.

Research shows that people who make no attempt to manage anger, but just express it freely, tend to become more angry.

### **Expressing anger appropriately**

Feeling angry is usually not the problem; it is how we express the anger. You are NOT expressing your anger appropriately if :

- the anger has turned to rage
- you become irrational
- you have physical symptoms such as increased heart rate, sweating, or flushed face,
- you are shouting or physically violent.

These sorts of behaviours escalate the problem, and create further negative consequences.

### **Thoughts play a big part**

Many successful methods for managing anger focus on the way angry thoughts lead to angry feelings. Since it is possible to control our thoughts, we can also control our anger. We can learn to recognise the thinking that ignites our anger, and replace it with thoughts that lead to a calmer response.

To identify which of your thoughts trigger anger it can be helpful to keep a record of each occasion when you feel angry. Do this for at least a couple of weeks - describe the situation, and your thinking associated with it.

For example, the situation may be "My supervisor walked straight past me this morning and ignored me". In turn, your trigger thoughts may be something like "*It's rude not to greet people; my supervisor doesn't care about me or any of the other workers; he expects me to stay back late but never thanks me*", and so on.

After you have a collection of situations and trigger thoughts written down, you can rewrite those thoughts so that they don't contain any 'shoulds', blaming, unrealistic expectations, or generalisations. They might go something like "*I prefer people to greet me, but it's no big deal if they don't*"; or "*my supervisor sometimes acts as if he doesn't care, but who knows what's going on for him?*".

Talking with a professional counsellor can help you to identify problem thoughts that lead to anger or rage.

### **Take charge of your emotions**

Managing anger well also means being able to calm yourself on those occasions when you have strong feelings of anger. Calming yourself involves another set of skills such as deep breathing, saying relaxing things to yourself, and letting go of tension in the body.

These skills need to be practised and developed when you are not angry or stressed - then you'll be able to call on them when you really need them. When you are more calm, it is easier to be more solution-orientated.