DEALING WITH ANGER AND FRUSTRATION



In challenging times, you may find that you have little patience with other people or get upset over minor things. Anger and frustration are complicated emotions that often stem from other feelings, like disappointment, fear, and stress. Taking some extra steps to decrease your overall tension can prevent your feelings (and the reactions that they cause) from spiraling out of control.

TIPS FOR COPING

Pause before reacting. When you feel yourself getting mad, take a moment to notice what you're thinking, then take a few deep breaths or count to ten in your head. By giving yourself even just a few seconds before reacting, you can put some emotional distance between you and whatever is upsetting you – and you might even realize that you're actually tense because of something else.

Change your surroundings. Anger can make you feel trapped. Whether you're mad at someone in the same room as you or just angry at the world, sometimes physically relocating yourself can help you start to calm down. Go to another room or step outside for a few minutes of fresh air to help disrupt the track that your mind is on.

Get it all out. Keeping your feelings bottled up never works, so allow yourself time to be angry and complain. As long as you don't focus on it for too long, venting can be a healthy outlet for your anger. You can open up to a trusted friend or write it all down in a journal. Sometimes it feels better to pretend to talk directly to the person (or situation) that you're angry at – pick an empty chair, pretend they're sitting in it, and say what you need to get off your chest.

Release built up energy. Anger is a high-energy emotion, and we store that energy and tension physically in our bodies. Exercise is a great way to get rid of extra energy and can improve your mood. Some people find grounding exercises (like meditation or deep breathing) helpful to calm intense feelings, while others prefer more high impact activities like running or weightlifting. Think about what you usually do to decompress, like taking a hot shower or blasting your favorite music and use the tools that you know work for you.

Get organized. When things around you feel chaotic, it's often a lot easier to get frustrated and snap at people. Dedicate a few minutes each day to tidying, planning, or reorganizing. Implementing a routine can also help you feel more on top of things by adding structure and certainty to your daily life.

Eliminate stressors if possible. Sometimes there's no way to completely get rid of a big problem, but there's often more than just one issue contributing to your frustration. Things like an overwhelming workload or unhealthy relationship can make you feel on edge. Pay attention to how and why you're feeling stressed and see if you can make small changes to improve a challenging situation to make it less burdensome.

Manage your expectations. Negative feelings often stem from people or situations not meeting your standards or assumptions. It's frustrating to feel let down but recognize that you can't fully predict anyone else's behavior or how situations will play out. Shift your mental framework so that you aren't setting yourself up for disappointment.

Don't be afraid to ask for help. If you're working to cope with your anger but feel like you can't get it under control, it's time to get some extra support. Anger can fester and become explosive if not resolved. A number of mental health conditions can manifest as anger, so this may actually be a sign of depression or anxiety – treating an underlying condition can help heal your anger as well.

FAST FACTS

Of people who took an anxiety screen at mhascreening.org in 2020, 71% felt easily annoyed or irritable at least half of the time or nearly every day.[1]

Of people who took a bipolar screen at mhascreening.org in 2020, 82% reported being so irritable that they shouted at people or started fights or arguments.[2]

One poll found that 91% of respondents said that they feel people are more likely to express their anger on social media than they are face-to-face.[3]

TAKING A MENTAL HEALTH SCREEN IS ONE WAY TO WORK ON YOUR MENTAL HEALTH. VISIT MHASCREENING.ORG TO CHECK YOUR SYMPTOMS.



It's free, confidential, and anonymous. Once you have your results, MHA will give you information and resources to help you start to feel better.

Sources
[1]Proprietary data. MHAScreening.org. 2020.
[2]Ibid.
[3]IBM Watson Health-NPR Health Poll. November 1-14, 2018. https://www.ibm.com/downloads/cas/2YQ8NLD5

MHA Mental Health America

MANAGING FRUSTRATION AND ANGER

Anger and frustration are both common emotional responses that everyone faces. However, if these feelings become too intense, they can lead to both mental and physical distress, and cause problems in relationships. This worksheet can help you identify the emotions and thoughts behind your anger and frustration, and help you determine what you need to feel better.

DESCRIBE THE EVENT AND IDENTIFY SPECIFIC THINGS SOMEONE SAID OR DID THAT BROUGHT ON YOUR ANGER OR FRUSTRATION.

LIST OUT ANY EMOTIONS THAT WERE UNDERLYING YOUR FEELINGS OF FRUSTRATION OR ANGER.

For a list of emotions, visit http://bit.ly/emotionsunderneath

WHAT PARTS OF THE DESCRIPTION ABOVE ARE FOCUSED ON FACTS, ACTIONS, OR BEHAVIORS (AND NOT A JUDGEMENT OR OPINION)? WRITE IT DOWN.

Take some time to think about what needs to happen for you to be less angry. Focus on what you can do and what you need others to do.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO FEEL BETTER?

WHAT DO YOU NEED SOMEONE ELSE TO DO TO HELP YOU FEEL BETTER?

Remember - we can only control our own actions. However, writing down what you need from others can help you advocate for yourself.

THE NEXT TIME YOU FEEL ANGRY OR FRUSTRATED, WALK YOURSELF THROUGH THESE SAME STEPS TO HELP YOU PROCESS YOUR FEELINGS. ASK YOURSELF THESE QUESTIONS:

WHAT HAPPENED? → WHAT DO I FEEL? → WHAT DO I NEED?

Disclaimer: This material is adapted from NVC
https://www.nonviolentcommunication.com/learn-nonviolent-communication/4-part-nvc/

Mental Health America