

Don't Let Anger Issues Control You

from the American Counseling Association

For most of us, our daily lives include a lot of stress and tension. There's that morning traffic jam, the supervisor who never appreciates us, the kids' latest problems, the news reports of terrorism reports, bad economic news and local crimes.

Unfortunately, for many people, daily stress and tension can build to the point that it only takes one small incident for them to explode, letting their anger get out of control.

Experts say anger is the most poorly-managed emotion in our society, with as many as one in five Americans having an anger control problem. Not being able to manage one's anger is a major cause of conflicts in both professional and personal relationships.

Is anger a problem for you? One way to judge how well you control your anger is to consider whether you've ever, during an argument, raised your voice, broken something, pushed, slapped or physically hurt someone, embarrassed yourself, or felt out of control.

If any of those apply, consider these actions to help you better manage your anger.

A starting point is accepting responsibility for your anger. Anger may be triggered by someone else, but it's you who lets it happen and grow out of control.

It's also important to recognize the beginning signs of anger. Anger is easier to control when emotions are still at a low level.

Try to identify the cause of your anger. It isn't someone else, but rather something within you, emotional or psychological from your past, that's usually the real source of your anger.

And when anger does occur, learn to focus on the situation or behavior making you angry, rather than the other person. Criticizing or name-calling doesn't resolve a problem but merely escalates it. Rather than putting the other person on the defensive and raising the conflict level, use "I" statements to talk about what you're feeling and experiencing.

Learning to listen and communicate more effectively can also help control anger. Too often situations leading to an angry outburst are simply the result of not understanding what was said, or not expressing yourself clearly and calmly.

When anger controls you it can make your life miserable, lead to very real problems and even affect your health. If your anger is sometimes out of control, consider an Anger Management course (see your local hospital or mental health center), or consulting a professional counselor offering Anger Management help.

Counseling Corner is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to ACAcornet@counseling.org or visit the ACA website at www.counseling.org

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