

Anger:

How to feel and express anger in a healthy & safe way

“Nails in the Fence” (author unknown)

There once was a little boy who had a bad temper. His father gave him a bag of nails and told him that every time he lost his temper, he must hammer a nail into the back of the fence.

The first day the boy had driven 37 nails into the fence. Over the next few weeks, as he learned to control his anger, the number of nails hammered daily gradually dwindled down. He discovered it was easier to hold his temper than to drive those nails into the fence.

Finally, the day came when the boy didn't lose his temper at all. He told his father about it and the father suggested that the boy now pull out one nail for each day that he was able to hold his temper. The days passed and the young boy was finally able to tell his father that all the nails were gone.

The father took his son by the hand and led him to the fence. He said, "You have done well, my son, but look at the holes in the fence. The fence will never be the same. When you say things in anger, they leave a scar just like this one. You can put a knife in a man and draw it out. It won't matter how many times you say I'm sorry, the wound is still there."

The little boy then understood how powerful his words were. He looked up at his father and said "I hope you can forgive me father for the holes I put in you."

"Of course I can," said the father.

ANGER is *okay*. It is an intense emotion that can be uncomfortable and scary at times, but it is natural, normal, and completely okay to feel angry.

The difference is how we express our anger. Hitting someone, smashing a car with a bat, or yelling nasty things at someone are isn't anger, it is **aggression**. Aggression is violent or hostile behaviour and attitudes, it is *not* anger. Anger is the emotion; aggression is the way you are *choosing* to respond to that emotion.

Ways to manage and express anger without using aggression

Notice that you are angry. It is okay.

■ Write

- Vent! Get out all your feelings in a journal. Writing down your emotions - without judging them - is one of the quickest ways to become aware of what's going on inside of you. If you are more aware of what's going on inside of you, you'll be better able to manage the emotions and handle situations in a healthy way.
- 10 Ways to write for relaxation:
 1. Start writing about where you are in your life Describe your living situation, your work, and your relationships. Are you right where you want to be?
 2. For five to ten minutes just start writing in a "stream of consciousness." Don't edit your thoughts or feelings and don't correct your grammar. Don't censor your thoughts.
 3. Start a dialogue with your inner child by writing in your subdominant hand. Answer with your dominant hand. What issues emerge?
 4. Cultivate an attitude of gratitude by maintaining a daily list of things you appreciate, including uplifting quotes. Keep it in one journal or in a separate section so that you can read through it all at once. When you feel down you can read through it for a boost of gratitude and happiness.
 5. Start a journal of self-portraits. You can take pictures, draw colors or shapes or collage images. Learn to love and accept yourself just the way you are today.
 6. Keep a nature diary to connect with the natural world. The world we live in is a magical and mysterious place. Record the things you notice about the sky, the weather, and the seasons.
 7. Maintain a log of successes. Begin by writing the big ones you remember then regularly jot down small successes that occur during the week. As you pay attention, your list will grow and inspire you.
 8. Keep a log or playlist of your favorite songs. Write about the moods they evoke. When you hear a song that triggers a strong memory, write down how you feel and explore that time and space of your life.
 9. If there's something you are struggling with or an event that's disturbing you, write about it in the third person. This will give you distance and provide a new perspective. Write down what you learned about yourself.
 10. Develop your intuition. Write down questions or concerns then take a deep breath and listen for a response from your Higher Self. Let yourself write automatically. If you don't get an answer right away, look for signs during the day.

We all have dark days, black moods, and angry or anxious feelings. Use writing in a journal to explore the darkness. You will find your inner light when you do.

- Start your day in a positive way and fill your world positive reminders
 - Wake up to a soothing message / quote or music. There are apps that allow you to do a self-recorded message.
 - Keep positive messages or quotes of inspiration in key spots around your home (mirror, fridge).
 - Make your environment calm and soothing – tidy up clutter, put up inspirational images and quotes (even Post-its on your mirror!), use wax melts, candles, and essential oil diffusers to create a calm scented space
 - If you drink a lot of coffee or tea, perhaps personalizing a mug with a keep-calm mantra
- Rest and recharge
 - Anger and anxiety are only made worse by lack of sleep. Get as much regular sleep as possible
 - If you are feeling angry or anxious, and are able to, take a short nap to recharge your body.
- Use art
 - “Art washes from the soul the dust of everyday life” (Picasso). Doing something creative, is incredibly beneficial in pushing through uncomfortable feelings. Don’t worry about the final product. Just enjoy the process and act of being creative. Get messy and enjoy it.
 - Colour – adult colouring books are popular and plentiful in stores right now, and for good reason! Colouring has been proven to help reduce stress.
 - Keep a visual journal – rather than writing, draw, sketch (maybe do comics) your feelings and impressions of the day.
 - Draw in response to music. Just listen to the music and allow yourself to draw what you feel. It may be completely abstract and that’s okay.
 - Sculpt or use clay
 - Paint
 - Create collages or decoupage
 - Make jewelry
 - Knit, sew or crochet
 - Make your own stress balls
 - Create mala or other prayer beads
 - Make your own postcards or thank you cards
- Talk to someone
- Get active – burn off that energy. You could hit the gym and use the equipment or go to class like Zumba or kickboxing, or, alternatively, you could just get out and go for a long walk or run.
- Breathe and do mindful meditation – see handouts on breathing exercises and mindful meditation
- Laugh – watch a silly video online or watch your favourite comedy TV show or movie.
- Crank the tunes - sing and dance to your favourite upbeat music. Make a playlist for times you need it.
- Visualize it:
 - Picture your anger as boiling kettle. Flick the off as if you were turning off your anger. Let your temper cool down like a kettle.

- See your anger as a runaway horse. Imagine you are trying to break your mind corral. Rein it in.
- Personify your anger. Imagine it as a fiery-tempered troll in your path, push it away.
- Picture angry thoughts as bitter poisonous seed. Stops these from planting and taking root in your mind. Instead, raise a happy, forgiving “mind-garden” by showering your thoughts with anger-defeating quotes
- Cry – when you feel deeply sad and angry, crying is necessary and beneficial. Sit with it, allow the tears to come.
- Shred a physical representation of your anger – Take those hurtful letters, print off those emails, FB messages, or write out your angry thoughts then tear them to pieces.
- Record yourself – Capture your angry thoughts on your phone or computer. Listen back to this as if it were a good friend telling you their angry thoughts and offer them support.
- Repeat positive mantras and affirmations.
- Take a long shower or bath.
- Remind yourself that you have a choice. “Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response” (Viktor E. Frankl).
- Step back – if you are in a confrontational situation, physically take a step back. If necessary, leave.
- Be honest with yourself – What are you achieving by holding onto anger? Is it a case of injured pride that you would really love to swap for forgiveness?
- Plant a garden of compassion - in a small window box or in your garden, plant a flower for anyone who has angered you to signify your wish to forgive them. When you tend to your garden of compassion, picture each weed you take out as further uprooting and removing your anger.

Anger-Defeating Quotes

“Speak when you are angry and you will make the best speech you will ever regret” (Bierce).

“Anger and hate dig holes. Love and kindness move mountains. Choose your motivation wisely.”

“Every time you get upset at something, ask yourself if you were to die tomorrow, was it worth wasting your time being angry?” (Robert Tew)

“To be angry at someone is easier than being able to tell them that they hurt you.”

“My kindness is a sign of strength and not weakness. My kindness keeps me from hurting folks.”

“The strong person is not the good wrestler. Rather, the strong person is the one who controls himself when he is angry.”

“Holding onto anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; you are the one who gets burned” (Gautama Buddha).

“Never respond to an angry person with a fiery comeback, even if he deserves it...Don't allow his anger to become your anger” (Bodhi Sanders).

“Angry people want you to see how powerful they are... loving people want you to see how powerful You are” (Chief Red Eagle).

“You can't selectively numb your anger, any more than you can turn off all lights in a room, and still expect to see the light” (Alder).