



Behavioral Health Services

Employee Assistance Program

Call for More Information or
Professional Confidential Counseling
301.766.7600 or 1.800.635.2774

Understanding Anger

Facts

- Anger is a feeling, with physiological components.
- Anger is not a mode of behavior.
- Anger is universal among human beings.
- Non-expression of anger leads to increased risk of coronary heart disease in both men and women.
- What really matters is resolving the issue. Thus, the method of anger expression is important.
- Aggressive expression leads to further aggressive expression, not resolution.
- Anger is not a “steam kettle” phenomenon; it does not build up and finally explode.
- Most anger is directed toward those close to us, not strangers.

Myths

- Venting (by yelling, pounding pillows, hitting with foam bats) “releases” anger and therefore “deals with” it.
- Women are less angry than men.
- Some people never get angry.
- Anger is always a “secondary” emotion, with another “real” feeling behind it.
- Aggressive behavior is a sure sign of an “angry person.”
- TV violence, active sports and/or competitive work “releases” anger.
- Aggressive behavior is instinctive in humans.
- Anger is a destructive, sinful, undesirable emotion.

Anger is a problem when . . .

- it is chronic
- it is a substitute for constructive interpersonal relationships
- you are irritable and short tempered
- you are violent
- you raise your voice in pitch and volume
- you hit something
- you throw things
- it sets the stage for physical illness
- it leads to violence, drug and alcohol abuse, problems, or suicide
- you speed in a car
- you take drugs or drink alcohol to escape
- you act suicidal
- you act abusively

You may know you are angry when you physically feel . . .

- tense or nervous
- lethargic
- a headache
- depressed and sad
- nauseous
- anxious
- a tightened stomach
- a pounding heart
- muscles contracting
- difficulty breathing
- sweaty
- like you are hyperventilating



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I'm not angry - I'm merely annoyed

- Anger is typically more intense than annoyance.
- Anger is usually provoked by more serious events and circumstances than is annoyance.
- Anger involves an element of blame; annoyance often does not.
- Anger invokes a stronger desire for physical expression—"I've got to do something."
- With anger there is a greater sense of helplessness—"I can't deal with this."
- Anger is more often motivated by a desire for revenge, rather than simply eliminating the annoying situation.
- One is more likely to feel angry if he/she is in a negative mood (depressed) or annoyed if he/she is in a positive mood (elated).
- People tend to get angry with other people and annoyed at things (inanimate objects, weather, institutions).
- For most people, annoyance is a more common day-to-day experience.
- Anger lasts longer.