Staff Counseling Service

ANGRY?

INTRODUCTION

Most people find it difficult at times to express and manage angry feelings let’s take a look at what causes people to become angry and how to respond to stressful situations more positively.

WHAT CAUSES ANGY FEELINGS?

People feel angry in response to either external or internal events. For example, you may feel anger in response to the behavior of a specific person, such as your spouse, or a coworker. You may also feel angry in response to an incident, such as being stuck in traffic or waiting for a late plane flight. You may also feel angry as a result of your own thoughts and feelings- things such as worry, fear, or hurt, or the memory of upsetting events. Any of these things can set off angry feelings.

Some experts say that anger is a secondary emotion that is triggered by another emotion such as hurt, fear or frustration. To resolve the feelings of anger, it is necessary to identify and express the primary emotions that lie beneath the anger.

Feelings of anger are neither good nor bad. The important thing to realize is that you have the ability to choose your response to your feelings in any situation. Your way of dealing with angry feelings can be either positive or negative, leading to either destructive or constructive outcome for yourself and those around you.

HOW IS ANGER HARMFUL?
Psychologists have long disagreed about the value of ventilating feelings. Recent research shows that expressing anger often results in more irritation and tension, rather than in feeling calmer. Giving vent to anger can produce the following harmful effects:

- Blood pressure rises.
- The problem causing the anger becomes worse rather than better.
- The person venting the anger seems negative and intimidating, driving others away.

WHAT ARE THE PHYSICAL EFFECTS OF ANGER?

People who are frequently angry tend to develop more physical problems than those who are not. For example:

**Heart.** Researchers at Stanford University have found that of all the personality traits found, Type A patients, the potential for hostility is the key predictor for coronary disease. The combination of anger and hostility is the most deadly.

**Stomach and intestines.** Anger has a very negative effect on the stomach; it has even been associated with the development of ulcerative colitis.

**Nervous system.** Anger is bad for you because it exaggerates the associated hormonal changes.

Chronic suppressed anger us damaging because it activates the sympathetic nervous system responses without providing any release of tension. It is a bit like stepping on a car accelerator while stepping on the breaks.

WHY DO PEOPLE BECOME ANGRY?

Anger is our response to stress. Many times we feel anger to avoid feeling some other emotions, such as anxiety or hurt, or when we are frustrated because we want something and can’t have it. Sometimes, feeling angry is a way of mobilizing ourselves in the face of a threat.
Anger may be useful because it stops (blocks) stress. For example:

You have been rushing all the day in your home office to meet an impossible deadline. You daughter bounces in after school and gives you a big hug as you furiously type on your computer. You snap, “Not now! Can’t you see am busy!”

You have just finished taking an important exam. You have studied for weeks, and the result is very important in your career. You fantasize all the way home about having dinner at your favorite restaurant. When you get home, you find that your husband has prepared steak dinner for you. You yell, “Why don’t you ask me before you just assume you know what I want!”

This explains why people often respond with anger when they experience stressful situations such as being in a hurry, feeling overworked, feeling attacked, feeling forced to do something they don’t want to do, or feeling out of control.

WHAT ARE SOME ALTERNATIVES TO BECOMING ANGRY?

There are lots of constructive things you can do to deal with stress instead of becoming angry. Here are a few examples:

- Do relaxation exercises.
- Beat a pillow or hit some balls at a batting cage.
- Get some physical exercises.
- Listen to your favorite music
- Make a joke of the situation
- Play a game.
- Take a nap
- Tell someone about the situation
- Write about the situation

HOW CAN I DEAL WITH STRESS TO PREVENT ANGER?

Angry response often results when we are unhappy with someone else’s behavior. Here are some other responses you can choose instead of flying off the handle:

Set some limits. Let’s say a friend hasn’t returned a book you lent her. Now she wants to borrow another one. You could say, “I’m not going to be able to lend you this book until you return the first one.”
**[MANAGING ANGER]**

Calling a time-out is a very effective technique for breaking the sequence of behavior that leads to a blowup. It works best if it is discussed ahead of time and both people agree to use it.

**Don’t wait.** When you realize that you are feeling annoyed by a situation, speak up. Don’t wait until your annoyance escalates to anger.

**Be assertive.** Say what you want from the other person in a positive way. For example, say, “Please call me when you get home” rather than “Would you mind giving me a call when you get home?”

**HOW CAN I STOP THE ANGER SPIRAL ONCE IT STARTS?”**

Once you begin to feel angry, there are several things you can do to stop the process and keep things from spiraling out of control. Here are a few ideas:

**Call a time-out.** This is a very effective technique for breaking the sequence of behavior that leads to a blowup. It works well if it is discussed ahead of time and both people agree to use it. With whom person in an interaction can initiate a time-out. One person makes a time-out gesture, like a referee in a football game; the other person is obliged to return the gesture and stop talking.

**Check it out.** If anger is a response to personal pain, it makes sense to ask the other person,

“What’s bothering you?”

It may be helpful to memorize a few positive statements to say to yourself when your anger is escalating.

Make positive statements. Memorize a few positive statements to say when your anger is triggered. These statements can remind that you can choose your behavior instead of reacting in a knee-jerk manner. For example, you might say:

“I can’t take care of my own needs.”

“His needs are just as important as mine.”

“I am able to make good choices.”

Be prepared with a memorized response. Here are a few statements and questions that will help deescalate anger:

“What’s bothering me is ...”

For Further Assistance: Call Staff Counsellor’s Office - Ext: 24703 or + 254 762 4703
“If this continues like this, I’ll have to do _____ to take care of myself.”

“What do you need now?”

“So what you want is...?

Reference:

Laurie Cope Grand (2003), Couples and Family, Client Education handout Planner.