

Do you ever feel like you're losing it?



Dealing positively with anger helps you look after your mental and physical health, helps you feel better about yourself and improves relationships with those around you. This guide outlines how anger works, explains the benefits of keeping anger under control and offers some tactics you can use to manage your anger more effectively.

10 ways to calm down when you start to feel angry

- 1 Count to ten
- 2 Drop your shoulders and breathe deeply
- 3 Talk to a friend
- 4 Imagine what advice your calmest friend would give to you
- 5 Try yoga or meditation
- 6 Take some exercise
- 7 Take yourself out of the situation that made you angry
- 8 Redirect your energy by doing something active or creative
- 9 If you feel the urge to throw or hit something... use a cushion
- 10 Try screaming to release tension (in private or into a pillow)

What is anger?

Anger is one of the most basic human emotions. It is a physical and mental response to a threat or to harm suffered in the past.

Why do we get angry?

Whether or not we feel someone has wronged us on purpose is a crucial factor in whether we become angry. Our recent experiences can also influence our reactions. If you're having a bad day and are in a state of constant tension, you're more likely to snap when the fifth thing in a row goes wrong, even if it's something that wouldn't usually bother you.

Triggers include:

- Facing a threat to ourselves or our loved ones
- Being verbally or physically assaulted
- Suffering a blow to our self-esteem or our place within a social group
- Being interrupted when pursuing a goal
- Losing out when money is at stake
- Someone going against a principle we consider important
- Being treated unfairly and feeling powerless to change this
- Feeling disappointed by someone else or in ourselves
- Having our property mistreated

Be assertive

Being assertive instead of aggressive is a healthier way to deal with anger. Before you allow yourself to flare up, put yourself into another gear and take ownership of your feelings.

- Tell people you are feeling angry and why
- Talk slowly and clearly
- Use the word "I" to make it about you, not about them
- Make requests rather than demands or threats
- Say "I could" and "I might" instead of "I must" or "I should"

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Is anger the same for everyone?

Faced with the same situation, some people will feel angry and others will not. Some will show their anger, in a variety of ways, while others will keep their anger to themselves.

The way that parents behave when they are angry can influence how their children deal with anger throughout their lives so it's important that parents set a good example.

How do people behave when they are angry?

People often express their anger verbally. They may shout, threaten, use dramatic words, bombard someone with hostile questions or exaggerate the impact of someone else's action.

Aggression is just one kind of behaviour that people can adopt when they are angry. Aggressive behaviour can be physical or verbal and gives the signal that someone intends to cause harm. Aggression often takes over when people act on their instinct to protect themselves or others. Alcohol and drug use can make some people act more aggressively.

Some people who are angry get their own back indirectly by acting the martyr. They get their own way by making other people feel guilty and playing on that guilt.

Others develop a cynical attitude and constantly criticise everything, but never address problems constructively.

Some people internalise their anger. This can lead to self-harm as these people can find it hard to deal with their emotions.

What kind of problems can be linked to anger?

Anger in itself is a natural human reaction but it becomes a problem when it leads to aggressive behaviour and harms us or other people. Anger is the emotion most likely to cause problems in relationships in the family, at work and with friends.

Long-term and intense anger has been linked with mental health problems including depression, anxiety and self-harm. It is also linked to poorer overall physical health.

How can managing anger help me?

There is a lot of evidence to suggest that managing your anger in a healthy way can help people look after their mental and physical health, feel more positive about themselves, achieve their goals, solve problems and enjoy better relationships with the people around them.

Protecting your mental health

Feeling stressed out makes us more likely to lose our temper and people in good mental health are better able to cope when things go wrong. Here are some tips to stay mentally healthy.

- Keep physically active
- Eat a balanced diet
- Drink sensibly
- Keep in touch with friends and loved ones
- Take time to relax and enjoy yourself
- Accept who you are and do something you're good at
- Care for others

Where can I go for further help?

You can find more information about managing anger at bbc.co.uk/headroom. If you are worried about anger or another aspect of your mental health and want advice on what to do, your GP is a good place to start. S/he may suggest ways you can manage your anger yourself or they may refer you to another service for further support.