



PacifiCare®
Behavioral Health

Wellness Monthly

Healthy matters to keep in mind.

July 2007

Hot Under the Collar: Managing Your Anger

In the past twenty-four hours something has bothered or even angered you — perhaps it was an inconsiderate driver on your commute last night, a burned dinner, or maybe your spouse did not do a chore as promised. Anger is a very normal and natural human emotion, but it does have some negative consequences if not controlled. Though it's often unavoidable, there are ways to manage and control anger.

What is anger?

When angry, you experience emotions that can run the gamut from mild irritation to fury. You may feel this emotion because of an external event, such as the actions of a co-worker or a traffic jam, or by something internally such as worrying about finances

or recalling a frustrating event.

Like other strong human emotions, anger may bring about other biological and/or physiological changes. Typically, with anger, your heart rate and blood pressure go up as do the levels of the energy hormones adrenaline and noradrenaline. Anger is the body's way of responding aggressively, to defend yourself from an attack or other similar threats. In some circumstances anger may be necessary to get out of a dangerous situation, but often there is no real threat. In addition, society, social norms, and the environment limit how we can respond with anger.

Anger creates a lot of energy, but when this is not released or controlled in a healthy way, it may create another problem: passive aggressive behavior. A person with this behavior has not learned how to constructively express his anger. Individuals with passive aggressive behavior get back indirectly at the person who has angered them, often by being cynical, critical, or negative. This type of behavior makes it difficult for them to have successful relationships.

Everyone becomes angry from time to time. What is more important, however, is learning

Tips for Controlling Anger

Because you can't avoid being angry, learn how to control these feelings when they occur. There are a variety of ways to control your anger.

Relaxation — To calm angry feelings try some simple relaxation tools such as deep breathing or meditation.

Perception — By changing your view, you may stop the escalation of your anger. Try replacing negative inner thoughts and comments with rational ones.

Problem Solving — Not every problem has a solution. Rather than searching for a solution, which can escalate your emotions further, focus on how you can handle the problem.

Improved Communication — Sometimes anger flares during a conversation and angry individuals jump to irrational conclusions because they or someone else is not effectively communicating. Slow down, think carefully about what to say, and listen to what the other person is saying.

Upcoming Articles

August 2007
Kids Surf Safely

September 2007
Avoiding Relapse

Continued on pg. 2 →→

Tips Continued on pg. 2 →→



how to express and control these feelings before you put your health and relationships at risk.

If your anger is negatively affecting your relationships or your job, you may want to consider counseling. With appropriate counseling, you can learn how to better handle these feelings with techniques

and strategies. Be sure to explain to the therapist what problems you are experiencing and what you want to work on. It's also a good idea to ask what his/her approach to anger management is. ■

Humor — Address your anger instead of simply "laughing" it off, but use humor to help face the problem constructively.

Change in Environment — If your immediate surroundings are the cause of your irritation and frustration, see how you might change them.

What to Do with Your Anger

While the instinctive approach to dealing with anger is often an aggressive response, there are a variety of ways people can address this emotion. In general, three approaches are most popular:



your anger and express yourself, it is not good to let your anger escalate into an aggressive confrontation. If left unchecked, you are not in control and may potentially be hurting others.

Suppressing — When you hold in your anger, stop thinking about it, and focus on something more positive, you are suppressing it. The goal in this action is to suppress the anger and its energy so that you can convert it into a constructive behavior. This may seem productive at first, but be aware that if anger is not

allowed an outward expression, it may turn inward on yourself. This internalization of anger can lead to health problems of hypertension, high blood pressure, or depression. Sometimes, suppressing the anger leads to passive aggressive behavior as discussed previously.

Calming — When you do this, you effectively control your outward behavior (not taking out your anger on others) and control your internal behavior. As a result, you can calm yourself immediately and let your feelings subside. You may say to yourself, "I am in control. This is an upsetting situation but I can stay calm."

It may also be helpful to become familiar with your "triggers." These are specific events or situations that tend to set off your anger. The earlier you recognize that your anger is arising, the easier it is to manage. ■

Please note that expressing your anger is not the same as "letting it all hang out." While it is healthy to release

Resources

PacifiCare

Ask your HR representative for your access code and toll-free number.
www.liveandworkwell.com

The information and therapeutic approaches in this article are provided for educational purposes only and are not meant to be used in place of professional clinical consultations for individual health needs. Certain treatments may not be covered in some benefit plans. Check your health plan regarding your coverage of services.