

# The Listening Ear Help Sheet: Anger

## What is anger?

Feeling anger is OK. Anger can help get us through hard feelings and situations and motivate us to change things we don't like about our life.

Anger can become a problem when it comes out as aggression or affects a person's daily life and relationships.

This might be because they find their feelings of anger overwhelming or hard to control.

Or it might be because they express their anger in ways that might hurt themselves or others around them.

Anger can also be a sign that someone might be experiencing sadness, depression or another mental health difficulty.

Learning to be aware of our anger and to express it in a safe way is an important part of good mental health.

If you feel angry a lot or have trouble controlling your anger, there are lots of things you can do to help manage this in a healthy way.



## Why do I feel angry?

Anger can be our way of expressing or responding to a range of other feelings, like:

- frustration
- embarrassment or humiliation
- guilt or shame
- jealousy
- hurt or sadness
- feeling unable to control a situation
- feeling threatened or frightened
- feeling unfairly treated
- feeling misunderstood or not listened to
- feeling the pressure of living in two worlds (that is, First Nation Peoples and non-Indigenous)
- feeling a loss of connection to family, community or country

## When does anger become a problem?

Anger becomes a problem when it begins to affect a person's daily life and causes them to react in ways that might hurt themselves and/or others around them.

### **Signs that anger might be a problem include:**

Feeling angry a lot of the time at an intense and overwhelming level.

Having trouble controlling anger.

Feeling sad and distressed as a result of getting angry.

Using alcohol and other drugs to manage anger.

Feeling the need to use anger to get people to do something.

Withdrawing from people or situations bottling things up rather than coping with them.

Regretting the things you did or said when you were angry.

Expressing anger by saying or doing something aggressive or violent (e.g., shouting, swearing, throwing or hitting things).

## Anger vs aggression

Anger can sometimes lead to people being aggressive or violent but they're not the same.

Anger is a feeling, but aggression and violence are actions, and it's these actions that can lead to problems.

Anger can sometimes feel intense and overwhelming, but it doesn't necessarily lead to violent or aggressive behaviour.

## How can I manage my anger?

Here are five steps you can take to manage your anger in a healthy way.

### **1. Acknowledge your anger trigger signs.**

Think about the things that regularly trigger your anger like running late for school or being blamed for something you didn't do.

This might help you to avoid these things in future or react differently when they happen.

### **2. Neutralise the situation.**

When you're angry, think about how your body feels.

If you're tense, take some long deep breaths and focus on your breathing. Also try tensing and releasing some of your muscles.

Dealing with your body's reactions to anger can help to calm your emotions and find a better way of expressing them.

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You could try: Taking a break. You could walk away from a situation until you've calmed down.

This will stop you from acting in a way that hurts you or someone else.

Using delay or distraction. Try counting slowly to 10 or doing something physical, like push-ups.

These strategies will take your mind off what is making you angry and can stop you from saying or doing something that you might regret.

### 3. Get to the bottom of why you are angry.

Remind yourself that it's okay for you to be angry and think about why you're feeling this way.

When you realise the real reason for your anger, it is much easier to work out solutions to it.

If you're not sure why you're angry, you could try asking yourself questions like:

Did someone do or say something that upset me?

Do I have other feelings right now that might affect the way I'm reacting, like being sad or embarrassed, or feeling a loss of connection to myself?

Does the situation bring up bad memories?

Some people find it easier to write down or draw their answers to these questions.

### 4. Explore solutions.

Brainstorm some helpful ways to express and resolve your anger.

It might help to ask yourself questions like:

How can I explain the situation in a respectful way?

How might other people feel about this situation?

What do I want to happen now? Is this reasonable or do I need to think about a compromise?

Can I deal with this while being respectful to myself and others involved?

Remember, we can't always change the things that make us angry, but we can change the way we respond.

### 5. Reach out to someone you trust.

Your family and friends, a teacher or coach, they might have ideas about how you can manage your anger.

Talking with them can be a great place to start exploring your feelings.

If you're being harassed, bullied or discriminated against, there are people who can help.

If your anger continues without improvement, then talking to your GP or a mental health professional could help.

They could teach skills, like relaxation and communication, to help you deal with anger in a healthy way.