

Can you tell WHEN you are angry?

Many people do not even realize when they are angry. Early physical signs of anger can include:

- Muscle tension
- Headache
- Stomachache
- Feeling flushed, sweaty or hot
- Clammy fingers or hands
- Change in breathing
- Clenched fists and loud voice

Each person has his or her own warning signs that anger is building.

Do you know WHY you are angry?

If you don't know why you are feeling angry, it will be more difficult to figure out what needs to be done. Sometimes what is contributing to your anger is obvious:

Someone races around you to take a parking space.

You get blamed for not getting a job done that was assigned to a co-worker.

Your teenager takes the car without permission and is gone for hours.

At other times you may notice yourself feeling angry for "no good reason."

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What is Anger?

Anger is a natural and necessary emotion. It is a feeling that occurs when we feel under attack in some way.

Anger comes from inside of us. It can be caused by many events. Common examples are an unfair, selfish or thoughtless act, a hurtful remark. It is a natural response to dissatisfaction with our environment.

The purpose of anger is to alert us to danger, producing the flight or fight response. Anger is meant to protect us from harm. Anger is an appropriate emotion for many circumstances. It helps us to cope assertively with difficult life events and allows us to overcome obstacles.

Expressing Anger

Anger can be expressed in unhealthy ways:

Under expression - Repressing anger can create resentment and can lead to serious physical, mental and emotional problems. Repressed anger is often expressed in passive-aggressive and manipulative ways.

Over expression - Poorly controlled anger is expressed intensely, occurs frequently, and can lead to aggressive behaviors.



Quick Guide - Patient/Family Readjustment

Military personnel are deeply affected by their war experiences. Adjustment difficulties are common. These are normal reactions to abnormal experiences. This series of brochures deal with issues that are common following deployment. Remember - identifying your problem areas and seeking help is a sign of strength, not weakness. It means you are actively coping with your challenges.



Healthy anger is constructive - It helps us deal with life's challenges.

Unhealthy anger is destructive - It makes our lives more difficult.

- ★ Recognize **WHEN** you are angry
- ★ Recognize **WHY** you are angry
- ★ Recognize **HOW** you express anger
- ★ Learn to manage your anger better



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Strategies for Managing Anger

Anger in combat is proactive

Focused on the enemy and ...

- ... unites the group
- ... strengthens bonds
- ... promotes hypervigilance to danger
- ... motivates solutions

Feeling angry is not usually the problem. Problems come from the way anger is expressed or not expressed. You can't always avoid or change the things that anger you, but you CAN learn to control and manage your reactions.

Anger at home is reactive

Focused on a friend or family and ...

- ... divides the group
- ... weakens bonds
- ... promotes hypervigilance to flaws
- ... interferes with solutions

★ Better Communication -

Angry people tend to jump to conclusions and act without stopping to think. Some of those conclusions can be very inaccurate. The first thing to do if you're in a heated discussion is slow down and think through your responses. Do not say the first thing that comes into your head. Take a deep breath and think carefully about what you want to say. At the same time, listen carefully to what the other person is saying. Take your time before answering.

★ Problem Solving -

Sometimes anger and frustration are caused by very real problems in our lives. Not all anger is misplaced. It may be a healthy, natural response to difficulties. There is a belief in our culture that every problem has a solution. This adds to our frustration as we find out that it is not always the case. When dealing with a difficult problem resolve to do your best. Make a plan and check your progress along the way. Do not punish yourself if it takes longer than you thought it would. If you know you are making a serious attempt you will be less likely to become impatient or fall into all-or-nothing thinking.

★ Relaxation Techniques -

One way to calm angry feelings is to work on relaxing. There are many ways to help yourself relax. Examples are breathing very slowly and deeply, slowly repeating a calm word or phrase, visualizing being in a place you find relaxing, or physical exercise. Try out several approaches to find out what works for you. If you are involved with someone who is also easy to anger, it might be a good idea for both of you to learn these techniques. Practice the relaxation techniques daily that work best for you. Learn to use these skills automatically when you're in a tense situation.

★ Cognitive Restructuring -

Simply put, this means changing the way you think. Angry people tend to curse, swear, or speak in a hostile way. When you're angry, your thinking can get very exaggerated and overly dramatic. Try replacing these thoughts with more rational ones. Angry people tend to demand things like fairness, appreciation, and agreement. They demand that things be done their way. It is important to remember that everyone wants life to be fair. We all want appreciation for what we do. We all want to 'get our way'. We are all hurt and disappointed when we don't get these things, but acting in an angry manner only makes matters worse.