

# **Anger management**

*Deb LeRoy, LCSW, NCAC II  
Employee Assistance Program*

Anger is a completely normal, usually healthy, human emotion. When anger gets out of control, it can lead to problems at work, in your personal relationships and in the overall quality of your life.

Like other emotions, anger is accompanied by physiological and biological changes. When you feel angry, your heart rate and blood pressure go up, as does the level of your energy hormones.

Anger can be caused by both external and internal events. You could be angry with a specific person (such as a co-worker or supervisor) or at an event (a traffic jam or a canceled flight) or worrying about personal problems could cause your anger.

Some people really are more “hotheaded” than others are; they get angry more easily and more intensely than the average person does. Others are chronically irritable and grumpy. Easily angered people don’t always curse and throw things; sometimes they withdraw, sulk or get physically ill.

## **Express your angry feelings in a positive way**

You can’t get rid of or avoid things or people that enrage you, nor can you change them, but you can learn to control your emotions. The three main approaches are expressing, suppressing and calming.

1. Expressing your angry feelings in an assertive, not aggressive-manner is the healthiest way to express anger. Learn how to make clear what your needs are, and how to get them met, without hurting others. Being assertive doesn’t mean being pushy or demanding.
2. Suppressing anger and redirecting it. Stop thinking about it and focus on something positive. The danger in this type of response is that your anger can turn inward, which may cause hypertension, high blood pressure or depression.
3. Calming yourself down inside. This means controlling your outward behavior, controlling your internal responses, taking steps to lower your heart rate and letting the feelings subside.

## **Tips for controlling your anger**

**Breathe deeply:** Slowly repeat a word or phrase such as “relax” or “take it easy” as you deep breathe.

**Try non-strenuous, slow yoga-like exercises** to relax your muscles.

**Change the way you think:** Replace irrational thoughts with more rational ones.

**Learn to problem solve:** Sometimes anger and frustration are caused by unavoidable problems in our lives. It may be better to think about coping with the problem.

**Try to communicate better:** The first thing to do, if you’re in a heated discussion, is to slow down. Listen carefully to what the other person is saying and take your time before answering.

**Change your environment:** Give yourself a break. Make sure you have some “personal time” scheduled for times that you know are particularly stressful.

**Timing:** If you and your spouse tend to fight at night (perhaps you’re tired, distracted or maybe it’s just habit) try changing the times when you talk about important matters.

**Avoidance:** If your child’s chaotic room makes you furious every time you walk by it, shut the door.

**Finding alternatives:** If your daily commute through traffic leaves you in a state of frustration, learn or map out a different route. Try one that’s less congested or more scenic or find another alternative, such as a bus.

*Deb LeRoy is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and part of the IMPACT Employee Assistance Program, offered through Workforce Health, an affiliate of La Porte Regional Health System. Contact Workforce Health at (219) 851-3827 to learn more about employee wellness programs for your company.*