



EMPLOYEE SERIES

Tips to help manage anger

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Identify triggers and warning signs of anger. The first step in being able to manage your anger is to recognise the situations that make you angry and identify your body's warning signs of anger.
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List things that can trigger your anger. Make a list of the things that often set off your anger (e.g. running late for an appointment and not being able to find parking, your teenager leaving dirty dishes in the sink or a co-worker blaming you for something you didn't do). If you know ahead of time what makes you angry, you may be able to avoid these things or do something different when they happen.
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Notice the warning signs of anger in your body. Notice the things which happen to your body that tell you when you are getting angry (e.g. pounding heart, flushed face, sweating, tense jaw, and tightness in your chest or gritting your teeth). The earlier you can recognise these warning signs of anger, the more successful you will probably be at calming yourself down before your anger gets out of control.
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Learn strategies for managing anger. There are a number of different ways of managing anger and some strategies will suit you better than others.
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Control your thinking. When you're angry, your thinking can get exaggerated and irrational. Try replacing these kinds of thoughts with more useful, rational ones and you should find that this has an effect on the way you feel. E.g. instead of telling yourself “*I can't stand it, it's awful and everything's ruined*”, try telling yourself “*it's frustrating and it's understandable that I'm upset about it, but it's not the end of the world and getting angry is not going to fix it*”.
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Develop a list of things to say to yourself before, during and after situations that may make you angry. It is more helpful if these things focus on how you are managing the situation rather than what other people should be doing. Psychologists call this type of thinking 'self talk'.

Before

- *I'll be able to handle this. It could be rough, but I have a plan.*
- *If I feel myself getting angry, I'll know what to do.*

During

- *Stay calm, relax, and breathe easy.*
- *Stay calm, I'm OK, s/he's not attacking me personally.*
- *I can look and act calm.*

If you would like to book an appointment and /or speak with one of our Counsellors, it's as easy as calling 1300 66 77 00 or New Zealand 0800 327 669 or visit our website www.accesswellbeingservices.com.au



After

- *I managed that well. I can do this. I'm getting better at this.*
- *I felt angry, but I didn't lose my cool.*



Take time out. If you feel your anger getting out of control, take time out from a situation or an argument. Try stepping out of the room, or going for a walk. But look after your relationships, whether personal or at work - before you go, remember to make a time to talk about the situation later when everyone involved has calmed down. During a time out, plan how you are going to stay calm when your conversation resumes.



Use distraction. A useful strategy for managing anger is to distract your mind from the situation that is making you angry. Try counting to ten, playing soothing music, talking to a good friend, or focusing on a simple task like polishing the car or folding laundry. Maybe take up origami!



Use relaxation. Relaxation strategies can reduce the feelings of tension and stress in your body. Practise strategies such as taking long deep breaths and focusing on your breathing, or progressively working around your body and relaxing your muscles as you go.



Learn assertiveness skills. Assertiveness skills can be learned through self-help books or by attending courses. Using these skills ensures that anger is channeled and expressed in clear and respectful ways. Being assertive means being clear with others about what your needs and wants are, feeling okay about asking for them, but respecting the other person's needs and concerns as well and being prepared to negotiate. Avoid using words like 'never' or 'always' (e.g. "*you're always late!*"), as these statements are usually inaccurate, make you feel as though your anger is justified, and don't leave much possibility for the problem to be solved.



Try to acknowledge what is making you angry. Acknowledge that a particular issue has made you angry by admitting it to yourself and others. Telling someone that you felt angry when they did or said something is more helpful than just acting out the anger.



Rehearsing anger management skills. Use your imagination to practise your anger management strategies. Imagine yourself in a situation that usually sets off your anger. Imagine how you could behave in that situation without getting angry. Think about a situation where you did get angry. Replay the situation in your mind and imagine resolving the situation without anger.



Try rehearsing some anger management strategies with a friend. Ask them to help you act out in a situation where you get angry, so that you can practise other ways to think and behave. Practise saying things in an assertive, not aggressive way.