

Understanding Anger

It is OK to feel Angry

Anger is a natural emotion. Everyone feels angry sometimes and it is OK to feel angry. Anger can often be a reaction to feelings like hurt, frustration, embarrassment and fear. It can also often happen when we feel unable to control situations or feel helpless or misunderstood.

How Does Anger Affect Us?

Physically you may notice changes in your body such as:

- Your heart beating faster
- Altered breathing patterns
- Tense muscles
- An aching/burning in your stomach
- Sweating or feeling cold

Over time you might also notice:

- Altered sleeping patterns
- Changes in eating patterns
- Being snappy and blaming of others
- Being withdrawn, quiet and depressed
- Being sarcastic or dismissive in conversations
- Avoiding certain activities
- Being “passive-aggressive” – sulking or sighing

Taking your anger out on other people, either by abusing, threatening, bullying or intimidating them, either verbally with your words or physically with violence is not OK.

The more aware we are of being angry, the more chance we have of finding useful ways of dealing with it and staying in control.

Managing Anger

Everyone needs to take responsibility for dealing with their own anger and good immediate steps can include:

- Walking away from the situation or person for a little while
- Notice the physical feelings of your anger such as your heartbeat and focus on trying to slow it down, tense your muscles then slowly relax them, relax your posture if you can
- Talk with a trusted person about how you feel
- Involve yourself in some physical activity, walking, jogging, mow the lawn

When the anger has passed think about other ways that you could let off steam in the future without being destructive. Notice as early as you can when your anger is rising and when you handle things differently or better.

Anger can sometimes be a way of telling us that a situation needs changing. Consider what might need changing:

- in yourself
- the situation
- the relationship
- the workplace

Do something to start this change if you can.

Reaching Out

Sometimes people find it very hard to deal with feelings of anger and can find themselves taking it out on other people with aggression or violence.

Many services in the community offer anger management courses or counselling and it can also be helpful to talk to respected members of your family/whanau, church leaders or your doctor.

For further assistance contact:

- Citizens Advice Bureau 0800 FOR CAB (0800 367 222)
- Mental Health Education and Resource Centre 0800 424 399
- Mental Health Foundation 03 366 6936

Also see the Personal Help Services section in the front of the White Pages.

Pamphlets Available in This Series

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Health New Zealand Te Whatu Ora

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