

Anger

What is Anger:

As humans, it is normal to feel angry from time to time, it is one of our primary emotions. Anger can look different for everyone, and it can be caused by many different people, places, things, interactions, and experiences. Anger can be understood on three levels: physical symptoms, or how your body reacts to anger, cognitive experiences, or how anger impacts our thoughts, and behavioral indications, or how our behavior changes as a result of anger. Anger is commonly a difficult emotion for people to manage due to the fact that anger can develop within us very quickly which can often result in us thinking, acting, feeling, and doing things almost instantly not giving us much time to make a rationale decision or calm ourselves down.

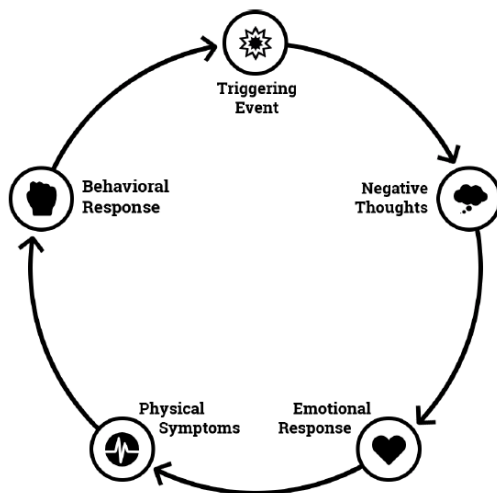
Anger Warning Signs and Triggers:

As we learn more about our anger and find ways to manage our anger, it is important that we identify our warning signs and our triggers. Warning signs are changes in our body, behavior, and thoughts that show us or tell us that we are beginning to feel angry. These warning signs can be different for everyone and can sometimes be difficult to notice.

Mind goes blank	Starts sweating	Face turns red
Body or hands shaking	Staring at the other person aggressively	Throwing objects
Heavy or fast breathing	Clenching fists	Scowling or making an angry face
Screaming, raising voice, or yelling	Feeling hot	Feeling sick to the stomach
Punching, hitting, or kicking objects or people	Going quiet and "shutting down"	Becoming aggressive
Becoming argumentative	Headaches	Crying
Pacing around the room	Insulting or cursing at the other person	Can't stop thinking about the problem

Triggers are people, places, things, interactions, experiences, so on and so forth which cause us to experience anger or feel angry. Triggers can be formed by our past experiences and the underlying emotions that we experience such as guilt, shame, embarrassment, fear, etc. that cause us to feel angry. Common triggers are: being told no or being told what to do, not getting your way, feeling mistreated, stress, threats to self-esteem, criticism, disappointment, embarrassment, and many more.

The Cycle of Anger



Triggering Event

An event or situation “triggers” your anger.

Examples:

- A friend making up a rumor about you.
- Being told you can not go to the mall with your friends.

Negative Thoughts

Irrational and negative thoughts that occur as a result of the triggering event. Examples:

- I will never be able to trust anyone.
- You never let me do what I want.

Emotional Response

Negative thoughts lead to negative emotions, even if the thoughts are irrational. Examples:

- Feelings of shame or fear.
- Rage directed at family or friends.

Physical Symptoms

The body automatically responds to anger with several symptoms. Examples:

- Racing heart
- Sweating
- Clenched fists

Behavioral Response

Your reaction based upon thoughts, feelings, and physical symptoms. Examples:

- Fighting
- Yelling
- Arguing

Tips to Manage Anger:

Distractions:

A list of healthy things you can help you can do when you feel angry:

- Write/journal about your anger
- Deep breathing
- Express your anger in a creative way
- Physical activity
- Count to 100
- Walk away from your triggers
- Talk to someone
- Squeeze a stress ball or play with a fidget
- Get outside and get some fresh air
- Listen to music
- Practice a hobby
- Your own ideas or distractions:

Identify the pros and cons:

Our ability to make decisions and think rationally is impaired when we experience a higher level of anger which can result in us making impulsive decisions or acting or behaving without thinking first. In order for us to make more positive and beneficial decisions, it is important that we understand the consequences to our actions. Take the time to reflect back on the decisions that you have made while angry and identify the positive outcomes and negative outcomes as a result of those decisions. Use the information you gather to help you make better and more positive decisions going forward.

Decision/Behavior	Pros and Cons
Using unkind words or curse words	Pros: Feels good in the moment Cons: Getting in trouble, guilt afterwards
Slapping or hitting siblings	Pros: Releases built up energy/anger Cons: Being grounded, hurting others
Walking out of class after disagreement with teacher	Pros: Getting away from trigger Cons: Getting detention, missing classwork

Angry Diary:

At the end of the day or a few hours after the anger has passed, take a few moments to reflect on the situation that caused you to feel angry or even just a bit frustrated.

- Identify the trigger.
- Identify the warning signs that you experienced.
- Recognize how you reacted due to your anger (how your behavior changed or what you did as a result of your anger).
- What was the outcome of your anger? How did it affect you and those around you? Was it a positive or negative outcome?
- If the outcome is negative, ask yourself: What could I have done differently or what can I do differently next time? If the outcome is positive, ask yourself: What did I do well or what can I do to help manage my anger again next time?

Use the information that you gather through this diary to help you further understand your anger and to identify where your anger becomes an issue and how you can improve on managing your anger going forward.

Event One	Trigger	
	Warning Signs	
	Anger Response	
	Outcome	

Adapted from Therapy Aid

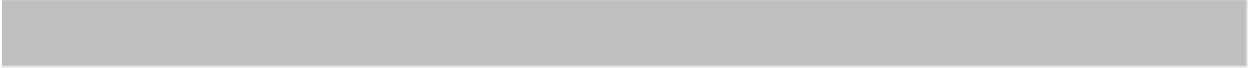
Additional Resources:

Books:

- Coping Skills for Teens Workbook. By Janine Halloran. (2020)
- Zero to 60: A Teen's Guide to Manage Frustration, Anger and Everyday Irritations. By Dr. Michael Tompkins (2020)

Apps:

- Calm App
- Mindshift
- Headspace
- Cups
- Moodtrack



References:

Adopted from: Therapistaid (2023)

Adopted from: American Counseling Association (2008)

Adopted from: Child Mind Institute (n.d.)