

Anger management: 10 tips to tame your temper

Keeping your temper in check can be challenging. Use simple anger management tips — from taking a timeout to using "I" statements — to stay in control.

By Mayo Clinic staff

Do you find yourself fuming when someone cuts you off in traffic? Does your blood pressure go through the roof when your child refuses to cooperate? Anger is a normal and even healthy emotion — but it's important to deal with it in a positive way. Uncontrolled anger can take a toll on both your health and your relationships.

Ready to get your anger under control? Start by considering these 10 anger management tips.

No. 1: Take a timeout

Counting to 10 isn't just for kids. Before reacting to a tense situation, take a few moments to breathe deeply and count to 10. Slowing down can help defuse your temper. If necessary, take a break from the person or situation until your frustration subsides a bit.

No. 2: Once you're calm, express your anger

As soon as you're thinking clearly, express your frustration in an assertive but nonconfrontational way. State your concerns and needs clearly and directly, without hurting others or trying to control them.

No. 3: Get some exercise

Physical activity can provide an outlet for your emotions, especially if you're about to erupt. If you feel your anger escalating, go for a brisk walk or run, or spend some time doing other favorite physical activities. Physical activity stimulates various brain chemicals that can leave you feeling happier and more relaxed than you were before you worked out.

No. 4: Think before you speak

In the heat of the moment, it's easy to say something you'll later regret. Take a few moments to collect your thoughts before saying anything — and allow others involved in the situation to do the same.

No. 5: Identify possible solutions

Instead of focusing on what made you mad, work on resolving the issue at hand. Does your child's messy room drive you crazy? Close the door. Is your partner late for dinner every night? Schedule meals later in the evening — or agree to eat on your own a few times a week. Remind yourself that anger won't fix anything, and might only make it worse.

No. 6: Stick with 'I' statements

To avoid criticizing or placing blame — which might only increase tension — use "I" statements to describe the problem. Be respectful and specific. For example, say, "I'm upset that you left the table without offering to help with the dishes," instead of, "You never do any housework."

No. 7: Don't hold a grudge

Forgiveness is a powerful tool. If you allow anger and other negative feelings to crowd out positive feelings, you might find yourself swallowed up by your own bitterness or sense of injustice. But if you can forgive someone who angered you, you might both learn from the situation. It's unrealistic to expect everyone to behave exactly as you want at all times.

No. 8: Use humor to release tension

Lightening up can help diffuse tension. Don't use sarcasm, though — it can hurt feelings and make things worse.

No. 9: Practice relaxation skills

When your temper flares, put relaxation skills to work. Practice deep-breathing exercises, imagine a relaxing scene, or repeat a calming word or phrase, such as, "Take it easy." You might also listen to music, write in a journal or do a few yoga poses — whatever it takes to encourage relaxation.

No. 10: Know when to seek help

Learning to control anger is a challenge for everyone at times. Consider seeking help for anger issues if your anger seems out of control, causes you to do things you regret or hurts those around you. You might explore local anger management classes or anger management counseling. With professional help, you can:

- Learn what anger is
- Identify what triggers your anger

- Recognize signs that you're becoming angry
- Learn to respond to frustration and anger in a controlled, healthy way
- Explore underlying feelings, such as sadness or depression

Anger management classes and counseling can be done individually, with your partner or other family members, or in a group. Request a referral from your doctor to a counselor specializing in anger management, or ask family members, friends or other contacts for recommendations. Your health insurer, employee assistance program (EAP), clergy, or state or local agencies also might offer recommendations