



Managing anger a healthy step

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Anger is often defined as an emotional state that may range in intensity from mild irritation to intense fury and rage. In most cases, anger is a natural response to fear, harm, or perceived injustice and may occur when we believe our needs and wants are not being met. As a result, we may lose patience and act out our anger in aggressive, sometimes violent, ways.

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), anger becomes a problem when we feel it too frequently, too intensely or express it inappropriately. Feeling anger too intensely or too frequently can have severe effects on a person's physical health. High blood pressure, irregular or rapid heartbeat, and migraines are a few physical problems that can be related to anger issues.

Expressing anger inappropriately, be that through aggressive behavior such as violent acts or verbal abuse, can damage relationships, jobs and social functioning. Suppressing anger is also an inappropriate way to handle one's anger. Suppressed anger may result in physical problems, such as ulcers or high blood pressure, and it can be related to psychological difficulties, such as depression.

People who experience anger frequently and intensely may either suppress their anger or express it in aggressive ways. People who exhibit these two types of behaviors can benefit from anger management sessions.

Anger management entails learning anger de-escalation strategies and appropriate anger expression techniques

to decrease the likelihood that one will experience negative consequences. De-escalation techniques may include using timeouts, breathing exercises, or counting exercises. Negative consequences can range from feeling guilty about what one has done or said to being incarcerated for engaging in violent acts.

Anger management involves raising awareness and increasing understanding of anger triggers and cues. It also involves realizing that the inappropriate expression of anger is learned. Knowing this is valuable because it suggests that more appropriate expressions of anger can also be learned.

One way that anger can be handled more appropriately is by developing assertiveness skills. Assertiveness skills involve setting appropriate boundaries, expressing opinions respectfully, and implementing problem solving steps to resolve conflict.

Individuals should become aware of the role stress plays in the escalation of anger. Stress is cumulative, which means it builds up over time. People who do not manage stress tend to be more prone to anger. It is important for people to learn to de-stress throughout each day. Stress management techniques such as deep breathing exercises, relaxation exercises, physical exercise, and meditation can help a person de-stress and are vital to a good anger management program. Comprehending that anger might be the result of irrational thinking

patterns is a crucial step in gaining control of angry feelings. Cognitive restructuring or reframing negative thinking patterns can decrease the escalation of anger and the frequency and intensity of which it occurs.

Anger is typically a natural human response. However, there are times that anger may be a symptom of an underlying mood disorder, an impulse control disorder, or a substance abuse problem. Seeing a mental health professional can help one determine the extent of an anger problem or whether the anger is the symptom of an underlying disorder. A mental health professional can also help a person learn de-escalation techniques and control strategies previously mentioned.

Additional information on anger and anger management issues can be found at www.samhsa.gov or you can go to www.books4selfhelp.com/anger-management.htm for a good list of anger management books and resources.

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