

Anger Management & Conflict Resolution Skills

Instructions: Read and follow the instructions on each page. The entire packet must be completed and returned by the sentence completion date. Incomplete work will not receive credit!

Name: _____

Case: _____

Date: _____

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What is Anger?

Anger is an emotional response triggered by an interpretation that a threat is or may be present.

Everyone has lots of emotions. At different times, you may be happy, sad or jealous. Anger is just another way that people feel. It is okay to get angry – in fact sometimes it is important to get angry. Anger must be released right away. Otherwise, you will be like a pot of boiling water with the lid left on. If the steam does not escape, the water will eventually boil over and blow its top.

Anger is a powerful emotion. It can be used either in productive or counter-productive ways. It can lengthen or shorten lives. It is like electricity. It can run large equipment or it can electrocute you.

Anger can exist at any one of a wide range of intensities such as

Irritation → Anger → Rage

Irritation: this can be when you feel annoyed at something that someone has done to you.

Anger: this can be when you feel more than annoyed, but can be somewhat controlled.

Rage: this is when the anger has completely taken over your body and you can no longer think rationally about the consequences of your actions. This is the stage that can be the most detrimental, because you don't think, you just act.

Overall, anger causes mental confusion. It leads to impulsive actions and poor decision making.

Exercise #1

Write about a time that you felt irritated by someone. What did they do to irritate you? How did you react? If you could go back in time, would you change anything that you did? If yes, what? If you acted appropriately, how did you choose the best decision making tool in that instance.

Remember – for every action, there is a reaction – what does that mean to you?

Lined writing area for the exercise response.

Here are some things you should know about anger:

- It is a powerful survival tool.
- It is a response to pain (physical or psychological).
- It is a source of energy.
- It is a secondary emotion.
- When we are angry, the brain downshifts to a lower evolutionary level.
- Prolonged anger is unhealthy.
- Repressed anger is unhealthy.

When we feel energized by anger, we might want to ask ourselves how we can put this energy to the most productive use.

Perhaps you have heard the story of a woman who is in an accident and her car lands on top of someone that she loves. That woman may be feeling a lot of different emotions, including anger, however she channels all of these of emotions and with the help of adrenaline she is able to lift the car up and free her loved one.

The most helpful thing to remember is that anger is a secondary emotion; a primary emotion is what is felt immediately before we get angry. We always feel something first before we get angry, such as: afraid, attacked, offended, disrespected, forced, trapped, or pressured.

Go back to the essays that you just completed and write down you primary feeling in each case:

Irritation: _____

Anger: _____

Rage: _____

Now that you have established your primary emotion, what could you have done to channel that emotion away from getting irritated, angry or enraged?

Youth Violence – Quick Statistics

Youth violence is a widespread problem in the United States. Consider the following facts:

- About 9% of murders in the U.S. were committed by youth under 18 in 2000. An estimated 1561 youth under the age of 18 were arrested for homicide in 2000.
- Youth under 18 accounted for about 15% of violent crime arrests in 2001.
- One national survey found that for every teen arrested, at least 10 were engaged in violence that could have seriously injured or killed another person.
- About 1 in 3 high school students say they have been in a physical fight in the past year, and about 1 in 8 of those students required medical attention for their injuries.
- More than 1 in 6 students in grades 6 to 10 say they are bullied sometimes, and more than 1 in 12 say they are bullied once a week or more.
- Suicide is the third leading cause of death among teenagers. In 2000, 1921 young people aged 10 to 19 died by suicide in the United States.
- About 1 in 11 high school students say they have made a suicide attempt in the past year.

Describe an incident you have witnessed involving youth violence.

What do you think the participants should have done to prevent the situation from becoming violent?

How Can I Deal With My Anger?

Your mom just told you there's no way she's letting you out of the house until you clean your room. What starts out as mild annoyance (now you'll be late for Chrissy's party) turns into red-hot anger as you pick up the magazines and dishes from your floor. How dare she? You're not a child! Before you know it, you've kicked a big dent in your closet door, broken a dish, and yelled at your sister. Now you're grounded for the whole weekend – plus you feel terrible about the way you acted.

So, why did you fly off the handle so quickly? And why are there days when you feel like you just wake up angry?

Some of it may be the changes your body's going through. All those hormones you hear so much about can cause mood swings and confused emotions. Some of it may be stress. People who are under a lot of pressure tend to get angry more easily. Part of it may be your personality. You may be someone who feels your emotions intensely or tends to act impulsively or lose control. And part of it may be your role models. Maybe you've seen other people in your family blow a fuse when they're mad.

No matter what pushes your buttons, one thing is certain – you're sure to get angry sometimes. Everyone does. Anger is a normal emotion, and there's nothing wrong with feeling mad. What counts is how you handle it (and yourself) when you're angry.

Tools to Tame a Temper: Self-Awareness and Self-Control

Because anger can be powerful, managing it is sometimes challenging. It takes plenty of self-awareness and self-control to manage angry feelings. And these skills take time to develop.



Anger and Other Emotions

Underneath a person's anger there's often another emotion, such as hurt or guilt. Putting your feelings into words will allow you to explore and name these emotions. This helps lessen the intensity of those feelings.

Self-awareness is the ability to notice what you're feeling and thinking, and why. Little kids aren't very aware of what they feel; they just act it out in their behavior. That's why you see them having tantrums when they're mad. But teens have the mental ability to be self-aware. When you get angry, take a moment to notice what you're feeling and thinking.

Self-control is all about thinking before you act. It puts some precious seconds or minutes between feeling a strong emotion and taking an action you'll regret.

Together, self-awareness and self-control allow you to have more choice about how to act when you're feeling an intense emotion like anger.

Getting Ready to Make a Change

Deciding to get control of your anger – rather than letting it control you – means first taking a good hard look at the ways you've been reacting when you get mad. Do you tend to yell and scream or say hurtful, mean, disrespectful things? Do you throw things, kick or punch walls, break stuff? Hit someone, hurt yourself, or push and shove others around?

For most people who have trouble harnessing a hot temper, reacting like this is not what they want. They feel ashamed by their behavior and don't think it reflects the real them, their best selves.

Everyone can change – but only when they want to. If you want to make a big change in how you're handling your anger, think about what you'll gain from that change. More self-respect? More respect from other people? Less time feeling annoyed and frustrated? A more relaxed approach to life? Remembering why you want to make the change can help.

It can also help to remind yourself that making a change takes time, practice, and patience. It won't happen all at once. Managing anger is about developing new skills and new responses. As with any skill, like playing basketball or learning to play the piano, it helps to practice over and over again.

The 5-Step Approach to Managing Anger

If something happens that makes you feel angry (like not being allowed to go to a party until you clean your room), this approach can help you manage your reaction. It's called a problem-solving approach because you start with the problem you're mad about. Then you weigh your choices and decide what you'll do.

Each step involves asking yourself a couple of questions, and then answering them based on your particular situation. Let's take the example for the start of this article: your mom has just told you to clean your room or stay home. You really want to go to that party. The red-hot anger starts building. Here's what to do:

1. **Tune in to your feelings (self-awareness).** Start by noticing what you're angry about and why. Put into words what's making you upset so you can act rather than react.

Ask yourself: What's got me angry? What am I feeling and why? You can do this either in your mind or out loud, but it needs to be clear and specific. For example: "I'm really angry at my mom because she won't let me go to the party until I clean my room. It's not fair!" Your feeling is anger, and you're feeling angry because you might not get to go to the party.

Notice that this is not the same as saying "Mom's so unfair to me." That statement doesn't identify the specific problem (that you can't go to the party until you clean your room) and it doesn't say how you're feeling (angry).

2. **Stop and think (self-control).** This is where you stop for a minute to give yourself time to manage your anger. It's also where you start thinking of how you might react – but without reacting yet.

Ask yourself: What can I do? Think of at least three things. For example, in this situation you might think:

- a. I could yell at mom and throw a fit.
 - b. I could clean my room and ask if I could go to the party.
 - c. I could sneak out to the party anyway.
3. **Consider your options (think it through).** This is where you think about what is likely to result from each of the different reactions you came up with.

Ask yourself: What will happen for each of these three options? For example:

- a. Yelling at your mom may get you in worse trouble or even grounded.
 - b. Cleaning your room takes work and you may get to the party late (but hey, arriving late may add to your mystique). With this option, you get to go to the party and your room's clean so you don't have to worry about it for a while.
 - c. Sneaking out may seem like a real option in the heat of anger. But when you really think it though it's pretty unlikely you'd get away with being gone for hours with no one noticing. And when you do get caught – look out!
4. **Make a decision (pick one of your options).** This is where you take action by choosing one of the three things you could do. Look at the list and pick the one this is likely to be most effective.

Ask yourself: What’s my best choice? By the time you’ve thought it through, you’re probably past yelling at your mom, which is a knee-jerk response. You may also have decided that sneaking out is too risky. Neither of these options is likely to get you to the party. So option (b) probably seems like the best choice.

Once you choose your solution, then it’s time to act.

5. Check your progress. After you’ve acted and the situation is over, spend some time thinking about how it went.

Ask yourself: How did I do? Did things work out as I expected? If not, why not? Am I satisfied with the choice I made? Taking some time to reflect on how things worked out after it’s all over is a very important step. It helps you learn about yourself and it allows you to test which problem-solving approaches work best in different situations.

Give yourself a pat on the back if the solution you chose worked out well. If it didn’t, go back through the five steps and see if you can figure out why.

These five steps are pretty simple when you’re calm but are much tougher to work through when you’re angry or sad (kind of like in basketball practice when making baskets is much easier than in a real game when the pressure is on!). So it helps to practice over and over again.

*It doesn't pay to say too much when you are mad enough to choke.
For the word that stings the deepest is the word that is never spoke.
Let the other fellow wrangle till the storm has blown away.
And he'll do a heap of thinking about the things you didn't say.*
- James Whitcomb Riley.

What does this poem mean to you? How do you interpret it? Do you believe that it is possible? Do you believe that it is true?

Other Ways to Manage Anger

The five-step approach is good when you're in a particular situation that's got you mad and you need to decide what action to take. But other things can help you manage anger too.

Try these things even if you're not mad right now to help prevent angry feelings from building up inside.



Work it Out

Exercise, even going for a brisk walk, is a great way to work off anger. That's because physical activity produces brain chemicals that can make a person feel better.

Exercise. Go for a walk/run, work out, or go play a sport. Lots of research has shown that exercise is a great way to improve your mood and decrease negative feelings.

Listen to music (with your headphones on). Music has also been shown to change a person's mood pretty quickly. And if you dance, then you're exercising and it's a two-for-one.

Write down your thoughts and emotions. You can write things in lots of ways; for example, in a journal or as your own poetry or song lyrics. After you've written it down, you can keep it or throw it away – it doesn't matter. The important thing is writing down your thoughts and feelings can improve how you feel. When you notice, label, and release feelings as they show up in smaller portions, they don't have a chance to build up inside.

Draw. Scribbling, doodling, or sketching your thoughts or feelings might help too.

Meditate or practice deep breathing. This one works best if you do it regularly, as it's more of an overall stress management technique that can help you use self-control when you're mad. If you do this regularly, you'll find that anger is less likely to build up.

Talk about your feelings with someone you trust. Lots of times there are other emotions, such as fear or sadness, beneath anger. Talking about them can help.

Distract yourself. If you find yourself stewing about something and can't seem to let go, it can help to do something that will get your mind past what's bugging you – watch TV, read, or go to the movies.

These ideas can be helpful for two reasons.

1. **They help you cool down when you feel like your anger might explode.** When you need to cool down, do one of more of the activities in the list above. Think of these as alternatives to taking an action you'll regret, such as yelling at someone.
2. **They help you manage anger in general.** What if there's no immediate problem to solve – you simply need to shift into a better mood? Sometimes when you're angry, you just need to stop dwelling on how mad you are.

When to Ask for Extra Help

Sometimes anger is a sign that more is going on. People who have frequent trouble with anger, who get in fights or arguments, who get punished, who have life situations that give them reason to often be angry may need special help to get a problem with anger under control. Tell your parents, a teacher, a counselor, or another adult you trust if any of these things have been happening:

- You have a lasting feeling of anger over things that have either happened to you in the past or are going on now.
- You feel irritable, grumpy, or in a bad mood more often than not.
- You feel consistent anger or rage at yourself.
- You feel anger that lasts for days or makes you want to hurt yourself or someone else.
- You're often getting into fights or arguments.

These could be signs of depression or something else – and you shouldn't have to handle that alone.

Anger is a strong emotion. It can feel overwhelming at times. Learning how to deal with strong emotions – without losing control – is part of becoming more mature. It takes a little effort, a little practice, and a little patience, but you can get there if you want to.

What do you do to let off steam when you are angry?

Name two methods of managing your anger you have learned from this workbook.

Which of the methods listed above do you think might work for you, and why?

Responding to and Learning from Anger

Anger is an intense emotion. It means that we feel strongly about something. As with every emotion, it has a lesson for us. It can teach us what we value, what we need, what we lack, what we believe, and what our insecurities are. Anger is an emotion that allows us to express our feelings. How we express our anger can be the problem. However, everyone makes mistakes, but what we learn from our mistakes and how we make better decision in the future is what's important.

One way to learn from anger is:

Instead of saying: "She should never have done that. I cannot believe how irresponsible, insensitive, and inconsiderate she is. What a cold-hearted evil witch she is."

A more productive response is: "I am really upset by this. Why does it bother me so much? What exactly am I feeling? What are my primary feelings? What need do I have that is not being met? How have I been violated?"

What do you value? _____

What do you need? _____

What do you lack? _____

What do you believe? _____

What are your insecurities? What are you afraid of? _____

I don't like it when I feel: _____

I don't like it when people: _____

Sometimes by just writing down something that you don't like or don't understand helps. It can sometimes prevent you from blowing up. Have you ever written in a diary or journal? Did it make you feel better doing it?

*Between stimulus and response, there is a space.
In that space, lies our freedom and power to choose our response.
In our response lies our growth and freedom.*

- Victor Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning

It can be helpful to try and widen this space over our lives. This could be a sign of wisdom and maturity. Remembering that we have a choice helps us feel more in control. Studies show that when people feel that they have control over their lives, they feel healthier.

As a growing teenager, you will not always feel like you are in control over your life. In fact, you may feel that you have no control over your life. You must listen to:

- Parents or guardian(s)
- Teachers
- Principals
- School Resource Officers
- Siblings
- Law Enforcement Officials.

How could you possibly have control over your own life??

But you do have control over your life, you choose your destiny. You choose which road you are going to travel. All of these people are simply to guide you, but in reality the CHOICE IS UP TO YOU!

The decisions that you make as a teenager can and will follow you into your adult life, and all anyone wants to do is ensure that those decisions won't guide you down a road of despair.

Do adults make mistakes? Yes.

Do adults say things that sometimes might not be appropriate? Yes.

Are adults sometimes wrong? Yes.

How are you going to deal with this if it happens to you? How are you going to react when an ADULT is the one that has angered you? Will you win this fight?

No, probably not. What you must remember first is, who is the person that angered you? Is it your teacher, your mother, your SRO? Then you must think if you react on impulse what are going to be the consequences?

Have you ever heard of the saying: "You catch more flies with honey than with vinegar?"

What does that mean?

Blowing up and cursing, yelling, screaming is not going to EVER solve a problem. It will only make matters worse and add to the original problem.

Complete the following exercises:

10 Things that I expect from my parents:

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____
- 6. _____
- 7. _____
- 8. _____
- 9. _____
- 10. _____

10 Things that my parents expect from me:

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____
- 6. _____
- 7. _____
- 8. _____
- 9. _____
- 10. _____

What do you think the rules should be?

5 Things that my parents do that I think is unfair:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Have you ever spoken to your parents and told them how you truly feel? When you get angry do you feel like you can talk to them and tell them why you are angry? Learn how to express your feelings in a positive way. It is ok to tell someone how they have wronged you. It is NOT ok to get angry and curse out your parent or a teacher.

Have you ever felt like this? Sometimes it is good to know that you are not the only one who feels this way. Thousands of kids your age have the exact feelings that you have. Who do you talk to when you are upset or angry?

Here are some Anger Busters:

- Talk to a friend that you can trust.
- Count to 10.
- Get or give a hug.
- Stamp your feet.
- Beat up a pillow because a pillow cannot get hurt.
- Draw a picture of your anger.
- Play a video game.
- Run around outside of the house five times as fast as you can.
- Sing along with the stereo.
- Pull weeds in the garden.
- Think good thoughts (maybe about a fun vacation or favorite place)
- Take a bike ride or go in-line skating.

Remember, it is never ok to hit or hurt another person. The anger that you may experience is perfectly normal, but when you take that anger out on another person it will only lead to more problems. Tell a teacher, talk to your parents, tell a friend, but resorting to physical violence will never solve a problem.

Never getting angry is impossible. Instead, remember that how you act when you're angry can make the situation better or worse.

Don't let the anger control you, take control over it!

Respect for Yourself and Others

Angry interactions can be avoided if we respect the basic rights of individuals to determine how they wish to live their lives. The following list is a collection of your legitimate rights. It is also a collection of the rights of any human being, including your parents, peers, and teachers.

Stand up and read the following rights out loud.

- I have the right to put myself first sometimes.
- I have the right to make mistakes.
- I have the right to have my own feelings and accept them as real.
- I have the right to my opinions and values.
- I have the right to change my mind.
- I have the right to protest inappropriate treatment or hostile feedback.
- I have the right to ask for clarification.
- I have the right to be diplomatic to achieve change.
- I have the right to ask for help or emotional support.
- I have the right to feel and appropriately express my feelings.
- I have the right to decide against taking another's advice.
- I have the right to say no.
- I have the right to be alone.
- I have the right not to say anything about my behavior.
- I have the right not to take responsibility for others' problems.
- I have the right not to have to anticipate others' needs and wishes.
- I have the right not to always worry about the welfare of others.

Equality and respect play a huge role in managing your anger. Learning how to respect others can avoid potential hostile situations. If you learn this while you are young and practice it as a teen, when you grow into adulthood you will not have any problems with others because you can use the tools that you gained as a child to diffuse situations. You will not always act like what others say or do. You cannot control the actions of others, you cannot control what others say or do. But what you can control is your reaction to others. Dealing with conflict is a part of life. While the type of conflict may change, it will never go away. Learning how to accept conflict and manage it is the key. Remember, for every action there is a reaction!

Equality & Respect

Non-threatening Behavior

- Talk and act in ways that make others feel safe and comfortable.
- Treat others with courtesy and respect.
- Treat their property with care and responsibility.

Negotiation and Fairness

- Accept that you may have to make changes, too.
- Be willing to accept compromises.
- Be willing to talk things through constructively.

Non-violence

- Use constructive verbal communication – no cursing!
- Be willing to separate – take some personal space.
- Cool down rather than engage in violence and threats.
- If dialogue fails, seek an unbiased third party for mediation.

Showing Respect

- Listen to others non-judgmentally.
- Be emotionally understanding.
- Value opinions of others, even if you disagree with them.
- Use language that is respectful.
- Describe behaviors that you don't like rather than calling someone a name.

Honesty and Accountability

- Accept responsibility for your words and actions.
- Acknowledge past use of violence, threat, or intimidation.
- Admit to being wrong.
- Communicate openly and truthfully.

Trust and Support

- Respect the rights of others to their own feelings, friends, activities, and opinions.
- Allow someone to lead their own life and support the goals they have for themselves.

Conflict Resolution Vocabulary

Communicate

Some conflicts start because people misunderstand each other. Talking things out and explaining might take care of it.

Negotiate

When two or more people decide to work out a conflict themselves, they might follow a set of steps. The steps help them work out the conflict or negotiate.

Mediate

Sometimes people want to work out a problem but have trouble negotiating. They might ask someone to help them. That person is called a mediator. He or she mediates the conflict by helping the people work it out. The mediator does not tell the people what to do; he or she helps them decide for themselves.

Arbitrate

Sometimes a mediator does solve people's problems. Then he or she isn't called a mediator. He or she is called an arbitrator. When people ask an arbitrator to help them, they must agree to do whatever the arbitrator suggests.

Litigate

When people can't work out their conflict themselves, they may go to a court and have a trial. They hire lawyers and go before a judge. A judge is like an arbitrator. The lawyers try to convince the judge that their client is right. The judge decides who is right according to the law and decides what the solution should be.

Legislate

To legislate is to make something the law or a rule. Some kinds of conflicts cause people to try to change the laws or the rules so the problem won't happen again.

Identify the Conflict Resolution Method

Read the following situations and identify what type of conflict resolution is being used.

Roger and Kindra were arguing over who would get to use the box of markers. They realized that arguing was getting them nowhere, so they figured out several ways they could both use the markers. Then they chose the way they liked best.

Type: _____

Jerome, Ted and Alfredo are supposed to put up a bulletin board display together, but they can't agree on what the theme should be. They finally went to their teacher, Mr. Nunez, and asked him to choose the bulletin board theme.

Type: _____

Juanita was upset because her best friend, Sara, walked by her this morning without saying a word. She didn't speak to Sara all day. Finally Sara got Juanita to say what was wrong. "I didn't even see you," Sara cried. "I would never walk by without saying something to you." It was all a misunderstanding.

Type: _____

Ricardo and Diana were playing on the same softball team, but they both wanted to pitch. They were shouting at each other. Finally, Monty came up and helped them work out a solution to the problem.

Type: _____

Marla was being teased and called names by some kids in class. She hated being called names. Every morning the class had a class meeting to discuss things. Marla suggested that there be a class rule against name-calling and teasing.

Type: _____

Carmen has accused Reba of stealing things out of her locker. They have taken their problem to the student court. The court is made up of a high-school girl, who is the judge, and a jury of eighth- and ninth-graders. They will present evidence to the court. The jury will decide if Reba is guilty. If she is, the judge will decide her punishment.

Type: _____

Have you used one of these conflict resolution approaches? If so, describe the situation.

What are some other ways of resolving conflicts that are not listed in the activity above?

Scenarios

Marge had really tried to be Howie's friend, but sometimes it was just too much. Howie is so obnoxious, especially around females, calling them names and touching them inappropriately in PE class. Marge asked, "Howie, why do you say those things?" Howie responded, "You're so cute when you get angry... what's the matter, babe?" The word "babe" did it. Marge was absolutely furious.

Explain how you think this situation should be handled.

Frank was steaming. His brother Rudy drove off with the car they shared when he had promised Frank he would take a bus to work today. Rudy knew that Frank really needed the car to pick up Sally at 2:00. To make matters worse, Frank couldn't get to Sally's house without a car if he tried.

How should Frank handle the situation?

Research

Search for an article on the internet or in the newspaper about youth violence. Print or cut it out and paste it on the back of this workbook. Answer the following questions about the incident.

Briefly describe what the article is about.

How does this incident impact the families of the youths involved?

Talk about a possible non-violent solution to the situation.

If two of your friends are in an argument, what do you think you could do to help them resolve the situation without someone getting hurt?

Talk to someone you trust if you have anger issues that you feel you cannot control.

Find at least one reason to smile each day and make someone else smile ... it's contagious!