



# Anger Management

Whether it is a discourteous driver, a co-worker who will not stay out of your desk, a spouse who will not pick up after themselves, or a neighbor who has loud parties all night, the principles of anger management remain the same.



## What You Can Do

When managing anger, it helps to know what your buttons are so you can prepare in advance. For example, do you become angry when traffic backs up on your commute? Think about and write down what makes you angry most often. Then list what your response is to these situations while being as specific and detailed as possible, such as teeth clench, face becomes red, want to throw something, abusive language.

Now, imagine yourself in one of these situations and try these techniques at the first sign of response:

- Practice a simple phrase or word such as “Stop.” “I am in control.” “I am cool and calm”—or something which will release energy but not trigger a tantrum of rage.
- Substitute one of your actions with another benign action. So, if you find that your stapler has been taken again and you feel your teeth clenching, you can yawn to relax your jaw. Some people find that when they feel a physical response, it is best to counter with a physical activity. This can be as simple as shaking your hands like you are flinging water off your hands and fingers, walking briskly, or playing catch.
- It is best to avoid name calling since that behavior adds fuel to the fire. You want to find something which will validate your feeling, but not escalate the anger. Humor can really help in this situation. For example, if you are having issues with your neighbor’s dog in your yard, you might say something like “your dog must be a really big eater, let me show you my lawn.”
- Count to ten or some other stalling behavior. That flash of anger will only last a few seconds, and you may find that if you can wait it out, you feel better and need no further action. Is the whole day ruined because someone left socks on the floor? Try to place things in perspective.
- Pick your fights. Decide if this is something which really needs attention. Will this matter in 10 years? Think about it overnight, and if you still feel you need to confront your neighbors about their loud parties, develop a plan and approach them politely and rationally, while allowing them to save face. After all, you will be neighbors for a long time, and it is in both your interests to get along.

Practice these techniques during calm times so that you can be ready when you feel that familiar rise in your blood pressure. Don’t worry if they don’t seem to work at first. It takes practice to learn and effectively use anger management skills.



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