

## Managing anger

To manage anger, we need to target a range of factors:

**A**nticipate trigger situations

**N**otice signs of anger

**G**o through your 'anger routine' e.g., relaxation exercises before, breathing exercises and calming self-statements during

**E**xtract yourself from the situation if necessary e.g., STOP, BREATH, LEAVE

**R**ecord how you coped

### Anticipate trigger situations

1. Once you have worked up a temper, it is very difficult to relax or use any anger reducing strategies. Therefore, it is important to be able to identify and anticipate trigger situations so that you plan and put strategies into place before your anger gets out of control.
2. Develop a list of situations or triggers to your anger.

### Notice signs of anger

Stay aware of arousal by scanning your body for physiological, cognitive, emotional and behavioural cues of stress.

#### Physiological cues

Notice which parts of your body become tense when you are angry.

What happens in your body as your anger increases?

## Cognitive cues

These types of thoughts may include:

*"She meant to / intended to..."*

*"They should have known better."*

*"He did it on purpose."*

*"He thinks I am stupid."*

What are your common anger thoughts?

## Emotional cues

Before you get angry and as your anger starts to rise, you may be aware that you are stressed, upset, hurt, offended, confused, worried, anxious, uptight, tense, annoyed.

What kinds of emotions are likely to result in you feeling angry?  
What are your common emotional cues?

## Behavioural cues

Behavioural cues can be used to track your arousal. For example, you may notice that you are starting to talk very loudly or that you are slamming into things. When you notice these things, again it is a good time to implement your temper routine.

What are your behavioural cues?

## Develop an anger routine

Prepare a list of anger reduction strategies. These may include the following.

1. Tension reduction exercises: Slow, deep breathing lowers arousal and distracts you; here and now grounding techniques.
2. Distraction techniques: What are some distraction techniques that you could use to distract you from being angry? Perhaps going for a walk, writing a shopping list, or reading a book? Distraction techniques are a specific coping strategy and should not be used to avoid dealing with and resolving situations.
3. Assertive communication: Plan in advance the best ways to approach difficult or potentially anger-inducing conversations.
4. Using problem-solving techniques and staying goal-focussed: Anger is often self-defeating because it prevents us from attaining and achieving the things we want. Ask yourself, 'what is my goal here?' Your goal will depend on the situation. Keep focussed on the things that really matter. Getting angry interferes with achieving those things.
5. Self-calming thoughts: Prepare these in advance and practise, practise, practise. Write them down and read before, during or after a potentially anger-inducing event.
6. Balanced thinking: Because thoughts play a large role in anger responses, identify anger thoughts that commonly trigger or exacerbate your anger and identify more balanced thoughts.
7. Alternative stress-reduction strategies: Are there other strategies that you have found useful in managing your anger, e.g., exercise, writing, listening to music, etc.
8. STOP, BREATHE, LEAVE: If you identify an anger-provoking situation and you notice your anger reactions rising in spite of other attempts to manage ... STOP. Say the word 'stop' to yourself, or visualise a stop sign. This will short-circuit your automatic response. BREATHE. Take in a few deep breaths to lower your arousal and distract yourself. LEAVE. Physically remove yourself from the situation. If possible, try and walk or do some exercise to reduce your physical arousal.

Think of a recent situation where you were angry, and develop a number of alternative courses of action and go through the pros and cons of each.

Do you think that your behaviour in the situation helped or hindered?

What is your anger management plan?