

Understanding Anger. Plus Anger Diary

Anger can be seen as a negative emotion, but there are no negative emotions. All emotions serve a function for us, none are negative. It's how we express those emotions can make how they feel negative or positive.

Knowing how you react in situations and the type of anger you use can be the first step in realizing if you have a problem expressing your anger. Sometimes people will read this statement and say "yep that's not me I never get angry." But we all do, we may not do it in a violent, confrontational way, that many people associate with how anger is expressed, we may express it in a more passive-aggressive form.

Whatever way you express anger it's still good to look at the types of anger and question do you express your anger in a positive way?

Types of anger

(It should be noted that this list is by no means complete but it will give you some ideas on ways people express themselves using anger. These anger types, as you will notice, can also overlap, so there is no one shoe fits all here.)

Chronic Anger – Is an ongoing form of generalized resentment of life and of others, but it can be directed at yourself. If prolonged it is unhealthy and stresses out the immune system. It can be closely linked to depression and mood disorders. This why we tend to think of depression as anger turned inwards

Volatile Anger – The type of anger that is coming/going often seen as explosive and intense. This is often seen as a type of anger that can lead to physical and verbal abuse, often triggered by a perceived hurt, insult or personal annoyance. Thus requiring anger management training for the individual concerned. These techniques are excellent in helping this type of anger. They help the individual to learn to identify the signs and symptoms that can lead to an outburst, and learn to calm themselves using breathing techniques, and/or removing themselves from the situation.

Judgmental Anger – Often expressed through criticism and hurtful comments to another individual we have resentments or loathing against.

Passive Anger or Passive-aggressive anger- This type of anger is often seen in situations where the individual cannot "get back at" or directly express their anger at the person concerned. It may even be hidden from the individual expressing it, as they can be unaware they are doing it. But they are angry and are expressing it in hidden or non-obvious ways. Such as through sarcasm, avoidance, arriving late or completing substandard work. The whole idea of this type of anger is that it is non-confrontational.

Overwhelmed Anger – Well as the title states the individual concerns is feeling overwhelmed and unable to cope with their life and/or workload. They feel frustrated, but may still keep up their workload but feel very resentful towards others around them.

Retaliatory Anger – Okay this is the “I’m going to get you back” type of anger. It can be directed at an individual, company or state body. The person concerned feels aggrieved at what they perceive has been done to them, or a loved one, and wants revenge in some cases. This is why it can also be seen as a dangerous expression of anger that’s motivating a violent outcome.

Self Inflicted Anger – A form of anger that is directed inwards and at the “self”. It can be expressed as an eating disorder, self-sabotage, self-harm or self-deprecation. It comes out of a seen “failure” on the part of the person expressing it. (note this is an oversimplification of this form of anger, if you are interested to know more I would suggest you investigate further.)

Constructive Anger – A form of anger that is often seen as positive as it can lead to motivations for change. We can use this type of anger to get something done, complete a project, protest against something in a peaceful way, or stand up for ourselves. The idea is that you do something positive with this anger.

When looking at the above list we can see that sometimes they overlap – as I stated already. But what we must do is see if there is one particular type of anger that is showing up in your life more and more often. If it is of a positive nature great, but if it is destructive, then we have to ask for help immediately. Anger management techniques are one form of help.

If you notice you are using self-inflicted anger in any form as a means of expressing your anger you should see help immediately. Passive-aggressive and overwhelmed types of anger need help too. We need to learn to stand up for ourselves and construct health boundaries including expressions of anger in a health form.

Still unsure about your anger?

You can start by using the diary below so you become more in tune with what type of anger you use and how you react when angry. You will probably not complete the diary when you are angry. But please do this as soon as possible afterwards. You need to develop your awareness as fully as possible.

Remember anger has a start, middle and an end. It comes in graduations, from mild irritation to annoyance, from anger to rage. Take time to understand and get to know the difference between each of these graduations.

Look at these questions, answer them, try some of the techniques suggested below also to get you started with anger management in a healthy way. (Please be honest with yourself, reaching out for help is a courageous act.) If at any stage you feel unable to cope with your anger or it is affecting your life adversely then please seek professional help to get to the root causes of your anger.

Anger is not an unhealthy emotion. It can be expressed in unhealthy ways. You can ask yourself these questions:

1. Does it help you get what you want without hurting anyone else?
2. Does it lead to more positive experiences than negative ones?
3. Is it respectful?

Write down your answers reflect on them. Don't judge your anger, just observe it. Notice the thoughts, feelings, perceptions, sensations and behaviours.

Start to notice whether the intensity of your anger is appropriate to the situation. It would be helpful to notice other people's reactions to similar situations.

Learn the most common triggers to your anger. Is it appropriate? Is it related to the past? Do you need help with your past experiences to let this anger go?

Sometimes we have had a bad experience around anger. In this situation we find it difficult to express any anger at all and turn it inwards instead. In this case it may be worthwhile to speak to a therapist.

Try other ways to cope with anger, particularly if this anger is related to old memories, but therapy is recommended here.

- Writing, painting, drawing, poetry and making a collage may help.
- Give yourself a time out, take a walk, remove yourself from the situation and count to 10 or longer if needed.
- Learn to use meditation, this can be a quick technique to help you calm down when you recognize your temper rising. You can find one on my podcast [here](#). They are also available on iTunes.
- Sometimes we can use a couple of techniques to help us: we need to allow our anger out in a healthy way. Even when we think we are not angry we can circumvent a more destructive by using some of these techniques. Remember though we should not use them in front of children.
 1. Use a child's baseball foam bat to bang the furniture – just simply bang on a piece of furniture for a minute or two.
 2. Another technique is to do wall pushing – where you imagine someone you're angry at and by placing your hands on the wall and then push. You can yell at the wall at the same time as you push.
 3. It's worth it to write down then, how you felt, what emotions come up for you?

These techniques should never be used to express yourself to another person.

Diary below

Date:	Time:
Trigger	
Thoughts	
Emotions	
Bodily Responses	
Behaviour	
Consequences Of Behaviour	

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