

Calling All Hotheads - Tips on Keeping Cool in an Angry World

Anger is a normal, healthy emotion. It lets us know when something is wrong and makes us take action. It's when anger runs wild that people may become hostile, even violent.

Why Do People Get Angry?

- *"Nobody listens to me unless I get angry."*
Some people feel that the only way they can get attention is to get mad, even if it means getting in trouble.
- *"It helps me get what I want."*
Just like people who use anger to get attention, these people try to use anger to force others into giving them what they want.
- *"He/She dissed me."*
People lash out when they feel they are being disrespected or treated unfairly. They may be insecure about themselves or sensitive to certain criticisms and insults.
- *"I just got frustrated."*
Sometimes it's hard dealing with a lot of emotions, and we don't know how to express ourselves. The result is often frustration and sometimes rage.
- *"I was sick of him or her teasing me."*
While many people may think teasing is harmless and just in fun, it can really get to people after awhile. As a result, they may lash out at the person who is teasing them.
- *"It's like I'm excited when I'm angry."*
Anger makes our bodies produce more adrenaline. It may not be a pleasant experience, but it's definitely intense.



Getting a Grip

It doesn't matter whether you're a toddler going through the "terrible twos" or a grumpy older person, it's always a good time to learn to cope with your temper.

- *Admit that you're angry.*
It's hard to deal with something if you don't admit that it exists first. Try saying to yourself, "Okay, I'm really angry right now, but I'm not going to lose my cool. I'm going to deal with it."
- *Deal with it!*
When you start feeling angry or frustrated, stop what you're doing. Take a few deep breaths. Count to 10 or 100. Take a walk, stretch, laugh, go for a run, or do anything that takes your mind off the anger.
- *Don't brush it off.*
Everyone gets angry sometimes — it's perfectly normal. Ignoring your feelings doesn't solve the problem and may make things worse in the long run. Don't reject your anger as irrational or without reason. Instead, try to figure out what's making you feel that way or talk to someone.

- *Identify and understand the cause.*
You've just failed your third English test this semester, and you yell at your best friend for asking you a stupid question. What's the real cause of your outburst? The test, not your friend. Knowing why you're angry helps you deal with it.
- *Walk away.*
You have the power to change or avoid an anger-provoking situation — so use it! Losing your cool isn't cool.
- *Get a new perspective.*
If you're having an argument with someone, try to put yourself in that person's shoes. Understanding where they're coming from might help you resolve the situation without losing your temper.
- *Vent to your friends and family.*
Venting is not taking out your anger on your friends and family. It's explaining your feelings and frustrations to people you trust and who can help you deal with the situation. Or talk to a school counselor, a teacher, or another adult you trust. If you find that you are angry all of the time, and can't get a grip even after you have really tried, you may want to seek professional help.

How To Talk to Someone Who Makes You Mad

Being able to communicate with someone who makes you angry is an important skill. When talking with people who drive you crazy remember to

- look and feel relaxed
- keep your voice calm
- be direct and specific about what's bothering you
- ask — don't demand
- make your statement once — then give it a rest.

Redirecting Your Anger

It's easy to lose control when you're angry. There are many ways to deal with anger by turning that negative energy into something positive. There can be immediate rewards from exercising, or there are some longer-term solutions.

- *Get involved in a cause.*
Find a group in your school or community that is trying to make a positive impact on society. For instance, you might volunteer with an environmental group or tutor younger kids after school.
- *Exercise!*
Physical activity is a great way to blow off steam, and spending time outside can also help you calm down. Take a walk in the park or go for a run. Train for a 5k race. Shoot some hoops, or try a new sport. Don't think about what makes you angry while you exercise.
- *Find a hobby.*
Many people have a hobby that helps them unwind. Your hobby could be anything from reading, painting and drawing, music, or sports to cooking, writing, collecting comic books, dancing, or building model airplanes. Find something that interests you!

Take Action

- Talk to your teachers or community leaders about developing a cross-age, anti-bullying program for the local elementary schools.

- Encourage your school or community center to start a peer mediation program. These programs give teens a way to resolve problems peacefully and provides a resource through which they can let out their anger.
- Encourage your school administrators to make anger management courses a requirement for all graduating seniors and for faculty as well.