

Tools for Anger Work-out

A.N.G.E.R Workout

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What are the two types of anger?

Anger In: This is feeling angry but directing it toward oneself, or inwardly directed anger. It is depression or suppressed hostility.

Anger Out: This is feeling angry and directing it toward other persons or things, or outwardly directed anger. It is the showing of repressed hostility and resentment.

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What is the anger cycle?

The open expression of anger out by one person on another person is almost always followed with guilt. Immediately the person may feel some elation for having "gotten it out" but the frequent normal response is guilt. Guilt then will lead to remorse that the person had been so hard or mean to the person upon whom the anger was vented. This remorse will function like a "self-checking" device and result in the anger being held in so that the anger becomes "anger in", which can lead to depression. This "anger in" over time will lead to resentment towards the original person towards whom the open anger expression was delivered. If this person down the road begin to irritate the "angry person" over time the anger person will not hold in any more and express anger out all over again.

Leading to a repeat of the anger cycle of guilt, remorse, anger in, resentment, irritation and anger out expression. This is a maladaptive model of handling anger.

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How does anger differ from hostility and aggression?

A. Anger refers to an emotional state consisting of feelings that vary in intensity from mild irritation or annoyance to intense fury and rage.

B. Hostility refers to an emotional state involving angry feelings that result in a complex set of attitudes. These attitudes motivate aggressive behavior directed at people or things.

C. Aggression refers to a set of behavior traits directed at destroying objects and injuring or punishing people.

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What feelings are felt during an expression of anger?


Fear, rage, wanting to make it better, upset, emotional release, sick, physically ill, displaced or misdirected attack, apprehensive, sad, hurt, offended, frustration, lack of feeling, revengeful, embarrassed, shaky, wanting to make it better, guilty, tense, uncomfortable, scared, "flight or fight" stress response, loss of composure, "normal"

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What are some common ways of dealing with anger?

Repression	experiencing but immediately forgetting or stuffing the anger
Nonfeeling	never even identifying the feelings or sensation of being angry
Displacement	getting angry at a person or thing when something or someone else is the actual target of the anger
Controlling	holding in the emotional storm of the anger
Suppression	experiencing the anger but holding it in with no expression of it
Quiet crying	suppressed anger with no verbal or physical cathartic process; this stifles the emotion of anger and changes it to sadness and pain
Assertive confrontation	a direct response of how I feel about the

	person or thing that angered me
Overreaction	fury or rage at something or someone who perhaps does not deserve such a reaction.

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What is the anger reaction to loss in a dysfunctional family?

- Anger at having to strive so hard and to be so good.
- Anger at living in a family that needs so much and gives back so little.
- Anger at parents for being so critical and irritable when one is trying so hard.
- Anger at self for constantly discounting one's own needs and selling out to other's demands.
- Anger at parents for not caring about me.
- Anger at a troubled person in the family for engaging in a dependency behavior.
- Anger at family members who conspire to belittle and manipulate the troubled person.
- Anger at self for causing a problem for self and others.

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How is anger often dealt with in a dysfunctional family?

- To maintain a "good" son or daughter image one must not show anger toward parents but must bury the feelings (anger in), which feeds guilt and depression.
- Anger leads to feelings of inadequacy that lead to a belief that "I never do good enough." This leads to resentment that leads to more buried feelings, resulting in guilt and depression.
- Intense anger at self and others can become frozen into a chronic attitude of hostility.
- Submerged anger leads to being vigilant for any attacks (real or perceived) on self. This provides a stimulus to draw the anger feelings to the surface, resulting in overreaction "Your anger in this situation is disproportionate to the importance of the event."
- Self-hatred leads to turning off feelings, which can lead to projection and blaming others for the problems.
- Anger leads to rage that leads to severe punishing of the troubled person or other family members.

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What are some ways to redefine anger?

- Anger is a signal that things are not going our way.
- Anger is a motivator for us to change things or to rectify them.

- Unresolved anger is a block to our emotional growth.
- Anger is a sign that we must take an assertive stance to tune into how we are feeling and why we are feeling that way.
- Anger is directly related to our thoughts. If we have angry thoughts we will become angry. However, if we don't have angry thoughts, we won't become angry.
- Depression is anger that has been suppressed.
- A hostile attitude is often the sign of an individual with chronic, unresolved anger who expresses the anger in passive and/or aggressive ways.
- Aggressive anger, which is verbal or physical, only intensifies one's anger once it begins to be expressed.
- Catharsis of anger, which is the ventilation of anger, usually leads to an increase in anger, and the expression of the anger usually intensifies.
- Anger is usually related to me and my reaction to something or someone. It is controllable by teaching myself new ways to handle the "anger provoking" situations, events, or people.
- My angry reaction to a "current situation" may be because the situation is a "trigger event," one that drags up "old" anger that has never been resolved.
- Anger can be turned into a source of strength to change my ways of acting and reacting to situations, events, or people.
- Ventilating anger directly on people is aggressive behavior and typically benefits no one. I usually feel guilt, shame, or greater anger after such ventilation, and whatever provoked my anger usually doesn't change.
- Harnessing anger into a productive force in my life will assist my emotional growth.

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What can I do with anger?

- Face the anger for what it is and don't avoid it.
- Identify the feelings at the root of the anger or depression.
- Use "I statements" to express the feelings of anger.
- Identify the guilt, resentment, rage, fear, embarrassment, depression involved in this anger.
- Confront the issues that stimulate the anger. Analyze them for what they are: stimuli drawing on deepseated subconscious feelings of anger that indicate unresolved emotional blocks from my past.
- Use imagery, role playing, an empty chair, or other object to confront past hurts and pains; express the submerged feelings that come out as I deal with this anger.
- Inform people in my current life of my need to analyze my anger responses; seek their assistance and understanding in this exploration process.
- If my current anger is not the result of efforts to uncover submerged feelings of old anger, then treat the current anger with rational "I" statements: "I feel angry because ?"

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What are some steps to take in handling current anger?

Step 1: Relax yourself by using deep, natural breathing and muscle relaxation.

- Take deep breaths and silently repeat the words "relax" until you are able to calm down.
- Do not say or do anything until you are calmed down.
- Avoid words or actions in the "heat" of the moment.

Step 2: Recognize what arouses or provokes your anger:

- Is it a situation, an event, a person?
- Is it real or imagined?

Step 3: Use a rational approach to "rethink," "reframe," and reason in your mind what is going on and why you are angry.

- Is this a trigger event bringing up old unresolved anger or resentment in me?
- How is what is happening to provoke my anger a product of my past?
- What is really getting me angry?
- Maybe this person provoking my anger is having a bad day or needs more of my understanding.
- How am I feeling about this?
- What needs to be changed here?
- What alternatives could I use to get the best results in handling this situation?

Step 4: Once you have a "clearer" idea of what is going on, take steps to change the situation that is provoking the anger.

- Use "I" statements. "I feel angry when you do..."
- Clarify your feelings about the situation.
- Point out issues needing clarity.
- Relate to the person how what is happening now is triggering feelings from your past.
- Identify the unresolved anger, resentment, hostility, or depression and work on it.
- Inject some humor into the situation to defuse the anger or hostility.

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What are some constructive ways to perform a "healthy anger work-out"?

Anger work-out refers to a healthy and full expression of anger on inanimate objects; **not** on people so as to rid myself of hostility and aggression aroused by my anger. Each of the following techniques could be used alone or in any combination.

- beating on pillows

- beating on a mattress
- stomping on floor
- beating a bed with tennis or racquetball racket
- beating a rug with a stick
- hitting a weight bag or punching bag
- physical exertion, i.e., playing racquetball, tennis, hand ball, etc.
- yelling in a car with windows closed
- yelling in a paper bag
- ripping up a telephone book or newspapers
- hammering nails in a board
- games in an amusement park that require pounding
- throwing soft objects
- beating a pillow or bed with a foam or plastic bat
- karate or judo practice
- beating drums
- loud yelling
- screaming at a concert or sports event
- screaming in a vacant field or park
- using a shovel to dig holes in the dirt
- hitting balls or stones with a baseball bat
- hitting a ball against a wall with racket or hand
- bowling to hit all the pins down
- writing a letter of anger, but ripping it up the next day - **not mailing it**
- expressing feelings by writing in a journal
- wringing a wet towel
- using a hammer to smash glass in a bag
- kneading bread or play dough

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What are some steps to work out unresolved anger to resolve past issues?

In handling a ``current" anger situation you may have come upon a ``trigger" event that brings up past feelings of hurt, pain, resentment, hostility, or anger. The trigger event is not what you are actually reacting to, but rather it is the past situation, (one that went unresolved) to which you are reacting.

The following steps will assist you in working out this unresolved anger:

Step 1. Take a pillow or cushion and go alone to your bedroom or to a quiet location.

Step 2. Position yourself so that you are kneeling in front of the pillow or cushion, which is either on a bed, a chair or the floor.

Step 3. Begin to visualize a scene or series of scenes surrounding the situation, event, or person with which you have unresolved anger.

Step 4. As you are visualizing the scene, begin to pound your pillow and yell out how you ``feel" about the situation, event, or person. Yell your guts out!

Step 5. Continue pounding the pillow and letting out your feelings until you feel satiated.

Step 6. At this point begin to use your reason and rationality to reframe or restate the situation. Begin to allow yourself to forgive those situations, events, or persons for what happened to you. Do not proceed to the next step until you can come to a ``healing" of your spirit at this point.

If you are stuck, repeat Steps 3 and 4.

Step 7. Once you feel as if you have been able to forgive and you feel healing beginning, write down what it was that made the reframed or restated situation have less blame and thus be able to be forgiven.

Step 8. If person(s) involved in the unresolved anger situation are still available (alive) and capable of communicating on a healing, non-blaming, feeling level, share your resolution with them and let the forgiveness and healing become alive.

If the person(s) involved are unavailable, let the forgiveness and healing take hold in your heart.

Step 9. If in the future a trigger event brings up this same unresolved anger, repeat Steps one through eight. For some unresolved anger situations, you may need to repeat these steps many, many times.

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Steps to improving your Anger Work-Outs

Step 1: In order to improve my ability to work anger out of my life, I first need to assess my understanding of anger. To do this I will answer the following questions in my journal:

- A. What is my definition of anger?
- B. What usually makes me angry?
- C. Who usually makes me angry?
- D. What ``hot buttons" are likely to arouse my anger?
- E. How do I usually express my anger?
- F. How healthy is my expression of anger?

- G. How do I feel when I am in the midst of expressing anger?
- H. How do I feel after I have expressed my anger?
- I. What are the benefits of my openly expressing anger?
- J. What inhibits my ability to express anger?
- K. How do others react to my open expression of anger?
- L. What negative results occur from my expression of anger?
- M. What is the positive outcome of my expression of anger?
- N. Where are my problems with anger rooted?
- O. How can I recognize my anger and then express it in a healthy way?

Step 2: Once I've analyzed current anger in my life, I need to recognize past, unresolved anger by answering the following questions:

- P. What anger issues in my life remain unresolved?
- Q. Who are the people with whom I still have unresolved anger?
- R. What events continue to conjure up anger for me today?
- S. What attempts have I made to work on my unresolved anger?
- T. How can I free myself up to work on my unresolved anger?
- U. What inhibits me about anger work-out on my unresolved issues?
- V. How can I forgive, forget, and heal the past anger?
- W. In reading the following piece written by Robert Muller, the former Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations, I feel I am ready to do anger work-out on both current and unresolved past issues.

Decide to Forgive

by Robert Muller

- Decide to forgive
- For resentment is negative
- Resentment is poisonous and devours the self

- Be the first to forgive, to smile and to take the first step,
- And you will see happiness bloom
- On the face of your human brother or sister.
- Be always the first
- Do not wait for others to forgive.
- For by forgiving,
- You become the master of fate,
- The fashioner of life, the doer of miracles.
- To forgive is the highest,
- Most beautiful form of love.
- In return you will receive
- Untold peace and happiness.
- Here is the program for achieving a truly forgiving heart:
- Sunday: Forgive yourself
- Monday: Forgive your family.
- Tuesday: Forgive your friends and associates.
- Wednesday: Forgive across economic lines within your own nation.
- Thursday: Forgive across cultural lines within your own nations.
- Friday: Forgive across political lines within your own nation.
- Saturday: Forgive other nations.
- Only the brave know how to forgive.
- A coward never forgives. It is not in his nature.

Step 3: I will use the anger work-out for all current anger events.

Step 4: I will use anger work-out for all past, unresolved anger issues.

Step 5: I will use the following anger work-out activities for a minimum of fifteen minutes daily. To relieve my built up feelings of anger.

My anger work-out tasks will include:

A.

B.

C.

D.

E.

Step 6: If I still have unresolved anger, I will return to Step 1, and begin again.

Source:

<http://www.coping.org>