



You Can Get a Handle on Anger

Everyone gets angry now and then -- it's a natural human emotion. But, if you don't learn how to express it in a healthy way, you may alienate loved ones and co-workers. You could be putting your health at risk, too.

Anger may lead to high blood pressure and depression, according to the American Psychological Association (APA). And research has linked high levels of anger -- not just occasional outbursts -- with heart problems, such as abnormal heart rhythms and coronary heart disease. People who are frequently angry may cope by adopting unhealthy habits such as overeating or smoking.

Regain control

Learning to express anger without losing control may help improve your personal relationships. But many of us just don't handle anger well; perhaps no one taught us how. The good news is that it's never too late to learn. These guidelines from the APA may help:

Communicate. When you're angry with someone, listen carefully to what he or she is really trying to say. Don't immediately react to the words themselves; count to 10 first. That will give you time to think about what you're going to say.

Relax. Breathe deeply and slowly while repeating calming words. Or, close your eyes and remember a relaxing experience; make one up if you need to. If you're often on edge, sign up for yoga or other type of relaxation class.

Be logical. Take a step back from the situation to gain perspective. Is such a strong reaction justified? Getting angry won't help you find a solution or feel better. Remind yourself that frustration is a part of daily life.

Problem-solve. Turn your energy toward finding a solution instead of lashing out. But keep in mind that you may not be able to fix all problems. Is the situation beyond your control? If so, try to move on instead of dwelling on it. Know yourself. Know what triggers your anger. Once you know what sets you off, you can avoid it. For example, if driving in traffic leaves you seething, find a new route to work or look into taking public transportation. For situations that you can't avoid, try some of the other strategies listed above for dealing with them calmly. If friends and family are walking on eggshells around you or you're having outbursts at work, ask your health care provider about counseling.

