



# Manage anger so anger doesn't manage you!

Anger is a normal, healthy emotion that we all have. It's not a **bad** feeling – it's a real feeling. Sometimes anger can get out of control and become destructive. It is up to each of us to learn to manage our anger and express it in ways that don't hurt others or ourselves.

It's OK to feel angry.

It's OK to express anger.

**It's NOT OK to take your anger out on someone else.**

Dealing with other people can sometimes be frustrating, but you can't avoid them, nor can you change them. You can, however, learn to control **your** reactions. Anger is an emotion that has a number of stages. Know the anger warning signs and make a plan to work through your anger in a safe way

## Stage 1 – Pre-anger

This is the time before anger is triggered. Everyone has different ways of dealing with emotions and different triggers for anger. Anger is a secondary emotion. It can be triggered by many other emotions, such as fear, hurt, boredom, loneliness or frustration. Depending on your circumstances, you may be more or less prone to slide into the emotion of anger.



## Stage 2 – Heating up

The heating up stage occurs when you start to get emotionally involved. As anger begins to build, changes happen in your body:

- Your breathing gets faster.
- Your heart beats faster.
- Your muscles tense.
- Your voice gets louder.
- Your pupils get bigger.
- "Fight or flight" stress hormones are released.

As energy pours into your body, your ability to think clearly is lessened. Your judgment is not always clear and there is a greater chance you may do something you will later regret.

## Stage 3 – Before boiling over

This stage refers to the few seconds before you lose your temper.

**You can take charge of your emotions at any of these stages, BEFORE you boil over.**

*Use the A.N.G.E.R. workout system on the back to help you learn how to manage anger so that anger doesn't manage you.*

The information in this handout is a compilation of information adapted from the following sources:

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Ph.D., SEA's Program @  
<http://www.coping.org>.

APA Online, "Controlling  
Anger – Before it Controls  
You" @ <http://www.apa.org/topics/controlanger.html>.

WikEd 2 [http://wik.ed.uiuc.edu/index.php/anger\\_management](http://wik.ed.uiuc.edu/index.php/anger_management).



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Get your license to care—the special Celebrate Children license plate—at <http://wctf.state.wi.us>.

# ♥♥ A.N.G.E.R. workout system

♥♥ The A.N.G.E.R. workout system has five steps that you can use to work your way from angry to calm.

♥♥ This handout uses the example of dealing with a crying baby to explain how you can take charge of your anger using the A.N.G.E.R. workout system.

♥♥ All babies cry, it's normal. Crying, however, is an unpleasant sound. It is normal to have strong feelings when we hear crying, especially if we feel powerless to stop it. Let's say the baby you are caring for keeps crying even though you have tried different ways to soothe the baby. It seems like the crying will never end and you can feel tension and anger building...

## ♥♥ A – Accept

♥♥ Don't deny your feelings. It is important for you to recognize what you are feeling, so you can manage your actions.

## ♥♥ N – Name

♥♥ Anger is a secondary emotion. Name and identify the emotions that have built up to the point that you are angry. Is it your tiredness or your frustration that has led to your anger?

## ♥♥ G – Get it out

♥♥ Put the baby in a safe place like the crib, leave the room, and close the door. It will not hurt the baby to cry while you take a break to safely express your anger and focus on calming yourself.

♥♥ Actively express your anger on inanimate objects rather than on people. For example:

- ♥♥ • Yell in a room away from others.
- ♥♥ • Yell into a pillow.
- ♥♥ • Beat on pillows, cushions, or a mattress.

- Hit a punching bag or weight bag.
- Rip a telephone book or newspaper.
- Dance, jump, shake, or spin around to loud music.
- Scribble with markers.

## E – Energize

Energize yourself to feel calmer, more relaxed, less anxious, less tense, or less stressed.

Built up anger takes time to subside and adrenaline leaves the body slowly. It is important that you don't return to the baby too soon. If you do, you may become angry again very quickly, especially if the baby is still crying. Take time to do one or all of the following:

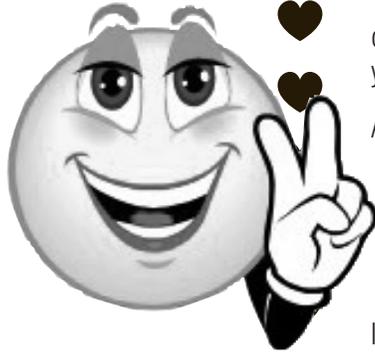
- **Calm yourself** – Use strategies that will help you calm down such as deep breathing or listening to music.
- **Talk it out** – Use some positive self talk. Remind yourself that the crying doesn't mean you aren't doing a good job. Call a friend or family member – talk it out.
- **Ask for help** – It's OK to say you can't manage on your own; sometimes asking for help is the best thing to do.

## R – Resume

Return to the baby after a 10- to 15-minute break if you can do so in a calm, cool manner.

It is important to monitor the signals from your body (like your breathing and muscle tension) and how you are feeling towards the baby. You may not be ready to go back or you may need to have another break, especially if the baby is still crying.

**Never have a baby in your hands when you are angry.**



Some people are angry most of the time. They often take out their feelings on others and sometimes on themselves. It can be a way of getting attention, controlling others, or asking for help. If anger is a constant feeling for you, it is important to seek professional help from a doctor or counselor.

