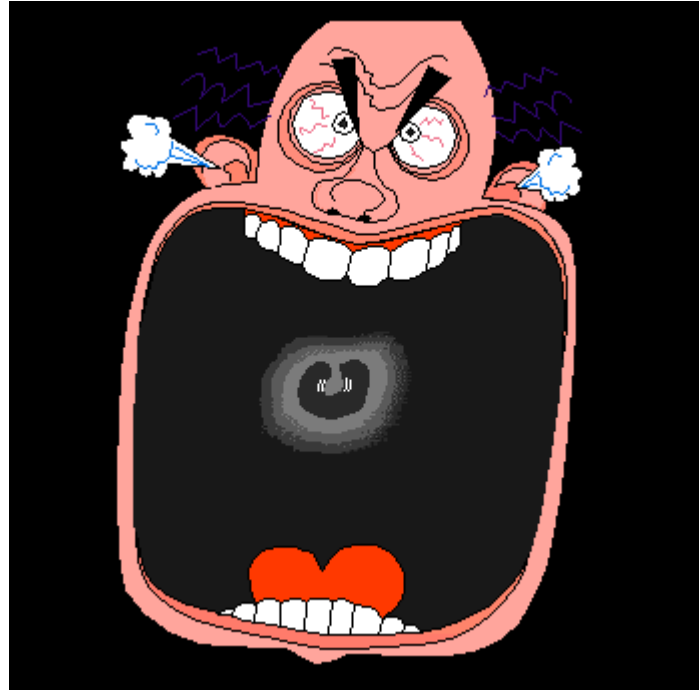


Anger



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Everyone feels angry sometimes

- It is normal and healthy to get angry when there is good reason.
- Sometimes we get angry but we don't really know why.
- It is important to do something with angry feelings and not bottle them up. This may mean the person releases so much pent-up emotion that they overreact to another situation.

Anger

- It is how people express their anger that can lead to problems.
- But there is a flip side to anger. Because of the surge of energy it creates, it can be pleasurable. This feeling is reinforced if becoming angry allows the release of feelings of frustration, or if another's response to someone's anger gives them a sense of power/control.

Anger

But:

- Different people deal with difficult situations in different ways. This can vary from being calm to becoming aggressive and appearing unable to cope.
- Anger is not always easy to spot

When does anger become a problem?

- Anger becomes problematic when it is too easily triggered or too prolonged, and then it impacts on concentration, mood, relationships, self-esteem, work and social life, and can result in aggression or violence to self or others

Recognising anger

When we get angry, our bodies experience a 'fight or flight' response caused by adrenaline.

What is 'Flight or Fight'?

- In our modern world, very few of us are exposed to the sorts of physical threat that anger and aggression originally evolved to cope with. We don't have to scare off sabre toothed tigers, defend our territory from invaders, protect our exclusive rights to our mate and demonstrate to others in our group that we are still worthy of respect - or do we?

What is 'Flight or Fight'?

- **For 'life threatening', substitute 'identity threatening'**. In today's society some of the things that make people feel angry and stimulate aggressive thoughts are:
 - **Perceived disrespectful treatment:** Of thoughts, beliefs, feelings and needs
 - **Perceived threat:** To the continuation, or success of something to which we are strongly committed, e.g. one's partner, university course, lifestyle

What is 'Flight or Fight'?

- **Perceived unfairness**
- **Perceived provocation or suspicion and hostility:** "They" did that on purpose, just to "wind me up". The best form of defence is to attack before they do.

As you can see, apart from the sabre-toothed tiger, everything else is still there.

Recognising anger

Some typical physical signs are:

- Clenched teeth
- Fists clenched
- Faster breathing
- Tense shoulders
- Red face/pale

Recognising anger

- These signs, and any others, need to be recognised by the person as warnings that they are getting angry.
- This will allow them to put in place useful coping strategies.

But it can be hard for a person to admit they feel angry. There may be a lot of pressure on them not to show their feelings.

Some coping strategies for when getting angry

- Thought blocking e.g. counting backwards in 7's from 100, counting colours, remembering lyrics to a song
- Slow deep breaths
- Scribble on paper with a wax crayon
- Write thoughts down
- Write a letter to the person they are angry about – **do not send it!**
- Try to relax hands and shoulders

Strategies for earliest signs of Anger

- Listen to music
- Go for a walk
- Exercise
- Read
- Draw or paint
- Rip up paper

It may also be helpful to have a 'safe word' to use if the person wants prompting.

Anger

Remember:

- The actions that you see may not be based in anger. The person may be frightened, scared, lonely, being abused, bullied, feel pressured, worried, unwell, a young carer, carrying unpleasant memories
- The person getting angry has to accept responsibility for their anger being shown in unhelpful ways, not to see their anger as being separate from themselves and not to blame others.

Anger

- There is little use in just giving someone coping strategies when there are reasons for the anger
- The underlying problem has to be dealt with otherwise the potential is that they will be using these strategies for the rest of their lives