

# MANAGING ANGER AND AGGRESSION

This information sheet is intended as a starting point to managing anger and aggression. Further assistance with conflict situations is available by calling the Department of Employment and Training on 1300 369 935 and asking to speak to a senior training support consultant.

"Feeling angry is \_\_\_\_\_."

- a. Normal.
- b. Something experienced by everyone.
- c. Not something you outgrow.
- d. A powerful feeling, but one you can learn to manage with practice.
- e. Not the same thing as aggression, which is a behaviour (such as hitting someone) that may result if you can't bring your anger under control.
- f. All of the above.

If your answer was "f" you recognise that anger is a normal emotion experienced by everyone.

## Learn the ABC's of anger

**Anger trigger** - what caused you to be angry?

**Behaviour** - what did you do about it?

**Consequence** - what happened because of what you did?

## UNDERSTANDING ANGER

There are five factors all operating at the same time in any angry situation. These factors include:

- our present thoughts
- the physical response that anger produces
- the way we display our anger to others
- the way that we experience life when we are angry
- the way we behave when we are angry.

If we are aware, our body can inform us of when we are angry. There are stages of the physical signs of anger:

- when a situation triggers an emotion
- tension or stress begins to build and muscles tense up (ie. gritting teeth or clenched fists)
- adrenaline is released contributing to growing tension
- breathing rate increases
- heartbeat accelerates
- blood pressure rises and
- there is now a body and mind "fight or flight" response.

## Hidden anger

It is not always clear when a situation has angered someone as they may express their anger in ways different to what you would expect. Some of the typical ways anger is hidden are listed below.

- The signs of anger are fairly clear but modified, for example, "I am annoyed," "I am fed up," "I'm ready to explode," or "I was annoyed by my friend but not really angry."
- Indirect expressions attempt to disguise the anger from the speaker and the listener. "I'm not angry." "I'm just disappointed in you."

- Anger can be a variation of depression with people experiencing anger in this way using phrases like "feeling blue" or "down in the dumps" or wanting to withdraw from the situation or future situations.

## **Effect on our wellbeing**

Underlying anger is caused by a perceived loss of control over factors affecting important values that we hold. It is frustration about not getting what we want or expect. Anger may create permanent damage to relationships. If managed inappropriately anger is likely to negatively affect our physical and mental health.

## **MANAGING ANGER**

Effective anger control does not mean bottling it up.

Anger management involves several important things:

- learning how to not get angry in the first place.
- keeping at a moderate level of intensity and expressing it constructively.
- using effective problem solving strategies to change problem situations and to better achieve what you want.
- becoming an expert about your personal anger reactions. Ask yourself:
  - what causes me to feel tense or agitated?
  - what situations tend to trigger angry reactions?
  - what are my beliefs or thoughts about how others should or should not treat me?
  - how do I typically express my anger?
  - what do I gain or lose from expressing my anger in this way?

Dealing with anger that does not involve another person by:

- acknowledging angry feelings.
- asking yourself what the anger is about.
- talking with a friend or counsellor.
- developing a plan for dealing with a stressful situation, if anger is linked to a specific situation.
- using physical exercise to release the tension.
- deep breathing, meditation or positive imaging.

Dealing with anger that involves another person by:

- identifying specific behaviour of the other person that has upset you.
- deciding if the issue is worth fighting about.
- expressing your viewpoint using an assertive approach to give feedback.
- negotiating a resolution to the problem once you feel the other person understands the issue and your feelings.
- allowing yourself to forgive the other person. Ideally, you and the other person will at least try to change some behaviours to avoid future conflict over the same issue.

## **Useful on-line resources:**

Problem solving and conflict resolution – Helpful hints

[www.training.qld.gov.au/apprain/factsheets/fs132.pdf](http://www.training.qld.gov.au/apprain/factsheets/fs132.pdf)

Violence at work

[www.whs.qld.gov.au/guide/gde02v1.pdf](http://www.whs.qld.gov.au/guide/gde02v1.pdf)

Stress at work – A guide for employers

[www.whs.qld.gov.au/brochures/bro027.pdf](http://www.whs.qld.gov.au/brochures/bro027.pdf)

A worker's guide – Workplace bullying

[www.whs.qld.gov.au/guide/gde32.pdf](http://www.whs.qld.gov.au/guide/gde32.pdf)

Specialist support for apprenticeships and traineeships

[www.training.qld.gov.au/apprain/factsheets/fs139.pdf](http://www.training.qld.gov.au/apprain/factsheets/fs139.pdf)