

Anger Management

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Anger

Anger is one of the most basic human emotions in response to anything we perceive as a threat, a violation or an injustice. It is an adaptive response similar to fight/flight believed to have an evolutionary usefulness in protecting us from harm. It may be accompanied by other emotions such as guilt, shame, disappointment, resentment, sadness or anxiety. All of these emotions can be difficult to express which in turn can trigger anger.

Anger in the Workplace

Workplace anger is potentially harmful. It can cause interpersonal difficulties and conflict in the workplace. Learning to deal with your anger constructively will improve harmony among staff

On-duty EAO available at 0818 008120

Monday - Thursday: 9am - 5.15pm

Friday: 9am - 5pm

Appointments are available evening
and weekends if required

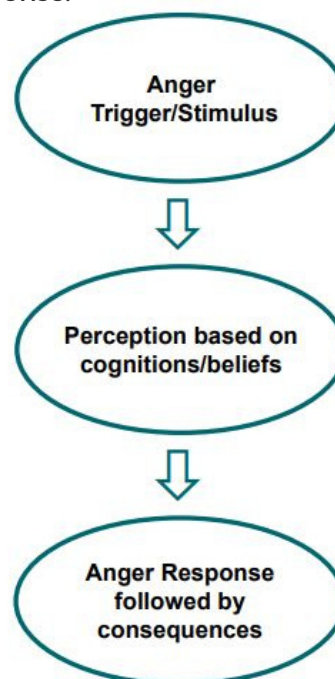
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How Anger can be Expressed

- **AGGRESSIVELY:** Anger is externalised “turned loose”. Anger expressed is directed at another/other persons, to hurt physically and or emotionally. Shouting or physical assault are examples of aggressive anger.
- **PASSIVELY:** Anger is internalised. It can be expressed by holding a grudge or seeking to covertly damage the other person in some way
- **ASSERTIVELY:** Anger is appropriately managed and communicated in a way that is direct and non-threatening.

Emotional Response Cycle

Emotions can be triggered by internal thoughts, feelings, physiological states or external events. Our subjective interpretation of events will determine our emotional response.



Pressure Cooker Metaphor

Anger is sometimes described as an emotional pressure cooker. If the energy that builds up inside the pot is not released slowly, it will eventually explode with catastrophic consequences. It is important that we learn to express our anger in an effective way that is not to the detriment of ourselves or others.

Effects of Anger

Prolonged and sustained bouts of anger can affect us both physically and cognitively. It can also change our behaviour.



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PHYSICAL:

- Heart muscles in overdrive can lead to high blood pressure
- Rapid and shallow breathing causing a greater intake of oxygen can lead to hyperventilation or choking sensations and even chest pains
- Increased muscle tension leading to headache and other aches and pains in the body
- Digestive system shutting down causing nausea

COGNITIVE:

- Taking things personally: becoming overly sensitive to what others say and do
- Focusing mainly on the negative situation to the detriment of the positives
- All or nothing thinking which can cause us to misjudge the reality of events
- Ruminating and dwelling on issues

BEHAVIOUR:

- Shouting, threatening, using dramatic words
- Bombarding others with hostile questions
- Exaggerating the impact of other people's actions
- Sulking or lashing out at people

Recognising our own Anger

Most of the time we experience and respond with anger without any real awareness of our actions and behaviours. In order to change our response we need to answer questions such as:

- How do I know when I am angry?
- What events/places/people/things make me angry?
- How do I react when I am angry and how does it affect others?

Greater awareness of the anger process enables one to make effective changes to how anger can be managed.

Myths about Anger

'Ignore it and it will go away' – Feelings usually need to be expressed but in a responsible and assertive way.

'If I am not angry others will walk all over me' – You do not have to be aggressive to prevent people from walking all over you.

'I can't help it. I am an angry person' – Take personal responsibility for your anger, remember

'all of us have the capacity to change.

'Anger is bad' – It is not always considered as being negative. It can arouse a sense of justice and motivate action.

Tips on Managing Anger

- Breathe deeply as soon as you become aware of the physical symptoms of anger.
- Allow yourself some time to consider the consequences of your actions (count to 10 perhaps).
- Spot and challenge any negative thoughts you perceive as unhelpful.
- Exercise can help in releasing any physical build-up of tension in the body and the endorphins released in the brain can significantly improve your mood.
- Humour is an excellent way of letting go of negative emotions. Find things that make you laugh.
- Express your anger in an assertive and appropriate manner without letting the anger fester for long periods.
- Take time out to relax and enjoy yourself.

How the CSEAS can help

The CSEAS is a support service which offers a wide range of free and confidential* supports designed to assist civil servants in managing work and/or life difficulties. As a first step you might like to discuss anger management issues with your Employee Assistance Officer. If you find that anger is severely affecting your health, your relationships and your life in general, it may be advisable to seek professional help from a practitioner in the fields of medicine, counselling, psychotherapy or psychology. By gaining a better understanding and insight into your individual patterns around anger you will learn how to manage your anger in a more positive way.

*See CSEAS website www.cseas.per.gov.ie for exceptions to confidentiality.

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