



# anger management

*Not always there with you ...but always there for you*



## ANGER MANAGEMENT

Sometimes when you are caring for someone, you may find that you are struggling with lack of sleep and struggling to find time for yourself, which can make you feel that things are getting on top of you. This can lead to a build-up of emotions and a sense that you are unable to control your feelings of anger and resentment both towards the person you are caring for and in relation to the situation that you now find yourself in.

Don't forget the person you are caring for may be also experiencing a variety of different emotions including frustration, anger and resentment that they are no longer able to do the things they used to and it is important that you recognise this too, if you are going to get to grips with your own feelings.

Anger is a normal, healthy emotion and one that everyone feels at some point. Whenever you're frustrated with something or someone, anger is often a way to show the frustration. Anger itself is neither good

or bad. However, learning to manage your anger is important to your health and well-being and to your relationships.

Everyone can make changes in their lives to help manage feelings of anger. Learning the facts about anger can help you to control your emotions.

*"I found it so hard to accept that it was ok to be angry - I just felt guilty."*

## How to identify anger triggers

Your anger triggers are things that consistently make you angry. These can vary from person to person and are in relation to your own experiences and perceptions. Most of the time you probably don't recognise and acknowledge the triggers that make you feel angry, so every time you come across a trigger situation, the anger continues to build up.

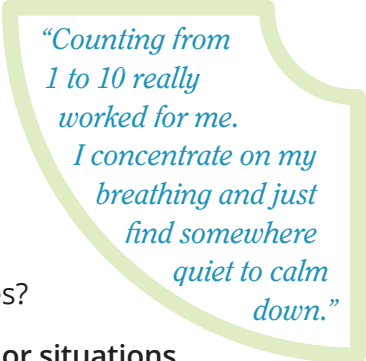
Managing triggers and avoiding them as much as possible will help you to manage your anger. If you can't avoid them, you can get prepared ahead of time to deal with the feeling the situation evokes in you.

### Identify your triggers:

It's a good idea, if you feel that your anger is starting to take over, to keep an anger diary, which you can use to track situations where you felt angry. Write down the situations and people that made you feel angry and frustrated. To get the most out of it, you should try to include things like:

- ▶ What happened that made you angry?
- ▶ What was it about the situation that upset you?
- ▶ Give a rating to how angry you felt at the time on a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being your most angry
- ▶ What were you thinking when this situation occurred?
- ▶ How did your behaviour affect you or other people?
- ▶ Were there other circumstances that may have made you angrier?

- ▶ How did your body react?
- ▶ What did you do?
- ▶ How did you feel right afterwards?
- ▶ How did you feel later?
- ▶ Were there any consequences?



*“Counting from 1 to 10 really worked for me. I concentrate on my breathing and just find somewhere quiet to calm down.”*

**You can also think about people or situations that make you angry. Examples include:**

- ▶ people not doing what you expect them to do
- ▶ people taking advantage of you
- ▶ infringement of your personal space
- ▶ disrespect
- ▶ injustice

**Next determine if there are things you can do to make the situation less upsetting such as:**

- ▶ you can make a choice not to get angry
- ▶ try to change your attitude to the situation
- ▶ try to change the situation
- ▶ lower your exposure to or avoid the situation if possible
- ▶ prepare yourself for the anger by proactively using anger management techniques when you know you are going to be coming in contact with something that angers you
- ▶ if the caring situation is becoming too much to cope with ask for help – sometimes just having someone to talk and off-load to can help to relieve the build-up of emotions

Over the long term, it is definitely worth thinking about why a person or situation makes you angry. This may be related to personal feeling, thoughts or assumptions that you have. Your responses are often associated with memories or experiences deep in your subconscious so you will have to do some mental work – maybe even with a professional – to understand why you react as you do. Once you understand your reactions, you can better begin to restructure your reactions to situations you find upsetting.

You may also benefit from attending a group with carers in similar circumstances. Knowing that your feelings are normal and that you are not alone may help you to manage your anger.

## **Physical Symptoms of Anger**

One way to learn how to manage your anger is to recognise the physical signs as they occur. You may not be able to do much about the situation you are in but recognising and learning to manage your emotions can make it easier to cope. Being aware of the physical signs of anger may help you to recognise that you are reaching crisis point and you need to walk away and take some time out, even if it is just for a few moments to allow you to calm down.

**Physical signs of anger include the following:**

- ▶ headache
- ▶ stomach-ache
- ▶ constipation

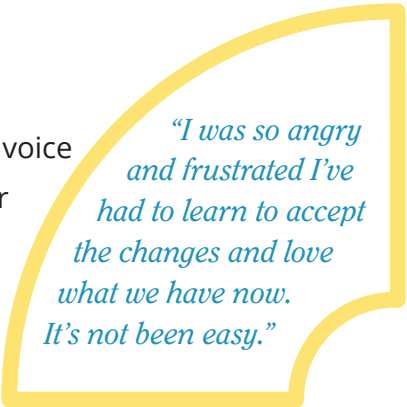
- ▶ clenching of the jaw
- ▶ grinding your teeth
- ▶ rapid heartbeat increased blood pressure
- ▶ sweating especially on the palms
- ▶ feeling warm or flushed especially around the face or neck
- ▶ shakiness
- ▶ dizziness

**Yours emotions will also change when you start getting angry. This can include:**

- ▶ irritation
- ▶ sadness or depression
- ▶ resentment
- ▶ guilt
- ▶ anxiety
- ▶ feeling as if you want to lash out at someone
- ▶ feeling like you want to run away

**Other signs may include:**

- ▶ raising your voice
- ▶ feeling on the verge of tears
- ▶ adopting a sarcastic tone of voice
- ▶ losing your sense of humour
- ▶ you may start to pace
- ▶ you may want a drink or other substance to help you relax



*“I was so angry and frustrated I’ve had to learn to accept the changes and love what we have now. It’s not been easy.”*

While some of these signs may be subtle, you can learn to change your behaviour if you are aware of the symptoms and signs of your anger before they happen.

Detailed below are ten key tips, which may help you to manage your feelings of anger and frustration and keep them under control

### **1. Think before you speak**

In the heat of the moment, it's easy to say something you'll later regret. Take a few moments to collect your thoughts before saying anything – and allow others involved in the situation to do the same.

### **2. Once you're calm, express your anger**

As soon as you're thinking clearly, express your frustration in an assertive but non-confrontational way. State your concerns and needs clearly and directly, without hurting others or trying to control them.

### **3. Get some exercise**

Physical activity can help reduce stress that can cause you to become angry. If you feel your anger escalating, go for a brisk walk or run, or spend some time doing other enjoyable physical activities. Just a few simple stretches can also help.

### **4. Take timeout**

Give yourself short breaks during times of the day that tend to be stressful. A few moments of quiet time might help you feel better prepared to handle what's ahead without getting irritated or angry.



*“We were in a bit of a vicious cycle - mum was getting so frustrated and angry with her disability that I was finding it hard to cope and was getting angry back so we looked at the things she could still do rather than what she couldn't.”*

## **5. Identify possible solutions**

Instead of focussing on what made you angry, work on resolving the issue at hand e.g. if someone is always late, tell them to arrive earlier than required. If someone takes a long time with their personal care, try to accept this and allow time for it.

If you are not coping – ask for help – you do not have to do everything by yourself.

## **6. Stick with “I” statements**

To avoid criticising or placing blame-, which might only increase tension - use “I” statements to describe the problem. Be respectful and specific, e.g. “I’m upset that you left the table without helping with the dishes, instead of “you never do any housework”.

## **7. Don’t hold a grudge**

If you allow anger and other negative feelings to crowd out positive feelings, you might find yourself swallowed up by your own bitterness or sense of frustration and injustice. But if you can forgive someone who angered you, you might both learn from the situation and be able to move on. It’s unrealistic to expect everyone to behave exactly as you want at all times. When caring for someone it’s important to recognise, and acknowledge when things are working well, holding on to the positives can help when things become overwhelming.

## **8. Use humour to release tension**

Lightening up can help to diffuse tension. Use humour to help you face what's making you angry and, possibly any unrealistic expectations you have for how things should go. Avoid sarcasm as it can hurt feelings and make things worse. Laughter is always good for relationship and can bring immeasurable relief to difficult days. It can give both you and the person you are caring for a positive sense of self, turning tears of anger into tears of laughter.

## **9. Practice relaxation skills**

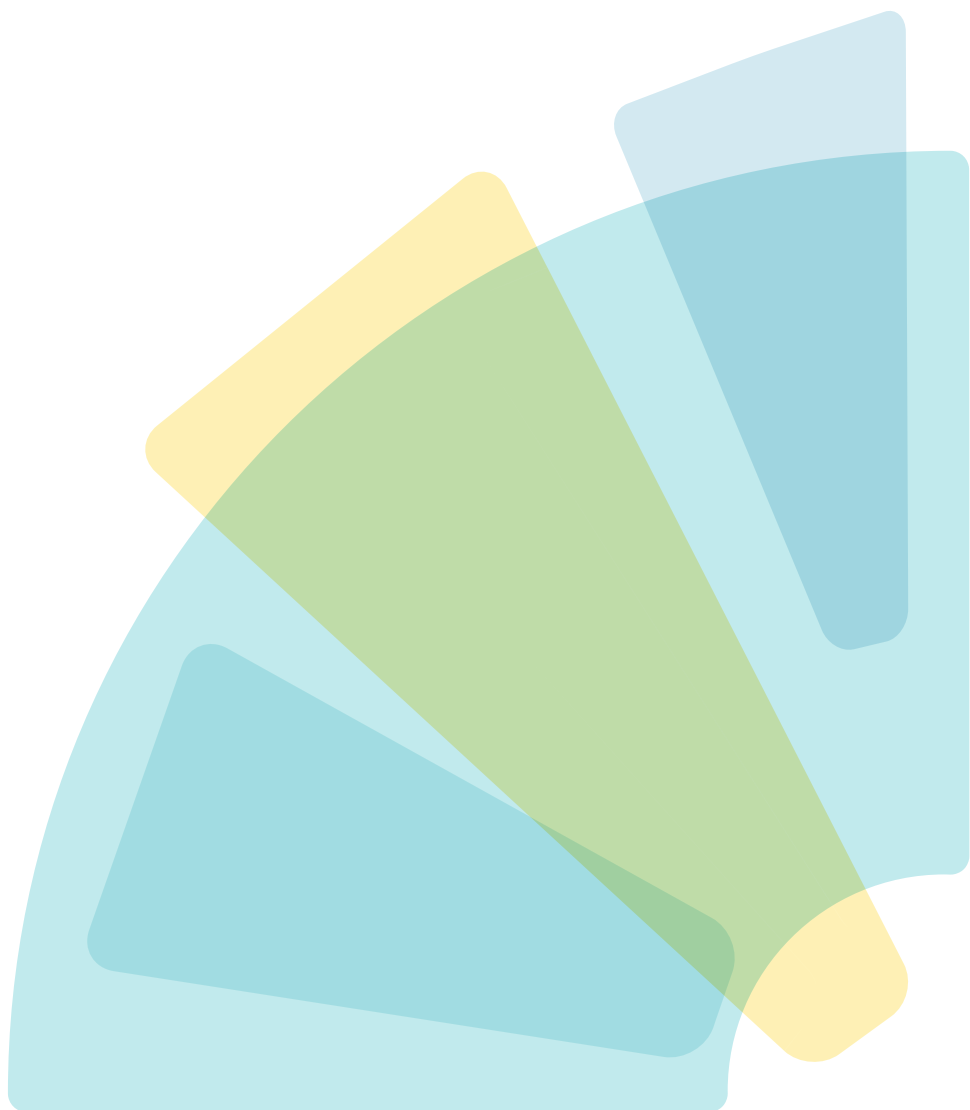
When you feel your temper is about to flare up, put relaxation skills to work. Practice deep-breathing exercise, imagine a relaxing scene or repeat a calming word or phrase such as "Take it easy". You might also like to try listening to music, writing things down or doing a few yoga exercise – whatever it takes for your personal relaxation. Make a personal list of things you need to do when anger is building and put it somewhere that is readily available and easy to see. You can help the person you are caring for to do this as well and work on managing your feelings of anger together. Talking together will help you both relax

## **10. Knowing when to seek help**

Learning to control anger is a challenge for everyone at times. Consider seeking help for anger issues if your anger seems out of control or causes you to do things you retreat or which hurts those around you. Your GP should be able to offer your support, advice and information about anger management and Borders Carers Centre can offer you advice, information and

emotional support to help with the caring situation.  
Speak to Borders Carers Centre about free Anger  
Management workshops.





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