

### *Ways NOT to handle anger*

Anger can range from Mild annoyance over a wait at the doctor's office, to red-faced rage over something another driver did on the roadway.

Using the four steps just described—admit, explore it, express it and drop it—can help you to better manage anger. Researchers also have identified four other ways in which we may respond to feelings of anger—each of which has serious drawbacks.

- \* Denying that you're angry—or not being able to even identify that you're angry—is called evasion. But evading anger only increases stress and may lead to such stress-related illnesses as headaches and depression (some counsellors believe that depression is unexpressed anger turned inward).
- \* To know that you are angry but to still keep it inside is called containment. Yet boxing up anger only delays its expression. Eventually, anger may lead to stress or stress-related illness or an angry outburst or temper tantrum.
- \* Displacement occurs when you take your anger out on something other than the object of your anger. A wife who gives her husband's golf clubs because of something he said or a coworker who sabotages a work project because he's angry over working conditions are examples of displacement.
- \* Indirect expression occurs if you're angry for a specific reason, but blame your anger on something else. For instance, you may be angry at your teenaged son for his poor study habits, but instead of addressing his study skills as the source of your anger, you pick fights over his use of the phone.

If you find that you mismanage your anger in any of these ways, remember that anger is a sign that something is wrong. Like an engine light that warns that a car is overheating, anger alerts us to the fact that there is a problem. The faster we take corrective, appropriate action, the less likely we are to “blow a gasket”.

If you feel you need help with your anger, look under “Help & Shelter” in your telephone directory. Help may also be available via telephone. Call us on our 24-hour hotlines 231-7249 or 227-3454.

This brochure was created with the compliments of:

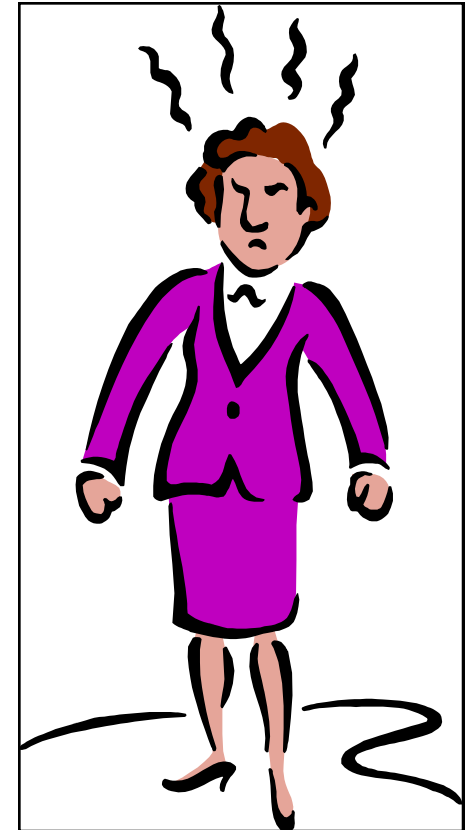
CIDA/Gender Equality Fund—September 2002

Help & Shelter  
Ministry of Housing Annex  
Homestretch Avenue  
D'Urban Park  
Georgetown

Tel: 225-4731  
24-hour Hotline: 227-3454  
Fax: 227-8353  
Email: [hands@networksgy.com](mailto:hands@networksgy.com)  
Website: <http://www.hands.org.gy>



## **ANGER MANAGEMENT**



## ***Anger management***

Like love, grief and happiness, anger is a basic, human emotion. It serves an important survival function by communicating to ourselves and to others that something is wrong.

How we express anger is something we learn. As children, we may have learned from one or both parents that anger can be used to get attention or one's way. Or we may have learned that we should show the "good" emotions—love and happiness, for instance—and keep "bad" emotions like anger inside. We may deny that we're angry because it seems irrational, or we may fear losing control. But whether it's expressed directly or consciously, all people experience anger.

Because we learn how to express anger, we also can learn how to manage it. This is particularly important for anyone who handles anger inappropriately—by hurting others or themselves or by making poor decisions in fits of rage. Instead of expressing anger in any of these ways, try this four-step approach.

***Admit it.  
Explore it.  
Express it.  
Drop it.***

## ***Admitting your anger***

The next time you feel angry, *admit it* to yourself. Don't deny feeling angry or try to cover it up. Identify your anger. What happens when you get angry? Does your heart race? Does your face flush? Do you feel a surge of energy? Many of us have been taught to push our anger down as soon as it surfaces, sometimes before we even recognise it. If you have been denying your anger for a long time, it may take some practice to recognise it when it surfaces. But, if you attune yourself to what triggers your anger, you will find that many things bring out angry feelings.

## ***Exploring your anger***

When you have identified what made you angry, stop and think about it. Then *explore* why you're angry—get to the source of the emotion. If it's something someone said to you, ask yourself why it made you angry. Give yourself a little time to think and you may put the situation into another perspective.

Notice and pay attention to your anger, don't judge it. Anger isn't "wrong"—it's a natural emotion. It tells us when something doesn't fit our world view, our "rules". It's also a way of protecting ourselves by responding to perceived threats. On the other hand, reacting rashly or impulsively to anger can ruin relationships or, worse lead to violence. Instead, count to 10. You may have heard that countless times, but it's still a good rule. Or breathe deeply and slowly, in and out. These techniques will calm you and give you time to assess the situation more objectively. It's best to THINK before you act.



## ***Expressing your anger***

Expressing your anger is the next step. If you think your anger might come out as rage, find a way to calm yourself first—breathe deeply again or go for a walk. When you can discuss the issue without exploding, do so. If you start to feel angry while you're talking, calm yourself down again.

Don't use personal attack as an expression of anger. This will only fuel the other person's anger and may lead to a situation spiraling out of control. Make sure your anger doesn't get in the way of what you are trying to express. If your anger is out of control, others will feel they need to protect themselves.

Remember, the feeling of anger is not the problem. What you do with that feeling can be a problem—or the beginning of a solution. Anger can be a good guide, but try to use your feelings of anger to point out problems, not to create new ones.

Once you've admitted your anger, calmed down and explored its reasons, you can begin to express it appropriately (to the right person) and constructively (to solve the problem that caused the anger).

## ***Dropping it***

The final step may be the hardest. It's also the most important. Once you have addressed the source of your anger, *drop it*. Whether the object of your anger changes or not, you've done all you can by expressing your anger in a healthy way.

## ***Other anger management tips***

### ***☞ Identify your "anger triggers"***

Knowing specifically what makes you angry is a step in controlling your response. Make a list of your "anger triggers" and keep the list in a place where you can refer to it often.

### ***☞ Try thought checking***

When you feel your anger building, stop and think about what upset you.

### ***☞ Take a time-out***

You should not stay in a situation that makes you angry. The situation may be beyond your control, but your response is completely within your control. A time-out shouldn't be used to avoid the situation altogether. Return when you feel calm enough to express yourself appropriately. If you feel your anger returning, take another time-out.