



Tempering the Tyrant: Finding Anger's Rightful Place

The ability to recognize and manage feelings of anger is important for all human beings but especially important for Caregivers as you struggle to balance caring for your own needs while also caring for another. Angry feelings arise as the direct result of needs being met or not met, or when safety or boundaries have been threatened. Recognizing anger as a simple, understandable emotional response or warning sign is the first important step towards improved self-care.

How do you notice you are angry?

- face becomes flushed or red/hot
- hands clench or teeth clamp down
- muscles tense or tighten
- voice rises
- stomp around pounding your feet
- feel a rush of adrenaline, heart race
- talk louder or faster; use profanity or swear
- have difficulty thinking clearly or become narrowly focused on the source of your anger and lose your objectivity or perspective

What purpose does it serve to get angry?

- Angry feelings are a warning sign or red flag that needs are not being met or boundaries are threatened.
- Instinctive angry behaviors are meant to warn aggressors to back off.
- Anger stirs energy and prepares us to stand up and take care of ourselves.

How do you express your anger?

- **Passive Expression-** swallowing the energy, silencing your voice, withdrawing, or diverting the anger into sarcasm, judgement, or criticism, the silent treatment.
- **Aggressive Expression-** bullying behaviors, threatening, blaming, refusing to listen, finger pointing, name calling, shouting, slamming doors, reckless driving, unwillingness to forgive, destroying objects, or becoming physically violent.
- **Tempered Expression-** wait to react long enough to get some perspective so actions are thoughtful and balanced.

Skills for Tempering the Tyrant



Breathe

There is one simple very powerful and effective way to at least pull the reins on anger when it has a hold on you. That way is to breathe. When you are reacting in anger breathing constricts and becomes shallow. A few deep breaths could alter things, could give you that moment to slow down and get perspective in order to act wisely rather than impulsively.

- Breathe deeply. Take a number of deep breaths, deep enough to make your belly stick out.
- A breath can give you that moment to slow down, get perspective, and hold off on a reaction.

Pay attention to yourself. Observe.

- Pay attention to yourself. Notice your feelings. Recognize what you need and take responsibility for the warning signs as they occur.
- This skill of self-observation can help provide perspective and prevent mindlessly reacting in anger.

Communication Strategies

- Start by becoming clear. Slow down and listen to yourself. Listen to what you feel and need.
- Find calm. Wait until you feel less stress and more in control of your emotions so that you don't react and communicate in a manner you may regret.
- Make "I" statements.
- Describe your observations. State what you see, hear, or notice, in specific terms without judgment. "I noticed___", or "I observed___."
- Share your feeling using a one word description of the emotion, such as "I feel sad, scared, worried or confused."
- Next, add the need that that you have. "I feel ___ because I need or want ___."
- Finally make a request that is clear, specific, and describes the positive action you want the person to take. "I feel ___ because I need___. Would you be willing to ___?"

Communication Strategies are based on the work of Marshall Rosenberg's Model of Non Violent Communication