

Extinguishing the Fire: Managing Angers Destructive Potential Handout

VA Caregiver Support Line

Anger is a tough emotion we all feel and show from time to time. Anger is a warning sign that you are being hurt or threatened. If your needs are not met or if you are giving more than receiving, you may become angry. Anger can be a helpful warning to take care of yourself. Acting out angry feelings in a destructive way can result in harm to you and others. Review and practice the skills below to better care for your angry feelings.

Think about the people who were around you as you grew up. The way those around you dealt with anger, plays a role in how you manage your anger today.

What was your experience with anger growing up?

It is important to know when anger is happening. Recognizing anger can help keep you and others safe.

What are your warning signs that you are getting angry? Some examples may be clenching your jaw or fists, talking louder or faster, flushed face, intense eye contact, or furrowed brows.

Destructive patterns of acting out anger

- Yelling
- Becoming physically threatening or violent
- Withdrawing or giving the silent treatment
- Demeaning

Can you recall a time when you acted out anger in one of these ways? What steps can you take to avoid anger becoming destructive?

- Notice destructive patterns when they occur
- Recognize when you are angry or when you see someone else is angry
- Take steps to interrupt destructive patterns of acting out angry feelings such as:
 - stopping or taking a break
 - belly breathing
 - setting limits
 - describing what you see happening and communicating limits
 - asking for what you need
 - exploring the underlying vulnerable feeling
 - reaching out for help.

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Ideas to proactively care for yourself

- Consider taking some time each day for Mindfulness
- Eat a well-balanced nutritious diet
- Avoid misusing drugs and alcohol
- Take care of your medical health needs and get preventative checkups
- Exercise
- Create and use your support system
- Prioritize your own mental health by engaging in hobbies that you enjoy
- Accept help from others when offered
- Reach out for help when you need it.

Listen to what you need. Protect yourself from allowing anger to harm you or those you love. Care for your needs so that you are not laying the groundwork for anger's fire to burn. Lastly, be forgiving with yourself. Remind yourself that life is a journey, one that you are learning from day by day.

Are you honoring your body, your mind, your emotions, your spirit? What will you add to your day to care for you?