



## DEALING WITH ANGER

Your face feels hot, your heart beats fast, and you feel all tight inside. You want to explode at this person who has made you so angry.

To be human is to know anger. Anger helps us to defend our rights and protect our freedoms. Yet anger can also lead to physical and emotional violence, depression, even illness.

We can learn to transform our anger from a weapon that wounds ourselves and others to a tool that promotes understanding and healthy relationships. Following are six suggestions for dealing with anger.

**1. Identify destructive expressions of anger.** People often express anger in destructive ways. They may become aggressive—hitting, throwing things, or yelling. Or they might act like martyrs, agreeing to a course of action they don't really like and then trying to make others feel guilty for forcing them to do it. Some people express anger in passive-aggressive ways with habits that disrupt the lives of those around them. Other people express anger indirectly, complaining to a third party instead of the person they're angry with.

Constructive anger lets the other person know we are hurt in order to prevent this from happening again and to promote understanding within the relationship.

**2. Express yourself assertively.** When we express ourselves assertively, we state clearly what is upsetting us, without attacking the other person. Assertiveness sets limits and expresses needs, using "I" rather than "you" statements. For example: "I do not like it when I feel ignored," instead of "All you ever do is watch TV!" Or "I am very angry; I expected a call," instead of "You are so inconsiderate!"

**3. Give yourself time.** In the midst of anger, we often speak impulsively. Everything seems very urgent. Yet few situations demand a resolution this moment. Slowing down helps us to stay calm, and gives us time to clarify the real issue. Take a deep breath and ask yourself, "What am I really angry about?"

**4. Respect the person you're angry with.** Recognize that you are two separate individuals entitled to different feelings and needs.

**5. Keep information flowing.** In conflict situations, some people tend to shut down, leaving the room or using the "silent treatment." Try to stay open and continue to engage. If the anger intensifies, you can jointly call time out—but agree on a time when you will return to the topic.



**6. Learn how to use degrees of anger.** Anger ranges from mild annoyance to rage. Many people avoid speaking up when they are experiencing the lower levels of anger, hoping the problem will go away. It usually doesn't. They get angry and jump several octaves, leaving others puzzled or hurt by their outburst.

**Conclusion.** Some people resolve anger through an energetic argument; others, through a calm discussion. Not enough of us resolve anger through humor. Whatever your style, anger at its best is a dialogue that is spiritually freeing. Through anger, you can touch another and be touched, bridging the solitudes of two unique individuals with healing love.