DEALING WITH DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

Georgia Association of Code Enforcement
Learning to manage anger is essential to...

- Relationships
- Career
- Health

Who is responsible for managing your anger?

Who is responsible for managing other people’s anger?

Anger is "an emotional state that varies in intensity from mild irritation to intense fury and rage."

"An EMOTIONAL State"

What causes you to be angry?

Resentment

You may feel angry when you’ve been hurt, rejected or offended.
Disappointment
Anger often results when expectations and desires aren’t met.

Annoyance
You may react in anger to minor irritations and daily hassles.

Fear
Anger is a natural response to threats of violence, or to physical or verbal abuse.
Understanding and Identifying the Cause of your Anger

**Frustration**

Failing to reach a goal or feeling out of control because of someone or something can cause anger.

**Stress**

Stress may make you feel anxious & irritable. Traumatic memories can also trigger angry feelings.

What happens to you on the inside when you are angry on the outside?

- Increased Heart Rate
- High Blood Pressure
- Tension and Stress
The instinctive, natural way to express anger is to respond aggressively. Anger is a natural, adaptive response to threats; it inspires powerful, often aggressive, feelings and behaviors, which allow us to fight and to defend ourselves when we are attacked. A certain amount of anger, therefore, is necessary to our survival.

However, on the other hand, we can’t physically lash out at every person or object that irritates or annoys us; laws, social norms, and common sense place limits on how far our anger can take us.

Everyone gets angry sometimes...

Handling anger well can help you:
- Overcome problems
- Reach your goals
- Stay healthy
- Feel better about yourself
...but too much anger or uncontrolled anger can cause problems

- Alcohol or other drug problems
- Physical issues
  - Sleep problems
  - Digestive problems
  - High blood pressure
  - Heart problems
  - Headaches
- Poor decision making
- Problems with relationships
- Low self-esteem
- Depression
- Problems at work

Warning Signs:
- Tense muscles
- Tight fists
- Clenched jaw
- Sweaty palms
- Racing heartbeat
- Fast breathing
- Trembling or feeling shaky
- Feeling warm or flushed
- Upset stomach
- Loud or mean voice

Hidden Anger

Is your anger out of control?

- Are my level of anger and my reaction out of proportion to the trigger?
- Am I directing my anger at an innocent person?
- Am I taking something personally?
- Is this how I usually respond in similar situations?
- Am I trying to take charge with my anger?
Three Main Approaches to Processing your Anger

The three main approaches are:

Expressing...

Suppressing...

and Calming...

Expressing!

Expressing your angry feelings in an assertive—not aggressive—manner is the healthiest way to express anger.

You should make clear what your needs are, and how to get them met, without hurting others.

Being assertive doesn’t mean being pushy or demanding; it means being respectful of yourself and others.

Assertive or Passive or Aggressive Behaviors?

- Assertive people state their opinions, while still being respectful of others.
- Aggressive people attack or ignore others’ opinions in favor of their own.
- Passive people don’t state their opinions at all.
Anger can be suppressed, and then converted or redirected. This happens when you hold in your anger, stop thinking about it, and focus on something positive.

The aim is to inhibit or suppress your anger and convert it into more constructive behavior.

Finally, you can calm down on the inside. This means not just controlling your outward behavior, but also controlling your internal responses, taking steps to lower your heart rate, calm yourself down, and let the feelings subside.
Can how we Communicate in the Workplace Contribute to One's Anger?

Angry people tend to jump to and act on conclusions, and some of those conclusions can be very inaccurate!

How Well we Handle Criticism Contributes to How Well we Manage Anger in the Workplace

It's natural to get defensive when you're criticized, but don't fight back.

Peace or Pieces you Choose?

Be real clear... anger destroys your Peace!

Are you a real life "Humpty Dumpty"?
Cognitive Restructuring

Simply put, this means changing the way you think...

So the question you have to ask...

Is It Good To "Let it All Hang Out?"

Things not to say...

"They don’t know who they dealing with..."
"I don’t know who they think they talking to..."
"You don’t know...You better asks somebody..."
"You don’t want this!"
"I wish you would..."
"I will turn up in here.."

Cognitive Restructuring Continued

If there is a way to improve an unpleasant, difficult situation, what point is there in being unhappy?

On the other hand, if it is completely impossible to improve the situation or to fulfill our wishes, there is also no reason to get upset, for how will our becoming unhappy help?
Ten Tips to Help you Keep your Temper
(from the Mayo Clinic)

**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.

**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.

**Get some exercise** - Physical activity can help reduce stress. If you feel your anger escalating, go for a brisk walk or run, or spend some time doing other enjoyable physical activities.

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Ten Tips to Help you Keep your Temper

**Take a timeout** - Timeouts aren’t just for kids. 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.

**Identify possible solutions** - Instead of focusing on what made you mad, work on resolving the issue at hand. Remind yourself that anger won’t fix anything and might only make it worse.

**Stick with ‘I’ statements** - To avoid criticizing or placing blame—which might only increase tension—use “I” statements to describe the problem. Be respectful and specific.

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Ten Tips to Help you Keep your Temper

**Don’t hold a grudge** - Forgiveness is a powerful tool. Forgive someone who angered you, you might both learn from the situation. It’s unrealistic to expect everyone to behave exactly as you want at all times.

**Use humor to release tension** - Lightening up can help diffuse tension. Use humor to help you face what’s making you angry.

**Practice relaxation skills** - When your temper flares, put relaxation skills to work. Practice deep-breathing exercises, imagine a relaxing scene, or repeat a calming word or phrase, such as, “Take it easy.”
Ten Tips to Help you Keep your Temper

**#10**...By far the most important:

*Know 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, causes you to do things you regret or hurts those around you.

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**Difficult Conversations**

Douglas Stone
Bruce Patton
Sheila Heen
The Three Conversations

What Happened?
- Who is right?
- Whose fault is it?
- What’s motivating them?

Feelings?
- How do I handle the strong feelings involved?

Identity?
- What does all of this say about me?

We Argue about Who’s Right

Difficult Conversations are never about facts
- They’re about judgments, values, interpretations, and expectations

Perception to Truth

Climb Down the Ladder of Inference

Conclusions
- The bottom line, e.g., “You’re wrong”

Reasoning & Interpretations
- How do my past experiences impact this? What implicit rules & assumptions underlie my reasoning?

Selected Data
- What data do I notice? What do I ignore? What might the other person notice that I don’t?
Example 1: Persuasion

When they are not persuaded, we assume...
1. They're irrational
2. They don't care about doing a good job
3. They don't fully understand the benefits

We can impact #3, so we focus on it. Repeat, louder, more benefits.

We See Benefits, Not Perceived Drawbacks

Remember, you're negotiating not with what they're saying, but with what they're thinking

Benefits of Inquiry and Listening:
1. You understand their perspective
2. You learn what they care about
3. Once their internal voice feels heard, they can focus on your message

Example 2: Blame vs. Contribution

Blame vs. Joint Contribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blame</th>
<th>Joint Contribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who's Fault?</td>
<td>Improve Together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Punishment?</td>
<td>My Contribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Your Contribution</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cost of focusing on Blame...
- Inhibits personal and organizational learning
- We misdiagnose the problem, so our "solutions" don't work
- Relationship damaged; problem persists
Example 3: Impact vs. Intent

Our stories include attributions about their intentions based on:
- The impact on us
- Our perceptions of their character
- Our feelings

We often assume the worst
- Especially if we don’t like them

However, intentions are invisible…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intentions</th>
<th>Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They meant it!</td>
<td>Good intentions, good intentions, conflicting intentions, or no intentions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They had good intentions!</td>
<td>Good intentions don’t sanitize a bad impact</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The “Feelings” Conversation

When feelings are at the heart of what’s going on, they ARE the business at hand… and the only way to resolve the issue is to address the feelings.

Unexpressed feelings…
- Leak into conversations
- Burst into conversations
- Hamper listening
- Undermine self-esteem

Remember…
- Feelings are normal
- Good people have bad feelings
- Your feelings are as important as theirs
- Find the feelings behind the label
Emily and Roz

Roz just isn’t warm. I helped her through her divorce, talked with her all the time, kept her company when she was feeling lonely. I was always there for her. And she never said a word of thanks.

So, I told Roz exactly how I felt. I was honest. I told her that at times she can be self-absorbed and thoughtless. And true to form, she went on the attack. She told me I was being oversensitive. That’s what you get when you talk about your feelings to someone like Roz. It’s not worth it.

To Avoid Feelings, We Translate Them

Common translations:

- Judgments: “Good friends don’t feel that way.”
- Characterizations: “You’re just so inconsiderate.”
- Attribution of intention: ‘Why did you try to hurt me?’
- Problem Solving: “You need to call me more often.”

Acknowledged Feelings Before Problem-Solving

acknowledgement

feels

problem solving

into the spectrum of feeling, share.

state their perspective.
The “Identity” Conversation

Identity Questions

We have anxiety from having to face another person, but also from having to face ourselves. Conflict has the potential to disrupt our sense of who we are in the world, or what we hope we are but fear we are not. Our identity is the story we tell ourselves about ourselves.

- Am I competent?
- Am I a good person?
- Am I worthy of love?
- You will make mistakes
- Your intentions are complex
- You contribute to problems

Identity Triggers

I’m not the kind of person who:

- Makes mistakes
- Lets people down
- Takes advantage of others
- Hurts people’s feelings
- Acts irresponsibly or unethically
- Is a lousy parent, spouse, employee…
### Coping with an Identity Quake

- **Don’t deny what’s true**
  - Takes too much energy
  - We don’t learn

- **Don’t exaggerate what’s not**
  - Mistake?
  - I’m worthless!
  - Worthless!

### Ground Your Self-Image

**FROM:** I am either a good person, or a bad person  
**TO:** I have a balanced understanding of my strengths and weaknesses

### Managing Anger Checklist

- Gain control of your own emotions
- Ground your identity
- Listen and inquire to understand their perspective and your contribution
- Acknowledge their feelings
- Validate their anger
- Empathize and partner in their anger
- Invite them to express anger appropriately
- Offer appropriate solutions or responses
- Follow up on commitments
Final Thought

Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow. It empties today of its strength.
~ Corrie ten Boom

Don’t Sweat the Small Stuff!

Evaluations and Learning to Action Plans

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