

Managing anger

Anger is a normal emotion that everyone experiences now and then. Often anger is experienced when we feel powerless, mistreated, misunderstood, humiliated, embarrassed, fearful, or when we feel like things are out of our control. Sometimes there's no obvious trigger. Given that cancer frequently makes people feel powerless, it's no wonder that people affected by it often experience feelings of anger.

While anger might motivate us to do things like get the best treatment or fundraise to help cancer research, if it's not thoughtfully targeted, if it's very intense and/ or frequent, it can be destructive (both for you personally and those around you). If you find that anger is becoming a problem in your life, consider the following.

Exactly what tends to make you angry?

Where are you when you are angry?

What are you doing when you are angry?

What are you thinking when you are angry?

What prior experiences, beliefs or 'buttons' are being pushed that may contribute to this anger?

Is it possible to avoid any of these situations in the future? If so, what will the costs and benefits be?

What do you notice in your body when you are starting to feel angry?

(E.g. tightness in chest, sweating, tense muscles, pounding heart)

Next time you notice these bodily sensations or thoughts coming on, consider stopping and asking yourself what is making you angry and then try one of the following strategies.

- Explain that you need some time to think (or 'cool down') and remove yourself from the situation. This will give you a chance to think things through and respond in a calm and controlled manner.
- Distract yourself from the situation by counting to ten, turning on the radio, going for a walk, or speaking to a friend (about something else).
- Ask yourself if you've made a genuine attempt to see this from the other person's point of view.
- Use humour to diffuse the situation.
- Acknowledge what the other person has said, tell them how you feel and respectfully communicate what you need or believe.
- Choose to just let it go.
- Try the [calming technique](#).
- Try [progressive muscle relaxation](#) to relieve your muscle tension and help shift your focus elsewhere.

Learning techniques to help you [sleep](#) better, [manage stress](#) and be [more assertive](#) may also help reduce your chances of becoming angry (see other worksheets).