

# Anger Management



What You Need to Know When Dealing with Anger

Krystal Kuehn, MA, LPC, LLP, NCC

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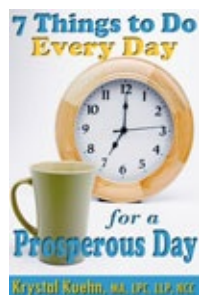
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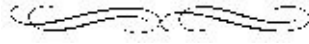
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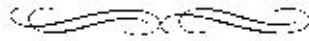
*For every minute you remain angry,  
you give up sixty seconds of peace of mind.*

*~Ralph Waldo Emerson*

~

*At the core of all anger is  
a need that is not being fulfilled.*

*~Marshall B. Rosenberg*



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## INTRODUCTION

*When you strike out in anger, you might miss the other person, but you will always hit yourself. ~Jim Gallery*

Anger - it's something we all have to deal with throughout our entire lifetimes. Most of us were never taught how to best cope with this powerful and potentially dangerous emotion. We may not even be aware of how much anger affects our everyday lives. It is a major contributor to relationship problems, health issues, negative attitudes, rebellion, depression, anxiety, and violence.

Once we understand anger and how it affects us personally, we can develop considerable control over our reactions and discover true inner peace and freedom. People and circumstances will no longer have control over us. We will learn to take charge of our lives.

In this book, you will discover what is behind your anger and how to effectively deal with this strong emotion. Not only will you learn effective coping tools and strategies, you will be motivated to change and improve every area of your life. Ample words of inspiration and wisdom are provided along the way to help you develop insight and discover that true happiness and peace can be yours. Managing your anger successfully will change your life and relationships forever!

I trust that you will gain greater control over your anger and your life after reading this book. Developing healthy coping skills and a new perspective can change your way of dealing with people, circumstances and inner frustrations. It can change your life. It has for me!

To your success and freedom,  
Krystal

# WHAT IS ANGER?

Anger is a normal, God-given emotion with a wide range of intensity from mild irritation to intense rage.

Although it is not a pleasurable feeling, it has an important function. Anger is like an alarm that alerts us that something is wrong. It is a response to a real or imagined threat. Anger warns us that our security, self-esteem, goals or property may be at risk.

Anger has 3 components:

- (1) Physical – The body prepares for action. Adrenaline is secreted into the bloodstream. Our heart rate and blood pressure are elevated. Muscles tighten and perspiration increases.
- (2) Cognitive – How we think affects our anger. It can make things worse or help us cope. For example, we can allow thoughts of injustice to fuel our anger or we can look for solutions.
- (3) Emotional – Anger is always a secondary emotion. That means that a primary emotion such as disappointment, fear, frustration, sadness, or hurt occurred first. Whether consciously aware of it or not, primary pain was initially triggered and anger was experienced as a result. More on this later.

Anger can be healthy or unhealthy, depending on how it is expressed. Anger itself is neutral. It is not a problem. It becomes a problem when it gets out of control. Out-of-control anger can result in poor choices with serious consequences. Angry outbursts have led to regretful words and actions, damaging relationships and lives.

Each one of us holds the responsibility to control and manage his or her own anger; but unless we do so effectively, anger can be a problem for us. It is a powerful emotion, and we must choose what we will do with the energy it releases in us. The importance of knowing what to do with our anger cannot be overstated. Studies have reported that most people become angry as often as ten times a day. Think about that! Why do we experience so much anger?

The expression of anger is a learned behavior. With repetition and practice, it becomes a habit. The good news is – bad habits can be replaced with good habits. It may not be easy, but with good tools and techniques and plenty of practice, anger can be successfully controlled and managed.

*Bad habits are like a comfortable bed, easy to get into, but hard to get out of.*



## WHAT AM I TRYING TO CONTROL?

You may have heard that anger centers on gaining control. But what exactly are we trying to control with our anger? We are trying to gain control of the *source* of our pain so that we will stop feeling the pain. Let me explain. Anger is *always* a secondary emotion. It is a response to primary emotions (for a list, go to *How Can I Deal with It*). For example, when Mark's plans to go golfing on his only day off were cancelled because of a storm, he became angry. His primary pain was frustration and disappointment. There was a reason he became angry - his goals were blocked.

Anger always comes as a result of primary pain. People do not get angry without a reason (with the exception of a physiological problem). The reason certain primary pain is triggered in one person and not another is dependent on many factors such as past experience, perception, interpretation, and coping style.

How Mark expresses his anger and tries to gain control over his primary pain – frustration and disappointment – is within his control. He has to choose if he is going to manage his anger or let it control him. Following are different reactions Mark may have.

He may complain and feel sorry for himself: “This always happens to me! Every time I finally get a chance to do something fun, it gets ruined!!” He may take his anger out on people around him. The most minor annoyance can lead him to blow up at his daughter. He might yell at her to clean up the mess she made in the basement (a week ago). When his wife walks into the room, he might begin to argue with her about something completely unrelated to his primary pain.

Mark may also choose to manage his anger in a healthy way. He can face his primary pain and acknowledge that he is very frustrated because things did not turn out how he had planned. He can accept the disappointment and not allow it to ruin his day. He can make alternate plans. He can make the best of the situation and choose to look at the positive side of the situation. “Maybe this is for the best. I really need to catch up on a few things anyways that I haven't gotten around to. This gives me the opportunity. I can still have a good day. I am glad I have the day off. I will appreciate and enjoy it.”

The remarkable thing about dealing with primary pain in healthy ways is that it redirects, weakens or completely diminishes the potentially negative effects of anger. Our decisions, moods and attitudes are no longer under the influence or control of our unresolved anger.

Some primary pain is deep rooted and gets triggered more often because of long-term unresolved issues with our primary pain. For example, Leah is very sensitive and insecure. Since childhood, she has been ridiculed and rejected by

her peers. When her primary pain of hurt and shame get triggered, the anger she expresses becomes self-destructive. Because of her experience, Leah might think people don't like her, and she might expect them to reject her. She might feel unlovable and dislike herself. Leah may sometimes interpret things said as a personal attack on her. For example, when a co-worker didn't agree with Leah's idea, Leah assumed it was because she didn't like her. Primary pain of hurt and shame are triggered and Leah's anger turns on herself. She might get a headache or upset stomach. Or, she might resort to drugs and alcohol. Some primary pain is very deep rooted, and to best deal with it, professional help may be needed.

## HOW CAN I DEAL WITH IT?

*Anger we feel is the consequence of pain in our lives.*

Primary pain should not be buried. When we don't deal with it in healthy ways to release it, we continue to experience the primary pain. It doesn't just go away. It can be evidenced in a negative attitude, and in negative thinking and speaking. It can turn to bitterness, holding onto grudges, a desire for revenge, violence and self-destruction. When primary pain is prolonged, it leads to feelings of helplessness and loss of control. We want the pain to end, but if we don't know how to stop it, we may resort to unhealthy coping such as hurting ourselves and/or others.

So how do we deal with the primary pain?

In order to deal with pain that precedes our anger, it first must be identified. To identify our primary pain, we can ask ourselves what we are feeling and take ownership for it (*see list of primary pain emotions on next page*). For example, I feel (emotion-primary pain) when (situation).

I feel worried when you drive above the speed limit.

We can process it further by asking ourselves *why* we feel a certain way and what we want to happen or change. For example, I feel (emotion) (because)

\_\_\_\_\_.

I feel worried because you might get into an accident or get a ticket.

I (want or wish) \_\_\_\_\_.

I wish you would drive the speed limit.

Some more examples: I feel jealous when you spend time with your new friends, because I feel left out. I would like you to ask me to join you sometime.

I feel hurt when you don't call me, because I think that you forgot about me and don't care. I wish you would call me more often.

When we face and process our primary pain, it makes it easier for us to let go of our anger. And when our emotions are no longer fueled by our anger, we can think more clearly and make better decisions.

We must remember that if it's a person we believe triggered our anger and caused our pain, they may not be willing to change or take responsibility. We are the only ones who can take responsibility for our pain. If we wait for some desired response (an apology, retribution, a promise, some changes) from them and don't get it, we may feel we have no control over our pain, and we will be unable to release it. Unprocessed primary pain can lead to more pain and anger. Depending on how we manage our anger, our relationships, health and overall

well-being may be damaged or negatively affected.

Following is a list of some common primary emotions that identify pain in our lives. Which one(s) do you find especially difficult to manage?

The next time you feel angry ask yourself, “What is behind my anger?”

Primary Emotions Hurt Frustration Fear Guilt Sadness Shame Anxiety Jealousy  
Embarrassment Worry Disappointment

## DOES EVERYONE EXPLODE?

There are both conscious and unconscious ways that people deal with their pain and anger. Some suppress it; others explode and become hostile. Review the following ways people handle their anger. Can you identify with any of them?

Exploders Exploders are conscious of their anger. They can get out of control and become violent, aggressive, hurtful, or rebellious.

They may express their anger *physically* – hitting, punching, slapping, shoving, kicking, throwing and breaking things and/or *verbally* – yelling, swearing, screaming, name-calling, accusing, fault-finding, nagging.

Suppressors Suppressors may or may not be consciously aware of their anger. They internalize their anger and/or ignore it. They may believe it is wrong to express their angry feelings or pain or fear that if they do, they may lose control. Some people who internalize their anger have it manifested in their bodies with stomach problems, headaches, and back pain. Behavioral signs are indirect and include withdrawal, guilt, submissive behavior, addiction, and overeating.

## DON'T PRESS THE WRONG BUTTONS

Everyone has his or her own anger buttons – triggers that make them feel threatened or distressed. The more aware we are of our specific triggers, the better prepared we will be to make healthy choices about how we will respond when they are pushed.

What makes you most vulnerable to anger? Following are some common triggers. Check off all that apply to you: I get angry when: Unappreciated

Invalidated

Taken advantage of

Someone doesn't agree with me In a traffic jam

Can't find what I'm looking for Have a deadline

Feel pressured

Lost someone

Have to follow rules Teased or bullied

Hungry

Tired

Treated unjustly

Have pain in my body Someone takes my parking spot Boundaries are violated

Criticized

Can't have my way

Forget an appointment Can't figure something out Bored

Disrespected

Nagged

Ignored

Sleep deprived

Someone cuts me off

Don't like how my hair turned out Have to wait in line Lied to

Yelled at

Need help

Drinking or on drugs Violated

# WHAT'S HAPPENING TO MY BODY & MIND?

Once you have identified your anger buttons, ask yourself:

*How does my body respond when I am angry?*

Grind teeth  
Clench fists  
Short of breath  
Rapid heartbeat  
Hot flashes  
Sweaty palms  
Upset stomach  
Dizziness  
Backache  
Dry mouth  
Hands shaking  
Legs trembling  
Feet tapping

Anger causes our **bodies** to react. The perceived threat prepares us for action and we are ready to run from danger or fight to protect ourselves or our loved ones.

Anger also affects our **thinking**. It can distort our perception, and we may not be able to think clearly or rationally. Ask yourself:

*What kinds of thoughts go through my mind when I am angry?*

If they cared, they would have helped me.  
This is a complete disaster.  
They are always against me.  
They make me act this way.  
They are being completely unfair.  
People are so selfish.  
I won't be taken advantage of.  
I can't take it anymore.  
My life is over.  
What a lying jerk.  
They won't get away with this.  
People are incompetent.

I'm so embarrassed I could die.  
Nobody really cares.  
They are purposely trying to get me mad.  
They always push my buttons.  
They ruined my day.  
They ruined my life.  
This always happens to me.  
I will never be happy.  
This makes me sick to my stomach.  
Nobody ever gives me a chance.  
This is a complete waste of my time.  
They are a bunch of losers.  
I never do anything right.  
It's never good enough.  
They should do it my way.  
They better give me what I want.  
They have to listen to me.

The thoughts above reveal some distortions in thinking commonly known as negative distortions. BLAMING is one of the most damaging anger distortions. Instead of considering our options and making plans to change the situation, we give up our power and wait for the other person or circumstance to change. However, it is within our power to choose to change our response to the situation and act on our options. If we depend on the other person(s), our situation, or our environment to change, we will continue to blame what is outside of our control and act as if the outcome all depends on people or circumstance.

Some blaming thoughts that give up our power include:

**They ruined my day.** *This way of thinking causes us to have a bad attitude in which we feel defeated and helpless. But are we really helpless? We can choose to rise above this defeated mentality and have a hopeful attitude by recognizing our own ability to change things even if it is only our attitude. No one has the power to ruin our day except us.*

**No one ever gives me a chance.** *If we really believe the world is against us, why should we keep trying? We lose our motivation and settle for less than we are capable of. Thinking no one ever gives us a chance, also affects how we relate to others. We will expect others to be against us. We will lose confidence in ourselves and wallow in self-pity.*



**This job is making my life miserable.** *If we think about all the reasons why we don't like our job and focus on all that is wrong with it, we will make ourselves miserable. We have options. Maybe we can make some changes at our workplace. We can also look for another job. If none of these are possible, we can always change our perception and attitude (more on this later).*

Some negative distortions are MAGNIFICATIONS or CATASTROPHIZING thoughts. This is taking an exaggerated view of something, and making it to be the worst it can be. For example:

**This is a complete disaster.** *Maybe things didn't work out like we had hoped, but is it the end of the world? How will it affect our lives 5 years from now? We can make the best of the situation if we don't allow the frustration to dominate our thinking.*

**I'm so embarrassed I could die.** *When embarrassed, we are very self-conscious. We feel uncomfortable, but not everyone sees us the way we do. We don't know what they're thinking, but most people are understanding and compassionate. Reminding ourselves that we are only human and we make mistakes can help us put this in perspective. It also helps to forgive, accept and laugh at ourselves.*

Another negative distortion is LABELING. When we label, we attach derogatory names to some behavior we do not like such as jerk, loser, idiot, stupid, incompetent, moron, etc.

**He is such a jerk.**

*Maybe he is acting like a jerk. Are we addressing his behavior or his character? Name-calling attacks a person's character; not how they have behaved. There is a big difference. Someone's behavior can be offensive and wrong, but that doesn't make them a bad person.*

**She is so stupid**

*When we feel frustrated or offended by someone's words or actions, or when someone does not agree with us, we might call them a derogatory name such as stupid or incompetent. Instead of name calling, we can try to be patient, understanding, and accepting. They might be doing the best they can do, or they*

*may mean well and don't know any better. And when we do not agree with one another, we can still agree to disagree. When tempted to call others stupid, we are challenged to extend to them the same grace we would hope to have.*

Jumping to conclusions, also known as MISATTRIBUTION, involves making assumptions about people's motives. Although there are times when our assumptions might be correct, we ought to consider other possibilities as well. Oftentimes, there is some relevant information we are unaware of that can better explain the person's behavior.

**They did it on purpose.**

*There are probably some other reasons for their behavior that I need to look into.*

SHOULD STATEMENTS are negative distortions that can become demanding and intolerant of others. They express how people or things should or should not be and can be judgmental.

**This should not be happening.**

*It is okay to acknowledge that something may be unfair or disappointing, but we will cope with it better if we replace should statements with ones that empower us.*

*We can assure ourselves that "It will be okay. I can handle it and remain confident and hopeful that things will work out."*

**They should give me what I want.**

*We can express what we want without being pushy, disrespectful, and demanding. We might not get our way or what we want and expect, but we can choose to accept what we cannot control and change only what we can. Doing so will help us release our anger and experience peace.*

When angry, we might see a problem as never-ending. This is OVERGENERALIZATION. We use words such as, "always," "never" "everybody" "nobody." We hear it in statements such as:

**I never do anything right.**

*This negative distortion keeps us from acknowledging the things we have done*

*right. We overlook the good and successful experiences, and focus on what we have done wrong. A very critical, self-condemning perspective such as this feeds a low self-esteem. When tempted to think on this thought, we ought to recall the many exceptions to this lie, and refuse to dwell on it. “Maybe this didn’t work out right, but I did my best and I have done plenty of things very well that I am proud of!”*

Please note: Angry thinking can include more than one negative distortion and they can overlap. For example – *She always makes me angry* is both blaming and overgeneralization. “She makes me” is putting the blame on someone else; and, stating that she “always” makes me angry is an overgeneralization because it implies it is unending.

Also note: Negative and distorted thinking can cause us to INTERNALIZE our anger which often leads to depression, excessive guilt, self-hatred, and/or low self-esteem. For example, meditating on these thoughts is unhealthy and self-destructive: I will never be happy. I never do anything right. Nobody likes me. *For more on depression and help in breaking free from it, check out: [Depression – Breaking Free from Its Grip](#)*

Following are some healthy coping thoughts:

Getting upset won’t help. It won’t solve anything.

I won’t let them get the best of me. I will keep my cool.

It’s just a hassle. I can deal with it.

I don’t have to make too much of this.

This can’t ruin my day if I won’t let it.

I’m in control of my anger.

I can walk away.

I won’t say anything I will regret.

Look how foolish they look. I’m staying calm.

I can take a deep breath and relax.

This says more about them than about me.

# Changing Negative Patterns

A very effective way to monitor anger is to create a weekly log to keep track of every time you get angry. This is a very good way to help you recognize common themes in your thinking and reactions. It will also help you to begin thinking about other ways you can respond. Replacing old habits with new ones takes some time. Just keep doing your best. Don't stop trying. Before you know it, there will be change. Even small improvements should be celebrated. Every victory will lead you a step closer to your ultimate goal.

*The person who removes a mountain begins by carrying away small slabs.  
~Irene Sutcliffe*

Following is an **ANGER LOG** that can be used to monitor every time you are angry. Record the following for every day of the week that you become angry:

Day, Time, Place

Event – What happened that triggered my anger? Who or what was it directed at?

Thoughts – What thoughts or beliefs were going through my mind?

Body - What changes occurred in my body?

Feelings – What may have been the primary emotion I felt?

Measure – On a scale from 1 to 10 with 10 being hostile, violent anger and 1 being calm and collected, I would rate my anger \_\_\_\_.

Action – How did I handle my anger? What did I do that was good? What could I have done better? What other ways could I have handled my anger?

Consequences – What was the effect of the action I chose to take? Is this okay with me? Why or why not?

## EXAMPLES OF NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES:

The situation didn't get resolved

Unnecessary drama

The problem got bigger

Words and actions hurt other people

Relationships are damaged

People lost trust and confidence in me

Got suspended or fired

Lost privileges or freedoms

## **How is my anger hurting me?**

Anger actually hurts us more than anyone else. Following are some reflective thoughts about the consequences of anger:

If you kick a stone in anger, you'll hurt your own foot. ~Korean Proverb Hating people is like burning down your house to kill a rat. ~Henry Fosdick

Resentment is like taking poison and waiting for the other person to die. ~Malachy McCourt I met a young man who was wounded in love; I met another man who was wounded in hatred. ~Bob Dylan You can't hold a man down without staying down with him. ~Booker T. Washington People caught up in anger and rage are more likely to be involved in a serious accident. ~American Medical Association To carry a grudge is like being stung to death by one bee. ~William H. Walton Those who are at war with others are seldom at peace with themselves. ~Author unknown For every minute you remain angry, you give up 60 seconds of peace of mind. ~Ralph Waldo Emerson Consider how much more you often suffer from your anger and grief, than from those very things for which you are angry and grieved. ~Marcus Antonius Anger hinders creativity and productivity

If your heart is a volcano, how shall you expect flowers to bloom? ~Khalil Gibran Anger (is a wind which) blows out the lamp of the mind. ~Robert G. Ingersoll

No man can think clearly when his fists are clenched. ~George Jean Nathan Hot heads and cold hearts never solved anything. ~Author unknown

# DO I NEED TO RELEASE IT?

*He who angers you conquers you. ~Elizabeth Kenny*

One of the most destructive consequences of anger is the imprisonment to hatred and bitterness it puts us in when we hold on to it.

## **Why do we hold on to anger?**

We hold on to anger for any of the following reasons:

We are afraid that letting it go will excuse the wrong done to us, and the other person will get away with hurting us.

We expect the offender to pay in some way, because we feel they owe us.

We are waiting until the other person takes responsibility (which may never happen).

We use anger as a weapon, thinking we are punishing the person(s) who hurt us.

We think letting it go means we have to forget what happened.

We think that if we release the anger, we will be expected to trust again.

Holding on to anger may also feel empowering and be a way of protecting ourselves. We might get our way when we get loud and aggressive. Or, we might think it is the only way people will listen to us. But instead, they are more likely to get defensive. Our angry behavior may shut them down so they ignore us, or it may cause them to get aggressive with us. Neither response elicits a positive, peaceable outcome.

We can get stuck in our anger for as long as we believe our reasons are valid. For example, we will remain stuck if we cannot accept that letting go of anger and forgiving a wrong does not excuse the wrong done to us. It does not mean the wrongdoer should get away with it. Sometimes legal action may be necessary. It

also does not mean that we have to forget what happened. We might never forget and that's okay. Forgetting is not a prerequisite to forgiving. Forgiving/releasing doesn't even require us to like the other person. It also does not mean we are expected to trust him or her again. Rebuilding trust is a process and does not happen instantly. Sometimes it may never happen. Once we accept these truths, our perspective will change and releasing anger will be easier to do.

There is no good reason to hold on to anger unless we use it bring about some positive change. Having anger at injustice can motivate people to take some necessary steps to make things right. This type of anger is not destructive, but rather, a force for good.

## Stuck in Anger

The earliest example of holding on to anger is recorded in the Bible. When Cain and Abel presented their offering to the Lord, and Cain's offering was not accepted, he became very angry. Getting angry was not the problem. It actually could have motivated him to learn from his error and make some positive changes for next time. But instead, Cain got stuck in his anger and did not express any responsibility or remorse. He held on to the anger and allowed it to control him. The Bible says that God reminded Cain that he would be accepted if he does what is right. He didn't tell him that it's too late and he would never have another chance. He didn't say that he was rejected as a person. But He did warn him that anger was going to control him if he did not get it under control.

Cain had a choice. He did not take control of his anger and release it. Instead, it got control over him and led to the first murder. The destructive consequences changed the course of history for all mankind. We may not think about it, but choices made in anger not only affect us, but they can affect others for generations to come.

*Something done in an instant can cause heartache for a lifetime.....*

*When you are angry, don't let that anger make you sin, and don't stay angry all day. (Ephesians 4:26, ERV)*

*Never do anything when you are in a temper, for you will do everything wrong.  
~Baltasar Gracian*

*When anger rises, think of the consequences. ~Confucius*

*Always think before you act because your anger will pass on, but your actions will remain. ~Author unknown*

*Anger dwells only in the bosom of fools." Albert Einstein*

*Learn this from me. Holding anger is a poison. It eats you from inside. We think that hating is a weapon that attacks the person who harmed us. But hatred is a curved blade. And the harm we do, we do to ourselves. ~Mitch Albom*

So what exactly is forgiveness?



**To forgive is to release anger and resentment and no longer require or expect payment from the offender.**

I like to use the word “release” interchangeably with forgiveness. We release someone from having power to continue to hurt us. We release a debt that we cannot collect on. We release ourselves from the bonds of hatred and bitterness. We release all that would hold and keep us down, and we find freedom. As long as we hold on to the anger, we are bound to prolonged pain with its negative effect on our life.

*To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you.*  
~Lewis B. Smedes

Is forgiveness necessary?

To forgive or not to forgive is a choice that we alone make. It is a crisis of the will. We do it for ourselves. We are the ones who benefit most from releasing the wrongdoer. We begin with our will. Ask yourself: Am I willing to release this anger? If not, why not? Review section above for possible reasons for holding on to it.

Maybe you want to release it, but think you are unable to. You can begin right where you are and say: *I am willing to be made willing to forgive/release the anger.* At this point, your heart and mind will be open to the healing that comes from releasing every negative emotion associated with the offense. Your willingness will make it possible for you to have a new perspective and readiness to let it go.

One of the most liberating experiences we can have when hurting is to forgive. When we forgive, we stop blaming. And if there is no longer anyone or anything to blame, we are free; we are empowered; and, we have better self-control. Forgiving includes forgiving ourselves as well as others. And when we are forgiven by God and others, it is up to us to choose to receive the pardon. Thinking they don't deserve pardon, some people have difficulty receiving it. Forgiving ourselves is just as important as releasing anyone else. When we forgive ourselves, we may have to process and release our regrets and learn from our mistakes. We must also accept our humanity and love ourselves as we are.

A good affirmation to remind ourselves to grant and receive forgiveness is:  
**I forgive myself. I forgive others. I am forgiven.**

Releasing anger is liberating! Releasing anger is something we do for ourselves. It benefits us. It brings healing and wholeness. It puts us back in control of our lives.

Following are some reflections that can help us have a new perspective and release any anger that binds us to bitterness, hatred, regret, pain and misery:  
*Accept that the past cannot be changed and you will begin to see a bright future with endless possibilities.*

*Release the wish for harm on the person who hurt you, and your wounds will begin to heal.*

*Trying to change things in life that we have absolutely no control over creates a great deal of anxiety. ~Charles Stanley*

*When we are no longer able to change our situation, we are challenged to change ourselves. ~Victor Frankl*

*Acceptance is the only real source of tranquility, serenity, peace....It can be acquired if you have an urgent desire to help yourself and are willing to ask God to help you. ~Vincent Collins*  
*Be not angry that you cannot make others as you wish them to be, since you cannot make yourself as you wish to be. ~ Thomas A' Kempis*  
*This beloved prayer has comforted countless people as it reminds us that true peace of mind comes with acceptance:*

#### SERENITY PRAYER

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference—

Living one day at a time;

Enjoying one moment at a time;

Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;

Taking, as He did, this sinful world as it is,  
not as I would have it:

Trusting that He will make all things right  
if I surrender to His will;

That I may be reasonably happy in this life  
and supremely happy with Him forever in the next. Amen.

To read an article I wrote inspired by the Serenity Prayer, go to: *The Serenity Prayer Principles - Finding Serenity in a Simple Prayer:*  
<http://www.behappy4life.com/article-serenityprayer.html>

# HOW TO BE ANGRY

*If the only tool you have is a hammer, you'll treat everything as if it were a nail.*

*~Abraham Maslow*

Remember that becoming angry is not abnormal, bad, wrong, or a problem. It is what we do with our anger that can lead to bad behavior and serious problems. For that reason, we can teach ourselves how to be angry with a little preparation.

When angry, we don't always think clearly or remember to use our coping skills. That is why we need to prepare in advance by recognizing warning signs that let us know our anger needs to be managed. For example, we:

Begin to raise our voice

Say something argumentative

Think angry thoughts

Use excessive physical force (slamming instead of shutting a door)

All of these signs are indicators that anger is present. Once we are aware of the signs, we can choose to do something to manage our anger before it escalates. We can prepare a "Coping with Anger Plan" with effective tools and lots of practice.

We can begin by asking ourselves:

*What can I do to calm myself down?*

There isn't a single best solution or strategy that works for everyone all the time. And, what is most helpful in one situation may not be in another. The important thing is to figure out what works best for you and remember to use it. With practice and discipline, knowing what to do when anger arises will become second nature.

**Following are some ideas you can include in your Coping with Anger Plan:**

## **DELAY YOUR RESPONSE**

Count to ten. Allow yourself the time necessary to calm down so you can remember to use your coping skills. Don't make any major decisions when angry. Wait until you can think clearly and rationally.

*The greatest remedy for anger is delay. ~Seneca Anger is a bad counselor.*

*~French Proverb*

## **RELAX**

Pay attention to your breathing. Slow down. Now inhale deeply through your nose. Hold your breath for about 5 seconds and exhale slowly. Spend a longer time exhaling as inhaling. Do this for 5-10 minutes.

## **TIME-OUT**

Remove yourself from the situation (a conversation, a work project), gather your thoughts and calm yourself down. Time-outs allow you to be alone and get some physical as well as mental and emotional space.

*If you are patient in one moment of anger, you will escape a hundred days of sorrow. ~Chinese Proverb*

**COPING statements** – memorize and use them: As long as I keep my cool, I'm in control I am not going to let this get to me

I don't need to prove myself to anyone

This isn't worth it

I will stay calm

Slow down. Take a deep breath

This too shall pass

This is only temporary

I won't let this get the best of me

He'd like me to get angry; I will disappoint him What she says doesn't matter

Anger isn't going to fix anything

*The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose one thought over another. ~William James*

## **THINK FIRST**

Lower your voice, watch what you say. You can't take back your words after they are spoken. They can do unspeakable damage that can last for many years. Regret for words spoken in anger is a costly price to pay. Think first.

*A gentle answer deflects anger, but harsh words make tempers flare. ~Proverbs 15:1*

## **RELEASE**

Do not deny what you are feeling. Allow yourself to feel the anger and work to release it. Talk to someone (a trusted friend, minister, professional), but do not over-talk it or let it consume you. Record your thoughts in a journal or diary. Write a letter or email, and delete it afterwards.

*Always write angry letters to your enemies. Never mail them. ~James Fallows*  
*Anger ventilated often hurries toward forgiveness; and concealed often hardens into revenge. ~Edward G. Bulwer-Lytton*

**PRAY** to God for His comfort, peace and perspective. Ask Him to help you release your anger. Remember that He said vengeance is His, not yours. Also remind yourself that He gave you a spirit of self-control. He understands you, and will give you the strength and comfort you need. He is the Prince of Peace. He is just and He will make all things right in the end.

*Who stood up for me against the wicked? Who took my side against evil workers? If GOD hadn't been there for me, I never would have made it. The minute I said, "I'm slipping, I'm falling," your love, GOD, took hold and held me fast. When I was upset and beside myself, you calmed me down and cheered me up. (Psalm 94:19, Msg) Contend, O Lord, with those who contend with me... Take up shield and buckler; Arise and come to my aid... Say to my soul, "I am your salvation. Then my soul will rejoice in the Lord and delight in his salvation. My whole being will exclaim, "Who is like you, O Lord?" (Psalm 35:1-3, 9-10)*

## **PURSUE PEACE**

Agree to disagree.

Be open to negotiation, compromise, and alternative solutions.

Be open to an explanation or apology.

*Be at peace with yourself first and then you will be able to bring peace to others.*  
*~Thomas A. Kempis*

## **PERSPECTIVE**

Focus on possible solutions, not the problem.

Try to understand the other point of view.

Learn something from the experience.

Become better, not bitter.

*Blessed are the flexible, for they shall not be bent out of shape. ~Michael McGriff*

*Never succumb to the temptation of bitterness.*

*~Martin Luther King, Jr.*

## **REFOCUS**

Change the subject. Sometimes redirecting the conversation can prevent it from going in a direction that could lead to offense, disagreements, and heated arguments. Some people want to be right, feel a need to prove their point, have a hard time when you don't agree with them, or simply want to avoid the topic. It's wise to refocus in these situations. For example, talking about politics and religion are commonly known to provoke disagreements that can lead to some very heated exchanges.

Do something else. If it's an activity that is signaling an angry response, stop and do something else. For example, if you're stuck in trying to figure out how to assemble something, stop and do something else for the time being, and get back to it later. If that isn't possible and it has to be done, give yourself a time-out.

*Listen to music*

*Exercise*

Do a little cardio, weights, push-ups, jumping jacks, go for a walk.... Exercise uses up chemicals and hormones (adrenaline and cortisol) that are released when angry. It increases the body's own natural feel-good hormones, endorphins. It also improves sleep.

*Laugh*

Watch a favorite episode on TV or some funny youtube videos. Laughter has been described as "internal jogging." It increases endorphins and helps us to feel better.

*The best remedy for a short temper is a long walk. ~Jacqueline Schiff*

## **REMEMBER**

It's okay to be angry, but it's not okay to hurt others, yourself, or belongings.

*Sometimes when I'm angry I have the right to be angry, but that doesn't give me*

*the right to be cruel. ~Author unknown*

## **CHOOSE YOUR RESPONSE**

*Accept responsibility for anger. People don't **lose** their temper. They **choose** their own temper. ~Author unknown*

You can choose a healthy response to anger. You now have many effective tools in your Coping with Anger Plan to use when needed. Figure out what works best for you and put it into practice. Write it down and put it where you can see it (dashboard, bathroom mirror, refrigerator, cell phone case). Repeat it throughout the day, and practice it in your mind until you have it internalized.

Every time you recognize the warning signs and use your coping skills to manage your anger, you develop self-control and self-discipline. The more you practice it, the easier it becomes to rule over anger and keep it from ruling over you.



## MORE ON MANAGING ANGER

### ***Face anger – there are healthy solutions:***

Do not teach your children never to be angry; teach them how to be angry.

~Lyman Abbott

### ***You always have a choice:***

I don't have to attend every argument I'm invited to. ~Author unknown

### ***Anger doesn't have to bring out the worst in you:***

Get angry, get furious but never crumble to resentment. ~Dodinsky

### ***Practice coping with the small stuff:***

If you get upset when the toast burns, what are you going to do when your house burns down? ~Author unknown

### ***Good or bad, there's always a reason:***

There was never an angry man that thought his anger unjust. ~St. Francis De Sales

## **WATCH YOUR WORDS:**

Before you give someone a piece of your mind, make sure you can get by with what is left. ~Author unknown

May my words and my thoughts be acceptable to you, O LORD, my refuge and my redeemer! (Psalm 19:14, GNT)

A gentle answer will calm a person's anger, but an unkind answer will cause more anger. (Proverbs 15:1, NCV)

Not the fastest horse can catch a word spoken in anger. ~Chinese Proverb

Speak when you are angry and you will make the best speech you will ever regret. ~Ambrose Bierce

Never write a letter while you are angry. ~Chinese proverb

An angry man opens his mouth and shuts up his eyes. ~Cato

***SLOW DOWN:***

A quick temper causes fights, but patience brings peace and calm. (Proverbs 15:18, ERV)

The key to everything is patience. You get the chicken by hatching the egg, not by smashing it. ~Arnold Glasgow

He that is quick to anger dealeth foolishly. Proverbs 14:17a

***TAKE RESPONSIBILITY:***

Take your life in your own hands, and what happens?

A terrible thing: no one to blame. ~Erica Jong

When you blame others, you give up your power to change. ~Author Unknown

***FIND YOUR INNER PEACE:***

For every minute you remain angry, you give up sixty seconds of peace of mind.  
~Ralph Waldo Emerson

When you find peace within yourself, you become the kind of person who can live at peace with others. ~Peace Pilgrim

Anger blows out the lamp of the mind. ~Robert G. Ingersoll

***Laugh more:***

One bout of anger will diminish the efficiency of your immune system for 6 hours, but one good laugh will increase the efficiency of your immune system for 24 hours. ~Francisco Contreras, M.D.

***We can change our perspective:***

We don't see things as they are. We see things as we are. ~Anais Nin

***Dealing with anger is a lifelong occurrence:***

Only the dead have seen the end of war. ~Plato

***Remember: anger is an emotion***

Feelings are not supposed to be logical. Dangerous is the man who has rationalized his emotions. ~David Borenstein

***Rather than think about how to get revenge, you can give it to God:***

Instead, clothe yourself with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. And don't let yourself think about ways to indulge your evil desires. (Romans 13:14, NLT)

***Advice from the wise King Solomon:***

My dear brothers and sisters, always be more willing to listen than to speak. Keep control of your anger. Anger does not help you live the way God wants. (James 1:19-20, ERV) *This Scripture in the NKJV translation:* So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

***Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit***

Obviously, we're going to have adverse feelings, or God wouldn't have needed to provide the fruit of self-control. Just being tempted to do something is not sin. It's when you don't resist the temptation, but do it anyway, that it becomes sin. ~Joyce Meyer

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-25)

***Try to resolve or process anger before the day is over:*** When angry, do not sin; do not ever let your wrath (your exasperation, your fury or indignation) last until the sun goes down. Leave no [such] room or foothold for the devil [give no opportunity to him]. (Ephesians 4:26-27, Amp.)

***We don't have to do it on our own, God offers us help. The Apostle Paul described his struggle and shares his solution:***

I can anticipate the response that is coming: "I know that all God's commands are spiritual, but I'm not. Isn't this also your experience?" Yes. I'm full of myself—after all, I've spent a long time in sin's prison. What I don't understand about myself is that I decide one way, but then I act another, doing things I absolutely

despise. So if I can't be trusted to figure out what is best for myself and then do it, it becomes obvious that God's command is necessary.

But I need something *more*! For if I know the law but still can't keep it, and if the power of sin within me keeps sabotaging my best intentions, I obviously need help! I realize that I don't have what it takes. I can will it, but I can't *do* it. I decide to do good, but I don't *really* do it; I decide not to do bad, but then I do it anyway. My decisions, such as they are, don't result in actions. Something has gone wrong deep within me and gets the better of me every time.

It happens so regularly that it's predictable. The moment I decide to do good, sin is there to trip me up. I truly delight in God's commands, but it's pretty obvious that not all of me joins in that delight. Parts of me covertly rebel, and just when I least expect it, they take charge.

I've tried everything and nothing helps. I'm at the end of my rope. Is there no one who can do anything for me? Isn't that the real question?

The answer, thank God, is that Jesus Christ can and does. He acted to set things right in this life of contradictions where I want to serve God with all my heart and mind, but am pulled by the influence of sin to do something totally different. (Romans 7:14-25, Msg)

## CONCLUSION

We do not have to be controlled by anger or be helpless victims of its negative influence in our lives ever again! Anger can be managed successfully. We can develop greater self-control and discover freedom. We can have inner peace and calm instead of hurt and distress. Anger can be released and overcome, and we can be liberated from its trap.

I hope you have found many helpful tools and insights to use in your everyday life to deal with anger when it arises. Anger is not something that can ever be eliminated, but it can be managed successfully and used for good.

I also hope that you were inspired to take greater charge of your life and realize that you can control anger before it controls you.

As always, I encourage and recommend getting additional support and help from a professional counselor or psychologist. Anger management groups as well as individual counseling can be very helpful in monitoring your progress, sharing your experiences, and being accountable to someone.

May you discover more peace and calm in every area of your life with improved coping, deeper understanding, harmonious relationships, and a healthy mind and body!

# RESOURCES

*Articles by Krystal:*

[Anger Management: Releasing Anger & Finding Freedom](#)

[What Are You So Angry About, Really?](#)

[Whose Fault Is It Anyway?](#)

[The Serenity Prayer Principles - Finding Serenity in a Simple Prayer](#)

[Learn to Manage Your Emotions So They Don't Manage You](#)

[Gratitude: The Antidote for Toxic Emotions](#)

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Krystal Kuehn, MA, LPC, LLP, NCC is a psychotherapist, best-selling author, teacher, songwriter and musician.

Krystal specializes in helping people live their best life now, reach their full potential, overcome barriers, heal from their past, & develop a happiness lifestyle. Her inspirational and empowering approach has been helping people all over the world for over 20 years. Krystal's articles, poetry, and songs have been published locally and internationally. She is also the author of many books (For a Complete List: [click here](#)).

Krystal has a passion for encouraging others. She believes everyone has untapped potential for greatness and everyone can live a life of fulfillment and true happiness. Krystal is the co-founder of New Day Counseling in Michigan.

Her web sites include: [NewDayBooks.com](http://NewDayBooks.com)

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[Baby-Poems.com](http://Baby-Poems.com)

[NewSongProductions.com](http://NewSongProductions.com)

[BeHappy4Life.com](http://BeHappy4Life.com)

[Facebook.com/WordsofInspiration](https://Facebook.com/WordsofInspiration)

**Connect with Krystal Kuehn** It is my sincerest desire and hope that *Anger Management: What You Need to Know When Dealing with Anger* has provided you with helpful information, tips, and insights so you can manage anger effectively and develop greater self-control and inner peace! I would love to hear your testimonials and how you have been blessed. You can send your

testimonials, feedback and comments to me at:



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