

# Understanding angry emotions

## TIP SHEET

Relationships Australia WA has developed a range of tips to help support healthy and respectful relationships. As a free resource, we encourage you to share this with your community.

During difficult and challenging times your struggle with anger may be amplified. Dealing with angry feelings, whether they are yours, or someone else's, can be difficult so it is important we raise our awareness and take responsibility for understanding anger. We can also learn ways to manage our emotions and choose behaviours that have healthy outcomes for ourselves and the people around us.

**Here are some suggestions and insights to help support you:**

### 1. Understand your angry feelings are a signpost

Angry feelings are normal and very important. Unfortunately, anger has a bad reputation which can make it harder for us to express it without causing harm to ourselves and others. Anger is a big signpost telling you that something is not right or something is uncomfortable. Your job is to work out what that might be, so maybe pause and ask yourself *'why do I feel angry?'* or *'what's going on here for me?'*

### 2. Be curious about your emotions

We experience many feelings each day, and they can become mixed up, so it can be difficult to work out exactly what we are feeling, especially uncomfortable emotions. Without questioning or exploring your emotions they often escalate into anger. Getting curious gives us the opportunity to pause, identify and speak our feelings out loud, and choose different behaviours to send more useful messages to the people we care about.

### 3. Recognise that angry feelings are not the same as angry behaviour

We all feel anger, but aggressive behaviour is not helpful to us or the people we care about. It is hurtful and disrespectful to others. When the anger shows up it's helpful to begin by acknowledging you are angry, then **PAUSE, BREATHE and CHOOSE** to behave in a way that looks after yourself and others.

### 4. Recognise that anger comes in many forms

It's easy to see anger when there is yelling, but there are other ways it can be equally destructive. Many people bottle up their anger - some tell themselves we are bad people for being angry and punish ourselves quietly, or maybe blame others for our own anger. What might look like sulking to others, negativity, or being picky, can actually be pent up anger.

Each of these are unhealthy ways of dealing with our feelings. So again, it's useful to identify what is going on for us and consider how that might be impacting those around you.

#### **5. Mind your language and take responsibility**

When we are angry, it's easy to cast outward and blame others, because it gets us off the hook and makes someone else responsible for fixing us up. Then we can get angry because others do try and fix us! So think about your language - rather than saying:

"You make me angry", try something like "I am really feeling angry, annoyed, irritated....and it's because of this .....but I will work it out/I would like your help."

See the difference? That's you taking responsibility!

#### **6. After the anger**

Angry behaviour can feel quite energising and is often accompanied by feelings of righteousness. After that though, we often feel shame and embarrassment, and then maybe we feel vulnerable. Often we then go straight back to anger to avoid the vulnerable feelings, which is unhelpful and so the cycle goes on. A healthier response is for you to dig deep, acknowledge how you could have handled things differently and learn to say sorry. Vulnerability can make us more human, more courageous and more connected to others.

If you'd like to register your interest in attending a course on [Understanding Angry Emotions](#), you can book online or call 6164 0200.

Relationships Australia WA also offers a variety of relationship workshops, courses and support services to help you navigate life's challenges. For more information please call us on 1300 364 277.