

The Anger Checklist

By Jeff Dwarshuis LMSW ACSW

People who have quick or extreme levels of anger may also have difficulty recognizing the signs of anger. Fortunately people can increase their recognition of anger by learning the physical, emotional and behavioral signs of anger.

Physical signs of anger

Clenching of the jaw or grinding of the teeth

Headache or stomach ache

Rapid heart rate, sweating and feeling hot in the face

Shaking, trembling and/or dizziness

Emotional signs or triggers for anger

A feeling of flight or wanting to get away

Sadness, irritation, or feelings of resentment

Feelings of guilt or a sense of contempt for another or others

Aggression and the desire to strike out verbally or physically

Behavioral signs of anger

Rubbing of one's head or cupping fists

Pacing, raising one's voice or beginning to yell, scream or cry

Aggressive behaviors of throwing, name calling or crossing into someone else's personal space

Craving a drink, a smoke or other substances that relax oneself

Getting Anger under Control

If you think that you often or occasionally have these warning signs then see the list below for seven steps to manage anger.

1. **Take a Timeout** – Before reacting in anger count to 10, take deep breaths and allow yourself to leave the situation. Slowing oneself down helps to defuse anger.
2. **Express your anger** – Use assertive language to express frustration. Keep from being aggressive, controlling or confrontational. Also, think first before speaking to avoid saying something you might regret.
3. **Identify solutions for changing what causes anger** – Instead of getting angry identify what is causing the anger and create solutions for change.
4. **Use “I” statements** – Avoid criticizing or blaming others by expressing your anger using “I” statements. For example instead of saying “You never spend time with me.” say “I feel upset because you came home late.”
5. **Don’t hold a grudge** – It is unreasonable to expect that others will always behave as you want. Forgiveness allows you to not become crowded by your own anger and sense of injustice and makes it easier to see the positive qualities in others.
6. **Use relaxation techniques and physical exercise to decrease anger** – Physical exercise releases chemicals in the brain that can leave one feeling more happy. Relaxation, such as deep breathing, reading, or positive self talk can allow control over anger.
7. **Know when to seek help** – It can be difficult to manage anger. Consider getting help if you find your anger is out of control, hurts others or causes you to do things you regret. Help can be found through anger management classes or anger management counseling.

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