

## Exercise: Manage Your Anger

### 1. Circle anger symptoms that are most troubling to you.

#### *Physical symptoms:*

- Racing heart
- Shallow breathing
- Tightness in the chest
- Muscle tension
- Dry mouth
- Clenched teeth
- Feeling flushed in the face
- Increased perspiration or sweating
- Clenched fists
- Tunnel vision

#### *Emotional symptoms:*

- Irritability
- Sadness or depression
- Guilt
- Resentment
- Anxiety
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Urge to strike out physically or verbally

#### *Cognitive symptoms:*

What kind of thoughts and interpretations do you have while experiencing feelings of anger? The following are some common thoughts:

- This isn't fair.
- He shouldn't have done that.
- This shouldn't have happened.
- What a jerk!
- This is wrong.
- Everyone is against me.

*Behavioral symptoms:*

- Standing up for yourself
- Asserting your needs
- Confronting someone
- Picking a fight
- Raising your voice
- Screaming
- Throwing something
- Punching or hitting something
- Hurting yourself

**2. Identify the pros and cons of how you currently manage anger, how you express it, and how it affects your life and rate them from 0-5**

<b>Pros of how you currently manage your anger</b>		<b>Cons of how you currently manage your anger</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It makes me feel powerful</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is hurting my relationships</li> </ul>	

<b>Score</b>		<b>Score</b>	

**3. Identify the pros and cons of working on your anger and rate them from 0-5**

<b>Pros of working on your anger</b>		<b>Cons of working on your anger</b>	
I would feel better about myself		It is a lot of work and practice	
<b>Score</b>		<b>Score</b>	

**4. Mindfulness Exercise to attend to your anger**

1. Find a comfortable and quiet place where you can sit or lie down.
2. Close your eyes and focus on your breath. Notice what it feels like to breathe in and out and which parts of your body move as you breathe.
3. Think about an experience that triggered your anger recently. Choose an experience of a moderate level, when your anger was around a 4 or 5 on a scale from 0 to 10.
4. As you focus on the experience, pay close attention to your body sensations.
5. Once you have finished scanning your body, focus your attention on the parts of your body where you feel anger.
6. If you find yourself judging the situation, notice that judgment and bring your attention back to noticing the sensations as just sensations.
7. Focus on noticing any urges your anger triggers and keep focusing on the different components of your emotion without trying to escape or avoid, change, or push them away.

8. Do this for about ten to fifteen minutes, or until the emotion subsides and you no longer feel angry.

**5. Recognize your role in an angry incident**

- What injustice did you experience that your anger was alerting you to? Were you treated poorly, unfairly, or otherwise wronged?

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- If you didn't experience injustice, was someone or something blocking your goals?

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- What was the experience of anger like in your body? Did these physical sensations help or hurt you in responding to the injustice?

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- How did you express that anger both verbally and nonverbally (posture, facial expressions, tone of voice)?

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- What might you have done to contribute to this situation?

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## 6. Manage pre-anger states

Write down a list of states that tend to exacerbate anger. You may choose for the following list and add pre-anger states of your own:

- Stress or anxiety
- Hunger
- Running late
- Physical pain
- Sleepy
- Tiredness

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Write down a list of cues that trigger your anger. You may choose for the following list and add triggers of your own:

- Being told no
- Driving in traffic
- Waiting in line
- Having someone disagree with you
- Being insulted
- Not having your opinions or wishes taken into account
- Observing people mistreating animals or children

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How can you manage your pre-anger states and/or cues that trigger your anger better?

*For example, if driving in heavy traffic tends to make you angry, think of ways you can avoid heavy traffic.*

- Can you take a less congested route to work?
- Can you change your work schedule so you don't have to drive during rush hour?
- Can you take public transportation instead?

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## 8. Distract yourself

Write down activities you can engage in to distract yourself and allow anger to subside. Some ways to distract yourself include:

- *Doing some math:* Count backwards from a random large number by sevens. For example, starting at 685 and doing the math in reverse in your head: 678, 671, 664, ....
- *Doing a puzzle:* Do a Sudoku, or crossword puzzle, or any other game that requires engaging your brain.
- *Naming and noticing games:* Pick a letter and name all the cities you can think of that start with that letter.
- *Read a book or watch a funny movie*

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## Exercise: Deep Breathing

To soothe yourself try deliberately breathing deeply and slowly.

### *Diaphragmatic Breathing*

1. Sit comfortably erect in a chair and become aware of your breath.
2. Place your hands over your abdomen. Imagine that the stomach fills with air as you inhale, so that your hands rise, and empties of air as you exhale, so that your hands fall.
3. Breathe naturally and comfortably for one to two minutes.

### *Tactical Breathing*

This breathing technique was developed by Lieutenant Colonel Dave Grossman (Grossman and Christensen 2004), and has been widely taught to members of high-risk groups, such as the military and police.

1. Relax your shoulders and upper body.
2. Inhale through the nose for a count of four, expanding your belly.
3. Hold the breath for a count of four.
4. Exhale through the lips for a count of four.
5. Hold for a count of four.
6. Repeat the process at least three times.



## Exercise: Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR), a simple technique developed by Edmund Jacobson, a Chicago physician, helps you relax your muscles one group at a time.

PMR has proven to reduce tension headaches, backaches, tightness in the jaw, tightness around the eyes, muscle spasms, high blood pressure, and insomnia.

Note: If you have injured muscle groups, consult your doctor before attempting progressive muscle relaxation.

### *How to Do PMR?*

The idea is to tense each muscle group hard for about ten seconds, and then to let go of it suddenly. Give yourself fifteen to twenty seconds to relax and notice how the muscle group feels when relaxed in contrast to how it felt when tensed, before moving on to the next group of muscles.

Here are some guidelines for practicing progressive muscle relaxation (PMR):

1. Find a quiet location where you won't be disturbed to practice.
2. Practice on an empty stomach. Food digestion tends to disrupt deep relaxation.
3. Practice at regular times.
4. Get in a comfortable position in which your entire body, including your head, is supported. If you are feeling tired and sleepy, sitting up would be preferable to lying down.
5. Loosen any tight garments and take off your watch, glasses, shoes, and so on.
6. Make a decision to try and focus on the exercise and each time your mind wanders, gently, bring your attention back to your body sensations.

7. Assume a detached attitude. Do not judge your performance.
8. Tense a particular muscle group (shoulders, chest, stomach, lower back, buttocks, and thighs), without straining, for seven to ten seconds.
9. When you release a particular muscle group, do it abruptly, and then relax as you enjoy the sudden feeling of limpness, for at least fifteen to twenty seconds before moving on to the next group of muscles.
10. As you relax a particular muscle group, repeat to yourself a relaxing phrase, like “I am relaxing,” “or “I let the tension flow away.”
11. Practice for at least twenty minutes every day.