

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

Pros of how you currently manage your anger		Cons of how you currently manage your anger	
• It makes me feel powerful		• It is hurting my relationships	

Score		Score	

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

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

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?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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?

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*

Anger Journal Prompts

1. Has anger been a lifelong problem for you?

2. When did you first notice that you're struggling with anger? Has it worsened or improved over time?

3. Are you aware of any early experiences that may have caused anger?

4. How is anger causing problems in your life and relationships with others (e.g., friendships, romantic relationship, parenting)?

5. How would your life be different if you felt less angry or learn to manage it well?

6. What situations or people trigger your anger?

7. How do you react to anger? Do you withdraw, yell, break things?

8. Do you tend to be judgmental with yourself when feeling angry? If so, what purpose is being hard on yourself serving?

9. If you feel angry, how can you calm yourself in healthy ways?

10. How can you show yourself more acceptance and compassion?

11. Where can you ask for emotional support or help?

12. What do you need to forgive yourself for?

13. If you could write a letter to your anger, what would you say?

14. What changes can you make in your life to reduce stress?

15. What advice would you give a friend or family member who is struggling with the same anger issues?
