

# Anger: What it is and what it does

Anger is a FEELING. It is not an action. Feeling angry is neither good nor bad – it just IS. We all feel angry at times. When managed appropriately, it helps motivate us to action. It propels us to fight an injustice or right a wrong.

However, anger also triggers a physical response in the body which, over time if not managed, can lead to a host of issues.

### What Anger Does to your Body

Anger triggers the body's 'fight or flight' response. Other emotions that trigger this response include fear, excitement and anxiety. Stress hormones, such as adrenaline and cortisol, flood the body. The brain shunts blood away from the internal organs and towards the muscles, in preparation for physical exertion. Heart rate, blood pressure and respiration increase, the body temperature rises and the skin perspires. The mind is sharpened and focused. While all of this is terrific if you are about to battle a raging rhinoceros, it's not so good when stuck in your car during rush hour.

### Health Problems related to Anger

The constant flood of stress chemicals and associated metabolic changes that accompany recurrent unmanaged anger can eventually cause harm to many different systems of the body. Unmanaged anger has been linked with:

- **Headache**
- **Suppressed immune system**
- **Gastrointestinal problems**
- **Skin problems**
- **Insomnia**
- **Increased anxiety**
- **Depression**
- **High blood pressure**
- **Heart attack**
- **Stroke.**

# Adjusting for Life: Anger Management

The first step to managing anger appropriately is recognizing your early warning signs. These are the physical signs your body gives you that something is about to blow. Some common signs of anger are listed in the chart below. Write in any additional signs you have noticed in yourself.

## Signs of Anger

Physical signs	Mental Signs	Behavioral Signs
Fast heart beat Sweating Shaking Clenched jaws Clenched fists Fast breathing Headaches Stomach aches Upset feeling in the stomach Tight chest Tense muscles Frowning or Scowling Hot or Red face	Problems concentrating Confusion Memory problems Thoughts of doing harm Angry thoughts Irritability Jumpy	Inability to sit still Withdrawing from others Throwing things Pacing Yelling

## Listen to Your Body

Think about a time recently when you were angry. Now, shade or circle the areas in your body where you felt that anger. Head pounding? Tight chest? Clenched fists? Butterflies in the belly?

What is the FIRST sign you notice when you are getting angry?

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