



FOR RECURRING ANGER

- Learn desensitization techniques. The anger response can become automatic or learned and can interfere with the ability to act cooperatively in future circumstances. This technique helps a person lessen the impact of triggers and learn more constructive ways to respond.
- Use physical exercise, meditation, humor or other enjoyable activities to release pent-up anger. Finding constructive ways to release tension can help to move on or to deal more effectively with the source of anger when the time is right.

SEEK HELP

It can be difficult to manage anger in a constructive and effective manner alone. Talking with a trusted friend or family member is often very helpful. Sometimes it is useful to seek help from a counselor to understand anger, sources of anger and find resolution. The Texas State Counseling Center offers professional counseling services and referrals for Texas State students.

REMEMBER

- Learn to recognize the signs of anger.
- Understand the reasons for anger.
- Find constructive and healthy ways to express anger.

Make an Appointment

Call

512.245.2208

Visit Our Office

LBJ Student Center, Room 5-4.1
8 a.m. – 5 p.m., Monday – Friday

Online Resources

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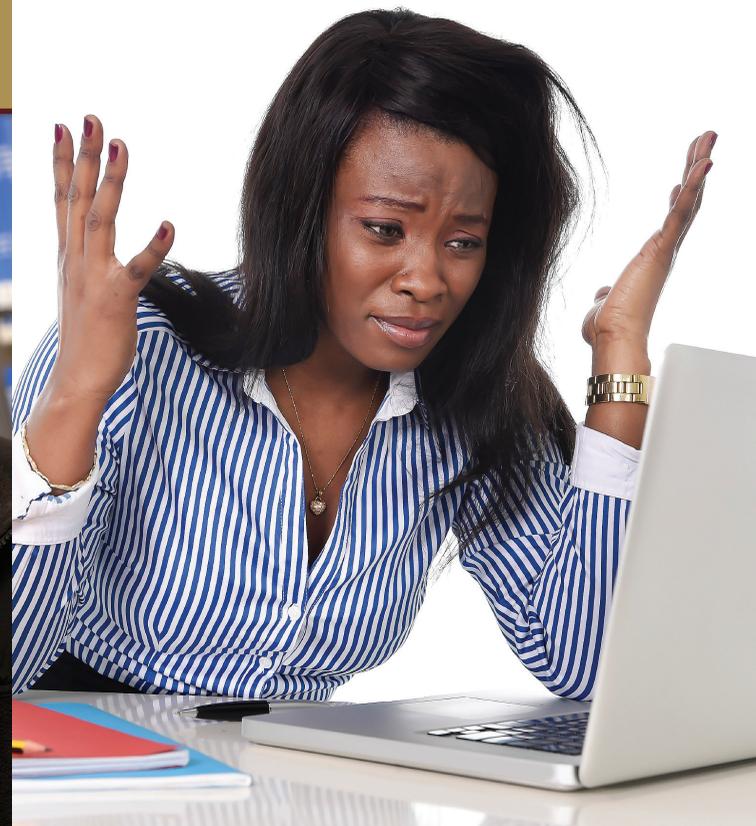
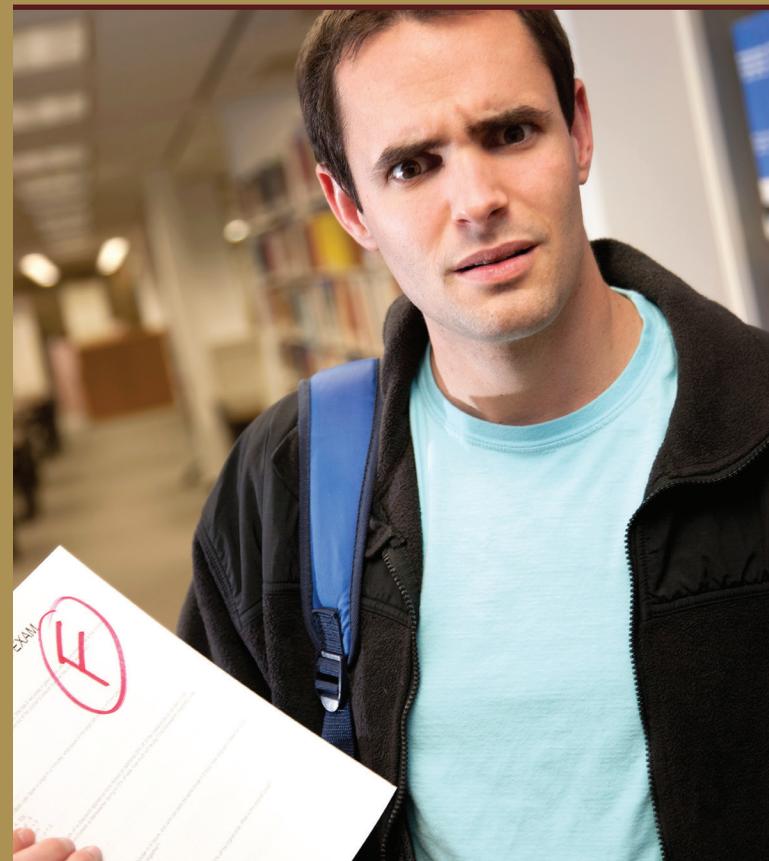


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COUNSELING CENTER

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ANGER: LEARNING HOW TO MANAGE



COUNSELING CENTER



The rising STAR of Texas

WHEN ANGER OCCURS

Garrett is fuming because he is stuck in traffic and is late for class. Kelsea is furious because Josh is already a half-hour late calling her. Devin is upset because he received a bill that he did not anticipate from the university accounting office.

Anger is a powerful but completely healthy human emotion that we naturally experience in response to frustration, hurt, disappointment, annoyance, harassment and threats to our security. If we fail to deal with our anger constructively and effectively, it can propel us into inappropriate, aggressive or violent behavior that can hurt others and create additional problems for us. Prolonged anger can result in high levels of tension and anxiety, health problems, increased accidents and interpersonal problems. Therefore, it is important to understand anger, its effects and patterns of response.

ANGER — WHAT HAPPENS

PHYSICALLY

When a person becomes angry, the body reacts just like it does to stress. The heart beats faster to pump increased oxygen, adrenaline and sugar into the bloodstream. Breathing becomes more rapid, blood pressure rises, and muscles tense; the body is energized for action. In looking for ways to release the tension, there might be a desire to yell or shout, slam things or punch something. Garrett, for example, might start leaning on his horn. Kelsea may send an angry text. Action may be taken to resolve a problem, or the anger might be held in. However, if a way is not found to release the tension, there's a risk of building up anger to a level that is dangerous and difficult to control.

COGNITIVELY

When thoughts about others become irrational or unfair, it may increase the anger felt. Kelsea might assume Josh doesn't care anymore. Self-talk can turn negative or self-degrading. Devin may think that bad things will always happen to him. Perceptions of a situation can become exaggerated and spiral to catastrophic levels; Devin might think that the institution is trying to sabotage his graduation. Negative thoughts often exaggerate anger.

EMOTIONALLY

Anger can often intensify or cover up other emotions. Self-pity can turn to rage when bad things happen; it's sometimes easier to show anger than fear. It's important to be able to know when other feelings are involved and need to be addressed.

WHAT CAUSES ANGER?

There are many types of circumstances that can cause a person to become angry. Some of the common sources of anger are:

- **Frustration** — Frustration occurs when there are barriers to short- or long-term goals; not being able to do what one wants or go where one desires. This can

generate feelings of helplessness and loss of control. Garrett is frustrated because he doesn't have control to make traffic move faster and get to where he wants.

- **Disappointment** — It is easy to feel disappointment when situations, events or people, including one's self, do not meet the expectations held. Kelsea may have expectations of when and how often Josh should call for her to feel appreciated.
- **Threat to security** — Situations that threaten security can range from doing poorly on an exam, losing a wallet or encountering a problem one is unprepared for. A person can feel vulnerable and unable to control their sense of well-being.
- **Fear** — Fear is the most common thread that runs through all of these situations, and anger is an emotion that is often used to mask the discomfort many experience with fear. Rarely do people want to admit they are afraid. It is a defensive response to the feelings of helplessness and vulnerability that fear produces. While fear is a passive emotion with energy directed inward, anger is an aggressive emotion that directs energy outward, away from one's self.

Sometimes there are more subtle causes of anger.

- fear of being powerless or being taken advantage of
- belief that being aggressive is an effective way to get results
- overreaction or misinterpretation of a situation based on internal beliefs or perceptions



We cognitively interpret most of our life experiences; how we interpret a situation influences how much anger we might experience. For example, if Kelsea believes that Josh has not called because he frequently forgets, she probably will experience annoyance. However, if she interprets his behavior as not caring about her, her fear may magnify and become anger.

HANDLING ANGER

Everyone experiences anger. The ability to express negative feelings in a constructive and positive manner is essential to positive physical and mental health. Listed below are steps to express and handle anger effectively.

- **Recognize anger.** Admit it, know personal reactions and signs of anger.
- **Slow down.** Breathe first, and remember that the situation can be handled more effectively from a calm mind and body. Decide not to act until calm is reached.
- **Use a sounding board.** Find a neutral person to talk to about reasons for the anger; it may help to determine accuracy of interpretations.
- **Identify fears.** Check to see if the anger has triggered fears, especially fears that come from sources other than the actual event occurring. Reappraise to see if "it's as bad as all that."
- **Don't avoid the issue.** Avoid allowing the anger to build up and interfere with later situations or circumstances. After reappraising the situation decide to confront it or let it go.
- **Examine options.** Identify different ways to respond to the situation and the potential outcomes that might result. Recognize that although it may seem there is only one way to respond, this usually isn't true; it's just not always easy.
- **Decide how to respond.** Determine the response that will result in the most positive outcome over the long run, one that won't generate regret or create more chaos.
- **Avoid displacing anger.** Because the energy of anger needs to be released, there is a tendency to displace anger onto people who are not the source of the anger.



WHEN IT'S TIME TO COMMUNICATE

Know the difference between passive, aggressive and assertive — healthy communication involves the latter. An assertive approach takes into consideration the needs, rights and obligations of each party involved.

Learn to fight fairly. It is important to know one's own feelings first, then to state clearly specific problem behaviors or statements and what is needed to rectify the situation. For example, Kelsey could say, "I feel ignored and unimportant when I don't hear from you when you said you'd contact me. I'd like for you to let me know and then follow through when you say you will call."

Ask if the other party understands and allow that person to express a differing perspective and/or need. Avoid blame and name calling.