



the facts:  
mental health challenges



headspace  
National Youth Mental Health Foundation

# understanding anger

**Everyone feels angry sometimes and feeling angry is OK. It can help get us through tough situations, help us understand ourselves better and can motivate us to change things we don't like about our life.**

Anger can become a problem when it begins to impact a person's daily life and causes them to react in a way that might hurt themselves or those around them (physically or emotionally).

If you feel angry a lot or have trouble controlling or expressing your anger, there are lots of things you can do to help manage this in a healthy way.

## Anger versus aggression

Anger can sometimes lead to people being aggressive or violent (e.g., physically, verbally) but they're not the same. Anger is a feeling, but aggression and violence are actions, and it's these actions that can lead to problems.



Anger can sometimes feel intense and overwhelming, but it doesn't necessarily lead to violent or aggressive behaviour.

## Why might I feel angry?

Anger can be our way of expressing or responding to a range of other feelings like:

- frustration
- embarrassment
- guilt or shame
- jealousy
- grief and loss
- hurt or sadness
- feeling unable to control a situation
- feeling threatened or frightened
- feeling unfairly treated
- feeling misunderstood or not listened to
- feeling a loss of connection to family, community or country.

## Signs anger might be a problem include:

- feeling angry a lot of the time
- behaving aggressively/violently (verbally, physically)
- having trouble expressing anger
- feeling sad or upset because of getting angry
- using alcohol or other drugs to manage anger
- using aggression to get people to do something
- withdrawing from people or situations
- bottling things up
- regretting the things you did or said when you were angry.





## What else might be going on?

Difficulties with anger can be a sign that someone might be experiencing sadness, depression, isolation, discrimination, or another mental health difficulty.

## So what can I do to manage my anger in a healthy way?

### Understand your angry triggers and signs

#### Triggers

Think about what normally triggers your anger. It might be possible to avoid these situations, react differently when they happen, or you could let others know your triggers so they can help.

#### Signs

These might be things like feeling hot, fists or teeth clenching, tightening in the chest, faster heartbeat.

### Calm your reactions down

- slow your breathing – take deep breaths
- take a break and leave the situation
- use distractions – e.g., count slowly to 10, try push-ups or bounce a ball
- get into nature – pay attention to what you see, hear, smell and touch
- talk with someone you trust.

### Understand why you're feeling angry

#### Ask yourself questions like:

- Did someone do or say something that upset me?
- What other feelings are happening for me?
- Does the situation bring up bad memories?
- Try drawing your answers if that's better for you.

### Explore your solutions

Wait until you're feeling calm and safe and think of some other ways you can express your anger.

#### Ask yourself questions like:

- How can I explain the situation in a calm way?
- What might I suggest to a friend if they asked me for help in this situation?
- What have I seen other people do that helps them deal with anger?

## Getting support

There are plenty of ways to manage anger so that it doesn't get in the way of your daily life or impact other people.

Check out the headspace website for tips on how to look after your mental health and to learn more about managing tough times.

If you've tried some of these strategies for some time without improving, it's time to reach out to a trusted friend, family member, Elder, teacher, counsellor, or a health service.

### Reach out to someone you trust

Your family and friends, a teacher or coach, your mob or Elders, might have ideas about how you can express your anger in healthy ways. Talking with them can be a great place to start.



If you or someone you know is going through a tough time you can get help and support from headspace, your school, TAFE or university wellbeing service or your local health provider. For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre, or for online and telephone support, visit [headspace.org.au](https://headspace.org.au)

If you need immediate assistance call 000 or to speak to someone urgently, please call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467.

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