

Spotlight!

Published: March 13, 2008

Anger Management 101

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Courtesy of: WomenSpeak*

Sally works for a large publishing firm. Her days are ruled by deadlines and she's constantly under pressure to complete her multiple projects on time. In the past, Sally was able to handle the hectic pace. But lately, vendor deliverables have been delayed and there has been high turnover in her department. She finds herself resentful and easily angered when she is asked to complete assignments on short notice.



Sally recently lost her composure with her supervisor and was given a warning. She is surprised and concerned by her own reactions. Sally loves her job but really needs some help. A friend of hers recently went through a divorce and used the company's referral service to find a specialist to help her cope. Sally calls her friend and gets the number, hoping to learn how to better manage her anger and improve her workplace situation.

Does Sally's situation sound familiar? Is your anger having a negative impact on your career and your life in general? Are you guilty of taking out your anger and frustration on colleagues, friends, or family? Take the quiz below to determine if your anger is getting the best of you.

Which of the following statements are true for you?

- a. When I become angry I react impulsively, without thinking.
- b. When someone I know is angry and upset, I also become angry and upset.
- c. I am easily embarrassed and humiliated, and when I feel these emotions I become angry.
- d. I am upset easily and find it hard to calm down once I become emotional.
- e. I often have to apologize to others for losing my temper.
- f. Once I am upset, I'm unable to give myself time to recover my composure.
- g. I don't seem to know my emotional limits, so my anger is triggered easily and without warning.

- h. People have told me I am verbally abusive, and I have occasionally been physically abusive with others or have lashed out by hitting a wall or breaking things.
- i. I feel guilty for having negative feelings and being angry, but these feelings keep coming back.

Scoring

Now tally up your responses. If you checked "true" for five or more of the items, your level of anger may be harmful to yourself, to others, and to your business. Now is the time to rein in those emotions and use your passion in a positive way to improve relationships and profits.

Here are some tips for managing your emotions the next time you find yourself in a situation that causes your anger to bubble over:

1. **Allow some quiet time for your anger to subside.** You cannot solve problems when you are extremely emotional.
2. **Refocus on what you want to see happen.** Ask yourself: What do I want the outcome of this situation to be?
3. **Acknowledge the situation.** Keep your voice calm. Use eye contact and slow, firm, gestures. Let the other person know that you want to talk and that you will listen to what he or she has to say.
4. **Don't jump in with both feet!** Start gently and move to heavier responses, only if necessary. Give the other person options.
5. **Look for solutions and be ready to compromise.**
6. **Find a way for all parties to save face.** No one wants to be blamed or embarrassed by the situation.
7. **Maintain respect at all times.** Treat the other person in an adult manner, even if his or her behaviour appears childish. Don't scold or humiliate.
8. At the first sign of anger, decide whether it is better to probe for more information or to acknowledge the feelings. Sometimes an open-ended or factual question redirects the other party; at other times, the emotion is the dominant message and requires attention. One word of caution: In some situations, calling attention to the emotion can actually increase the intensity of the anger.
9. **Give the person some time.** Take the pressure off the situation and allow a cooling-off time. People de-escalate at different rates. Usually, the more upset a person is, the longer it will take him or her to calm down.
10. **Be aware that the person may become angry again.** If that occurs, once again, take time out.
11. **Use empathy carefully.** Over-stating or under-stating the intensity of the other person's feelings may trigger further anger.

12. **Finally, safety first.** Don't put yourself physically between two angry people. Never enter a situation you think may become physical. Physical behaviour never solves problems. If things escalate to this kind of aggressive behaviour, don't hesitate to call the police.

Anger is an emotion we all experience from time to time. Different people react to anger in different ways. Some people use their anger as motivation to get them moving in the right direction. For others, things may quickly move out of control.

If you find that you are not able to curb your anger, it may be time to seek outside assistance. Many companies have an internal Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or make referrals to a mental health professional. EAPs work with employees and their families with everyday living problems. If your company does not have an internal EAP, check with your health care provider. Help is available. Do not let anger win. You can take charge of your emotions in the workplace and beyond.

All works Copyright 2006-2008. Nancy D. O'Reilly, Psy.D., is a clinical psychologist and the founder of the WomenSpeak Project, which is based on a decade of research about aging in a youth-driven society. Dr. O'Reilly is the author of Timeless WomenSpeak About Feeling Youthful At Any Age. She is a member of the American Psychological Association. For more information, visit her Website: www.womenspeak.com or call: 417-860-5834.