

**HOW TO  
MANAGE  
YOUR ANGER**

**BOOK 2**

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## **HOW TO MANAGE YOUR ANGER:**

Book 1 discussed the following chain of factors that lead to anger and possible violence:

**SETTING → TRIGGER → THOUGHTS → ANGER → VIOLENCE**

Book 2 discusses techniques which can be used to manage your anger by interrupting this chain. Managing your anger does not mean never expressing it, but means making it less of a problem for you. Anger is a natural emotion that can be used constructively by activating people to resolve problems.

Have a look back at the HELPFUL and UNHELPFUL ASPECTS  
Of anger in Book 1

What is it about your anger that you want or need to change ?

Anger Management involves learning how to tackle those unhelpful aspects of anger that are causing you difficulty. For many people this means aiming to get angry less often, learning to control how angry they feel, or not letting their feelings of anger last too long.

On the next page you will see an “Objectives Checklist”. It shows some of the aims that are often mentioned by people wanting to manage their anger. Have a look at these aims and if you wish, follow the instructions at the top, and add your own aims at the bottom.

**ANGER MANAGEMENT : OBJECTIVES CHECKLIST:**

Which of the following objectives would you like to achieve ? Put a mark beside those you could set for yourself. Add others at the bottom if you wish:

- Be more assertive
- Walk away from an argument
- Cool down an argument
- Look away when someone stares at you
- Stop myself from saying something I didn't want to say
- Calm myself down when I feel angry
- Spot when a situation might get out of hand and recognise when I am becoming angry
- Speak quietly instead of shouting
- Stop myself from hitting somebody
- Stop myself from swearing at someone
- Tell myself: "There's no point in getting worked up about this"
- Stop myself from flaring up when I am approached by the Police
- Talk to someone I don't like without being hostile to them
- Feel more relaxed
- Count to 10 when I feel furious
- When I feel angry, tell myself to do nothing until I feel calm
- Stop myself from feeling angry when I think of someone I hate
- Think more carefully before I say something
- Feel less anxious in groups of people
- Be less affected by violence in others
- Control my own mood swings in a better way
- Not let little things upset me so much
- Tell myself when I've done well
  
- .....
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## PREPARING FOR CHANGE – An Anger Diary:

Learning to manage your anger will involve making changes. They may be alterations in your lifestyle so as to reduce the number of potentially angry situations, or in the way you think or behave when those situations do arise. However, before making efforts to try out any changes it is very important to become an expert on your own anger. This involves knowing the stages of the setting – trigger – thoughts – anger – behaviour chain as they apply to your situation.

One of the most effective ways of becoming familiar is to keep an **ANGER DIARY** over a period of time in which you divide up each angry episode into these stages. Doing this allows you to spot any common features between individual angry episodes.

To start an anger diary try filling in the form at the back of this booklet as angry episodes occur. There is also a form with some completed examples to help you to do this. Try to fill it in as soon after the episode as possible so as to remember as many details as you can.

Continue onto A4 paper in order to record the relevant details of when you feel angry over a period of about two weeks. Below is described what sort of details each of the column headings ask for:

### i. **SETTING:**

These are situations that put you into a certain frame of mind that make anger and violence more likely when you are provoked.

Often it can be a physical place where arguments and anger often occur and so you expect there might be an argument as you enter it.

For example:

- DSS Office
- Sitting down for meals at home
- Coming home late from work

Think about **WHERE** the angry episode occurred and write it down.

Alternatively it might be the presence of certain people rather than the place.

For example:

- An unwelcome relative joins in a family get together at your house
- Spotting the man who had insulted you last week drinking at the bar
- Meeting the neighbour who constantly tries to put you down

Think about **WHO** was present when you got angry. This not only includes anyone you might have got angry at, but also other people who might have created the setting for anger in more subtle ways. For example, some people who have problems with anger feel they are locked in an image of being someone “not afraid to stand up for themselves”. Was there someone present whom you feared would have thought less of you if you hadn’t reacted in the way you did?

Write down anyone whose presence you think might have made you more likely to react angrily.

Finally, the **SETTING** for anger might have been how you felt physically and mentally at the time. Were you feeling fed up; or tired; or uncomfortable [such as being in pain] ?

Remember how easily other forms of arousal such as excitement or anxiety can switch to feelings of anger. Were you worked up about something else at the time ?

Think about **HOW YOU FELT**, both physically and mentally **JUST BEFORE YOU GOT ANGRY**. Write down anything that might have made you more likely to get angry.

ii. **TRIGGER:**

In this column write down the **EVENT ABOUT WHICH YOU BECAME ANGRY**. To help you, look back at page 5 in book 1 in which common triggers are described.

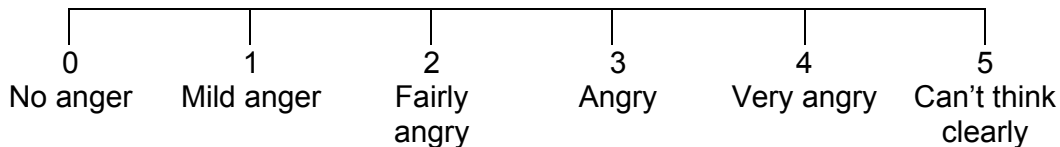
iii. **THOUGHTS:**

Try to write down the actual thoughts that went through your mind at the time the incident was occurring. This takes practice: the examples shown on the sheet may help you to do this.

If you find it hard to identify your thoughts, you may find it easier to leave this section out and fill in the rest of the diary sheet. This will still be very helpful, and you can start doing the **Thoughts** section later on.

iv. **How Angry you Became:**

The purpose of this column is to record how intense the feelings of anger became during the episode. Try to rate how angry you felt on the scale below:



Trying to rate your anger may be difficult at first. Don't worry if you can only make very rough estimates at first. The exercise of reflecting upon your sensations you have when you get angry is itself extremely important. Becoming an expert on your own anger includes becoming familiar with these sensations, particularly those which first occur when you begin to get angry.

v. **WHAT YOU DID:**

Note down here how you behaved once you became angry. This will enable you to identify behaviours that might lead to some of the problems that you are experiencing with anger. Examples of such behaviours are:

**Aggressive acts:** which tend to escalate anger and increase the likelihood of violence.

**Walking away angrily** and never returning to the issue to find a possible solution since this does little to stop the provocation occurring again.

**Not expressing your anger** in any way, since this can lead to your anger lasting too long and also does little to find a possible solution

vi. **HOW DID THE INCIDENT END ?**

If your initial behaviour ended the incident straight away [such as walking away] then there may be nothing more to write here. However, if this is not the case then write down how the incident ended. For example, did you resort to violence, did a third party intervene, or did the other person walk away? Simply note down what happened.

**TECHNIQUES FOR MANAGING YOUR ANGER:**

1. **Getting to know what makes you angry and why ?**

Coming to an understanding of how your own anger works is a vital first step. By keeping a regular account of angry episodes in your diary, you can become familiar with the pattern of settings, triggers and thoughts which make you likely to get angry. Once you understand when you are angry and exactly what has made you angry, you are in a better position to do something about it.

Your diary can also help you to see when your anger was not in your best interests. You can see when you tend to over-react; also when it is not the situation so much that has made you angry, but your approach to it.

2. **Changing your Thinking:**

Remember that a setting or a trigger does not directly lead to your anger. It is what you **THINK** about the setting or trigger that makes you angry or not angry. [See Book 1 for the example of the Porsche and the Poker Game !]

Anger can be a result of many things that go on in your mind. Sometimes we expect too much from a situation, or we take things too personally. Sometimes we need to step back and look at a situation from a fresh perspective. So learning to see things from different points of view and perspective is important.

Instead of being provoked by your thoughts, you can use your own thoughts to regulate your anger and guide your behaviour.

There are 4 areas where you can learn to regulate your anger through thinking:

**i. STOP DWELLING ON THINGS THAT YOU ARE ANGRY ABOUT:**

To be angry about something, you must pay attention to it. How often do you find yourself going over and over an annoying thing that happened days ago? Do you find yourself unable to focus on work or on enjoying yourself because you keep thinking about something that has made you angry. Examine the things that you pay attention to.

**IF PAYING ATTENTION TO SOMETHING THAT MAKES YOU ANGRY DOESN'T ACCOMPLISH ANYTHING, THEN DON'T PAY ATTENTION TO IT**

**LET IT GO .....**

**AND FREE YOURSELF TO DO SOMETHING MORE PRODUCTIVE**

**ii. HAVE A REALISTIC AND FLEXIBLE EXPECTATION OF YOURSELF AND OTHERS:**

Holding unrealistic expectations or expectations which are too high, can result in frustration and anger. How often do you get upset when:

- Something didn't go the way it was supposed to
- OR
- You made a mistake

Maybe you get frustrated because you cannot accomplish all the things you set yourself to do in the day.

Do you get regularly angry with someone because you are set in your thoughts about them and you tell yourself that you "just know they are going to do or say something" to make you furious?

Ideally, expectations are realistic and flexible. Try and adjust your expectations to the particular situation. Being realistic means being able to adjust your expectations to changes in your situation; what is realistic this week may be quite unrealistic next week.

Try to be kind to yourself when you make a mistake. After all, nothing is gained by "beating yourself over the head". Rather forgive yourself; "nobody's perfect".



**Did he hit me because of my INTERACTION or because he's a lout ?**

**iii. TRY TO TAKE A POSITIVE BALANCED ATTITUDE:**

Anger is rooted in negative thinking. It is fed by focusing on things that have gone wrong. So it is important to try to be positive about yourself and others.

Keeping a sense of balance and perspective is also important. Be serious about your responsibilities, but don't take things too seriously. Anger often comes from losing perspective: have you ever got angry over some small thing and realised later in the day that it wasn't worth getting so upset about ? Your view or perspective of what happened has changed. But if you remain locked in your first point of view, your anger will remain.

Learning to understand things from other people's point of view can also help prevent anger and keep it from becoming too extreme.

Get into the habit of asking yourself: "If I was that person, what would I be thinking, feeling, doing and why ?"

**iv. "SELF-STATEMENTS": Coping by Talking to Yourself:**

The things you say to yourself can make you upset and they can extend anger long after it would normally have gone.

Just as we can say things to ourselves that make us angry, we can use "self-statements" to regulate and control upset and anger,

To do this it is helpful to break the anger experience down into what happens before, during and after it.

- Preparing for the provocation
- Recognising when a situation is provoking you
- Coping with arousal
- Thinking about what happened

Some examples of self-statements are given for each of these stages. You may find some of them useful for managing your anger, but these are only examples and will not be suitable for every person and every situation. You can use self-instructions to guide your thoughts, feelings and actions in a way that deals with a particular problem or situation.

Therefore you need to find self-statements that are suited to **YOUR** particular situation. This is the important difference between self-statements and simple, mindless positive thinking. Simply telling yourself “that everything is fine” or that some awful person is “really OK” will probably not be very effective.

Keeping your particular problem situation in mind, try to find some self-statements of your own that will help you to deal specifically with the challenges of that particular situation.

**Preparing:**

When you know that you will soon be faced with something that is going to make you angry. [This is not always possible, as anger often happens spontaneously, without warning].

When you can see a problem coming, you can work out a way of coping with it ahead of time. You can also gear your mind to controlling your anger:

- “This is going to upset me, but I know how to deal with it”
- “Remember, stick to the issues and don’t take it personally”
- “There won’t be any need for an argument”
- “Easy does it. Remember to keep your sense of humour”

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**Recognising that you are in a situation that provokes you:**

The situation happens either suddenly or builds gradually. You begin to feel the early warning signs of anger. The sooner you are aware of these signs the sooner you can begin to attempt to cope with and regulate your anger before it gets out of hand.

“As long as I keep my cool, I’m in control”  
“Don’t make more out of this than you have to”  
“I’m not going to let him get to me”  
“Look for the positives. Don’t assume the worst or jump to conclusions”

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**☐ Coping with Arousal:**

You become increasingly agitated and tense the more provoked you feel. There are still things that you can say to yourself to manage your anger:

“My muscles are starting to feel tight. Time to relax and slow things down”  
“I have a right to be annoyed, but let’s keep the lid on”  
“He’d probably like me to get really angry. Well I’m going to disappoint him”  
“I can’t expect people to act the way that I want them to”  
“Let’s try a co-operative approach”

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**☐ Thinking about what happened:**

This is often a time when you remind yourself about what upset you. Sometimes you relive the experience or examine the effect it has had on you. Obviously how you feel will depend upon whether the conflict was resolved or not. Maybe you were unable to resolve the conflict. Maybe it was more important to keep control of your anger than to get the conflict sorted out. If you have succeeded in resolving things, then acknowledge your efforts and give yourself a pat on the back.

**i. When conflict is unresolved:**

“Forget about the aggravation. Thinking about it only makes you upset”  
“These are difficult situations and they take time to straighten out”  
“I’ll get better at this as I get more practice”  
“Can you laugh about it, it’s probably not so serious”  
“Take a deep breath and think positive thoughts”

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ii. **When conflict is resolved or you have coped with your anger:**

“I suppose I’ve been getting upset for too long when it wasn’t even necessary”

“My pride can get me into trouble, but when I don’t take things too seriously, I’m better off”

“I’m doing better at this all the time”

“I could have got more upset, but it wasn’t worth it”

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**TO USE SELF-INSTRUCTIONS EFFECTIVELY YOU MUST**

1. **Understand your own anger patterns**
2. **Be able to change how you think about situations**
3. **Break the anger experience down into stages**  
**And**
4. **Use self-statements that can get you to re-focus, think constructively and take action to regulate your anger.**

**Further techniques to manage your anger are:**

**3. Learn to Reduce your Tension and Arousal when Angry:**

You can’t be angry and relaxed at the same time. Anger is linked with tension. Because anger mobilises your body’s resources it gets you into high gear: your heart beats faster, you breathe quicker, your blood pressure goes up and your muscles get tight. You become sweaty and hot, literally “hot under the collar”. You can’t speak clearly, you shake, your concentration worsens, and your thoughts are disrupted. The more tense you are in general, the easier it is to get angry. When you are uptight, little things seem like big things.

You can be taught to do what is known as deep-muscle relaxation. It is a technique that needs to be learnt and there are various opportunities to learn how to do it, for example, relaxation groups. These techniques will help you to lower your level of tension by

relaxing your body and your mind. You can use these procedures at various times throughout the day, the relaxation techniques can help settle your nerves – it's like a light sleep.

**Relaxation has the following uses:**

- i. The more tense you are, the easier you become upset. So, as relaxation lowers your general level of tension, you will find it easier not to react to situations that could make you potentially angry.
- ii. You learn that you can control how you feel. You can use relaxation to “cool off” after you have felt angry. Also, relaxation teaches you to be aware of your body's signs and sensations, so you can become more aware of when your anger is starting to escalate, and do something about this.

Learning relaxation helps to bring your body back to a state of balance. As you learn how to relax and that you are able to relax, you gain a fundamental way of controlling your anger.

**HUMOUR AND LAUGHTER** are really good antidotes to anger. Anger is often the result of us being too hard on ourselves and on others. When we expect ourselves and others to be perfect, we lose sight of the positive things because we are focused on how we have failed ourselves or how other people have failed us. Humour is an attempt to get away from life's frustrations, e.g. jokes about bosses, in-laws etc. Remember the last time you had a really good laugh ? Your face was bright, your eyes glistened and your body and mind were relaxed !

**4. Controlling your Behaviour:**

When we are extremely angry, we tend to act before we think, and our behaviour makes the situation worse. Anger is different from violence: anger is an emotion, whereas violence is an act. However, anger can easily turn into violence. This is sometimes because we simply do not know how to settle a fight or to say what we want to say.

Anger can also become a problem if you back off from a conflict because you are afraid of what you will do if you lose control. However, there are ways to deal with someone who is upsetting you without losing control. You can learn to express your feelings without losing control through guided practice in situations where you feel angry. You will gradually feel more comfortable about what to do and how to do it.

**i. Deciding what you want from a situation:**

When you get angry it is because something is different to the way that you would like it to be.

You need to change your behaviour to correct a situation or to get what you want out of that situation. Obviously, before you can change your behaviour you need to get clear what it is that you are wanting to be different. What do you want ? What is your goal ?

ii. **Deciding on what to do to achieve your goal:**

Once you have decided on your goals you have to set about changing your behaviour to achieve them. When changing your behaviour it could be helpful to keep the following points in mind:

- Take things one step at a time. Some problems can't be solved in the immediate situation. Sometimes the wisest thing to do is to arrange to discuss the problem at a later time when tempers cool down or when someone is less emotionally upset.
- Once you have decided what you want, keep your mind on that. Don't allow yourself to be side-tracked onto other issues. If you have decided you want to discuss a problem with someone so that you can put your point of view across and reach a compromise, you need to have decided in advance exactly what it is you want and how you are going to approach the person. If an argument starts to develop, don't bring up all the things your dislike about the person concerned, e.g.:

“You complain about the money I spend on beer, but what about the money you spend on cigarettes and sweets and you're so untidy etc., etc.”

You cannot reach your goal unless you stick to your point.

If other issues get dragged in, the anger and recriminations are more likely to escalate.

- The management of anger involves skills in communication. Being able to communicate angry feelings in an effective, non-hostile form is a central skill in managing your anger. If you can learn to respectfully tell someone that you feel angry and tell them how you'd like them to act differently, this has several important effects: It:
  - Helps control the build-up of anger
  - Prevents you from losing control of your anger
  - Provides a basis for changing the situation that has caused the anger

When communicating your needs try to avoid “You” statements. For example, if you say:

“You are so unreliable”

The person may resent being blamed. Instead, use “I” statements:

“I feel angry when you say you will do something and you don’t do it”.

This expresses your feelings without blaming the other person. Try to avoid using emotive words like “lazy”, “Useless” or “selfish”. These usually arouse feelings of resentment in the other person and makes them less likely to listen to you.

You may find it helpful to break down what you want to say into the following four parts:

For example: Supposing you feel angry about the fact that you are not getting enough help around the house:

- **EXPLANATION:** State the problem or request clearly as you see it  
“I seem to be taking on more than my fair share of the housework”
- **FEELINGS:** Acknowledge your own feelings using “I” [not “you”] statements.  
“It’s upsetting me because I don’t get enough time to myself anymore”
- **NEEDS:** Outline clearly what you want out of the situation. Make as few demands as possible.  
“I’d like us to sit down and decide on a fairer system”
- **RESULTS:** Say what will happen as a result; the results if your needs are met and the disadvantages if they are not.  
“I think there will be a lot less tension between us if we sort this out, but will just carry on arguing if we don’t”

Sometimes raising your voice or flexing your muscles can get results in the short-term, but are not effective when it comes to finding solutions in the long-term, or to complex problems, and you will achieve more lasting results by sticking to the issues in a reasoned but determined way. Be patient and determined. However, remember that you won’t always get what you want. If you can express what you think, feel and want without losing your temper, that in itself is a good result. This will probably make it more likely that you will achieve your goal but it won’t guarantee it. Life isn’t like that. Expecting to always get what you want will only lead to more anger. You need to be prepared to compromise or sometimes even to accept that you won’t get what you want.

Showing some understanding of the other person’s point of view is more likely to get you a real solution to a problem.

Why butt your head into the wall, when you can get around the barrier.

- Learn to express your anger appropriately. This involves **LEARNING TO EXPRESS YOUR ANGER:**

- **At the right time:** For example, trying to discuss a problem with someone when you are both tired, hungry and have just got home after a hard day's work, could easily turn into an argument. You would probably get much better results if you waited until after you've had a meal and a little time to unwind.
- **With the right person:** Sometimes the anger that we feel for one person we take out on another person and so the wrong people bear the brunt of our anger e.g. when things don't go well at work, taking the frustration and anger out on family members. When this happens our relationships suffer.
- **In the right way:**

- **IF YOU ARE AFRAID THAT YOU WILL LOSE CONTROL AND BECOME VIOLENT:**

If you are becoming angry and fear that there is a possibility that you might lose control then it is important that you get away from the situation about which you are feeling angry.

- **HELP FROM FRIENDS:**

When something has really upset you, it is important to have a friend or loved one who is able to listen and to perhaps help you get a better perspective/view of the problem.

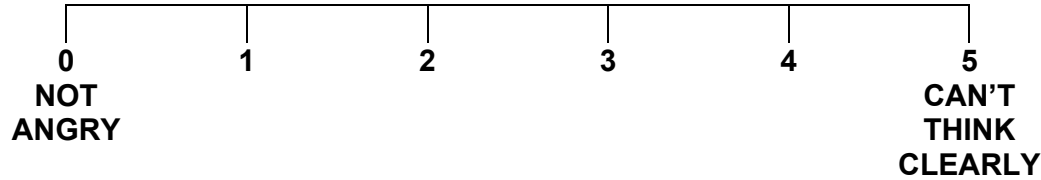
Sometimes just having someone listen while you express your feelings can help. Trusted people, who are not themselves involved in your conflict, can provide helpful suggestions about how to deal with certain people or support you in the steps you need to take to deal with the situation.

Supportive relationships also give you the feeling that you are cared for and respected and so help you keep a positive attitude which is important when dealing with anger.

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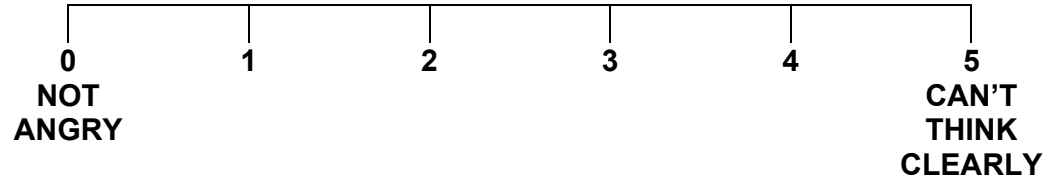
# ANGER MANAGEMENT SHEET:

**EXAMPLE SHEET**



DATE/ TIME	SETTING: [e.g. What had been going on before ? Where were you ? Who was there?	TRIGGER: [i.e. What actually provoked the anger ?	THOUGHTS: [Try to write down the <u>actual</u> thoughts that went through your mind]	HOW ANGRY? [0 - 5]	WHAT YOU DID:	HOW DID INCIDENT END ?
Wed. 6 <sup>th</sup> July	Driving to work. Already late. Heavy traffic	A woman walks very slow across the road at the pelican crossing, so I have to wait after my light has gone green	Stupid woman, what's the matter with you? You shouldn't even be out on the road in your state	3	Sounded my horn at her and made her jump	Drove off feeling embarrassed and ashamed of myself
Sat. 9 <sup>th</sup> July	At home. Trying to put new shelves up. Not happy. Didn't really want to do it	Screw won't go into the wall	What's the point? Everything I do goes wrong	4	Threw everything on the floor	Went out. Came back and had to pick it all up
Fri. 15 <sup>th</sup> July	Just back from work. Hard day - tired	Partner said: "Did you remember to get some milk on the way home"	Something else I haven't done. Never mind the fact I've been at work all day. Some people are never satisfied	3	Swore at them	Argument. Bad atmosphere all evening

**ANGER MANAGEMENT SHEET:**



<b>DATE/ TIME</b>	<b>SETTING:</b> [e.g. What had been going on before ? Where were you ? Who was there?	<b>TRIGGER:</b> [i.e. What actually provoked the anger ?	<b>THOUGHTS:</b> [Try to write down the <u>actual</u> thoughts that went through your mind]	<b>HOW ANGRY?</b> [0 - 5]	<b>WHAT YOU DID:</b>	<b>HOW DID INCIDENT END ?</b>