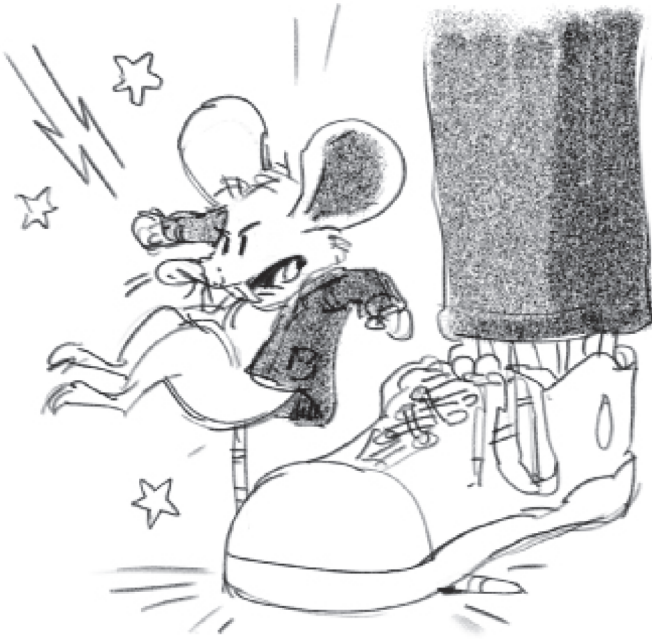


ANGER MANAGEMENT



"We are not in control of the things or the people that make us angry, nor can we change them. We can learn to better understand the roots of our own anger and change how we control our reactions."

—Thich Nhat Hanh,
Anger: Wisdom for Cooling the Flames

Anger is an emotional reaction to perceived threat. It's something you feel inside your body.

The expression of anger comes from what you have learned and your ways of thinking. There is almost always an initial feeling that arises before anger sets in, such as rejection, hurt, humiliation, frustration or fear. As a threat protective system, anger energizes you to take constructive or destructive actions. We often resort to angry outbursts to shield ourselves from engaging with these more vulnerable feelings

Anger can serve as a useful signal that something isn't right, motivate you to make changes, or face problems that you have been avoiding.

Anger can also lead to significant loss and suffering. Poor decisions, damaged relationships and careers, and medical problems can result from strong and frequent anger.

It helps to remember, the angrier you become, the more difficult it is to manage your actions.

The key question to ask yourself:

"Is my anger helping or hurting me?"

Understanding the Roots of Anger

Sometimes we need to understand the root causes of our own anger. Sometimes we need space and time to rest and reflect before confronting whatever is causing anger and upset.

1) When anger moves from annoyance to irritation, then rises to rage, a person might be acting on beliefs that are not accurate to the situation. In any heated discussion, we all have to slow down to think before reacting.

2) When cooled down and ready, ask the other person about their perspective, outlining your point with "I feel..." rather than "You did or did not..."

3) Listen calmly and carefully to what the other person is saying, taking time before answering. Listen to what's underlying the words and emotions. Try not to fight back right away.

To become aware of the human condition and how anger can be sourced from unmet needs, we can think about the roots of our own anger and why we might have certain expectations of others.

HOUSEMATE ACTIVITY

Understanding the “why” behind your own personal triggers

This exercise is to be done when all is calm, not to talk about current issues or situations. Take 5 minutes each to share.

- 1) Describe a recent time where you “lost your cool.”
- 2) Analyze the “why” behind that situation and your anger. Consider how your feelings and thoughts of anger might have been shaped by past events in your own personal history.
- 3) Brainstorm healthy ways you can calm yourself or cool down when such traces of your personal history become “triggered” again.

The issue isn't anger itself, but rather the struggle to react constructively to anger.

In many cases, we are not just angry but rather have emotions running underneath that are based on past trauma. This pain can unconsciously influence how we react.

To better understand internal conflicts and triggers, you can write about them, draw pictures, confide in a friend, or take long walks to sense and honor your feelings.



Anger Management Techniques

1) Breathing: Focusing on breathing helps you regain balance and clarity. You can take deep breaths, counting to four while inhaling and to four while exhaling. Repeat for two minutes.



2) Turn off autopilot: Slow down your reactions by noticing but not reacting to your thoughts. Ask yourself, "Where is my anger taking me in this moment?" Don't give in to your angry thoughts. Take your time and consider your options. Choose reactions that are consistent with your values and who you want to be. The decision is yours.

Anger Management Techniques

3) Exercise: Take a long walk, do yoga, or lift weights to release the cortisol (stress hormone) building in the body.



4) Lead with Warmth and Humor: Resist the temptation to start conversations in ways that come across as too stern or negative. Sharing a joke can help defuse anger.



HOUSEMATE ACTIVITY

See below the five levels of anger. Think of an experience that triggers each level. Share things you have done to resolve angry feelings at each level. Let each person talk for 5 minutes, while others listen without interrupting. [We are not able to have a rational conversation at the rage or fury level. Take a step back and revisit the issue when calm.]



Become a Better Listener: Practice Deep Listening

“Deep listening is the kind of listening that helps us to keep compassion alive while the other speaks.

During this time you have in mind only one idea, one desire: to listen in order to give the other person the chance to speak out and suffer less. This is your only purpose. Other things like analyzing, understanding the past, can be a by-product of this work. But first of all listen with compassion. Compassion.”

—Thich Nhat Hanh,
Anger: Wisdom for Cooling the Flames



The tone you set for yourself is the
tone you set for the whole house!