

SOLUTIONS

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ANGER 101 MANAGEMENT

What is anger, anyway?

Anger is an emotion. Anger is not bad; in fact, it is a necessary and healthy part of our lives if we manage it correctly. In short, anger is an emotion you have when you or someone you love feels *threatened or opposed*. It is a protective emotion and motivates you to protect or take care of yourself and your loved ones.

Aggression and violence are unhealthy **actions** to express anger. Again, anger is not the problem – it's the unhealthy expression of anger that is the problem. Why is anger such a problem for so many people? It's simply because most people don't understand it or know what to do with it. That's why there is so much uncontrolled anger and not enough healthy expression of anger.

Anger is sometimes hard to manage because it is such a powerful emotion. It's supposed to be powerful, for your protection, remember? Anger (and all emotions) operates on a sub-conscious level, so it is difficult to control it consciously. Mostly, we have difficulty sorting out the threat (real or perceived) and what to do about it, which results in aggression or violence.

Managing anger can be viewed as sorting out the survival value from what is socially appropriate. Anger has lots of energy that you can use for good, healthy purposes. It works hand-in-hand with love and intelligence for good outcomes. Healthy anger shows up as determination, enthusiasm, commitment, focus, and clarity. Healthy anger management discards violence and aggression and connects with a moral right to help you create the life you choose.

Many different strategies and skills for anger management intervention have been tried and tested. Some involve better thinking, re-directing behavior, emotional awareness, and physical interventions.

Here are some basic tips on managing anger:

- Relaxation coping skills target both the emotional and physiological arousal associated with anger, with the intent being to lower the anger arousal.
- Cognitive (thinking) interventions target correcting information processing, identifying distorted patterns of threats, developing more reality-based thoughts, and freeing up problem-solving and coping resources.
- Behavioral coping and social skills training target the actual expression of anger (vs. reducing anger arousal).
- Problem-solving skills training is useful, such as focusing on consequences of anger outbursts.
- Additional strategies that have been found to be useful in managing anger effectively include avoiding situations that make one angry, changing environments, focusing on something positive, engaging in substitute positive activities, and improving communication and social skills.

Always be open to looking internally if anger issues occur in your life. Often professional or other help is needed to find healthy expressions of emotions.

Manage Money with Your Mate

It's no great mystery why money issues are often cited as one of the top reasons for divorce in the U.S.: Talking about money is never just talking about money. Most couples -- whether married, engaged, or cohabitating -- have an occasional tiff about family finances. Even in the best of times, money can be a conversational time bomb in relationships.

You make time for the important things -- the vet, the kids' soccer games, the dentist, the in-laws. Setting — and keeping — a date to talk finances is just as critical as almost anything you do as a twosome.

Mark your calendars (in pen). Don't relegate this task to the "we'll get to it sometime" pile.

Plan for distractions. Schedule a babysitter. Unplug the phone. Leave no room for excuses.

Pick a reward. The benefit of working through your money issues is increased comfort, security, and satisfaction.

Following through on your money date deserves a tangible reward. So pick an incentive to celebrate the completion of your powwow. Write the reward on your calendar as a reminder of the big payoff.

Wall Street provides updates to shareholders on a quarterly basis. That's a good calendar for couples, too. It keeps you both in the loop and allows you to track your goals and tweak them. So, while the calendar's out, pick a date for your next money get-together.

Put a positive spin on money management. Ask what your partner is excited about in the coming years. Maybe it's a family cruise, paying cash for college, or retiring 10 years early. Then commit to finding ways to make those things happen together.

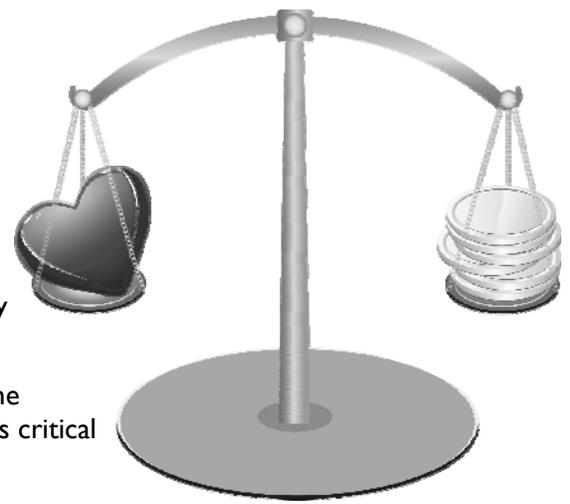
Accept equal responsibility for changing your lives, and no fair bringing up past financial indiscretions. Each conversation should focus on what you can do from this day forward to improve your lot.

Use concrete examples of what you want. Instead of talking in the abstract (e.g., "I get worried about what we have in the bank."), be specific (e.g., "I'd feel a lot more secure if we had \$3,000 in our emergency fund.").

Compromising is more palatable if you know you'll get your way in at least a few areas. Come up with an amount of money each partner can spend every month without question.

If emotions run high, get a neutral third opinion. Plug your plan into a personal finance program like Quicken or Microsoft's Money. There should be no arguing with black-and-white numbers. If there is, consider taking your budget talk public with a financial advisor.

Recall happy memories. Remember your first date? What did you do? How much did it cost? Who paid? And what was the rent on that first apartment that was such a dump? Recall what drew you two together in the first place. Money doesn't have to be a sore spot in your relationship. Keep reminding yourselves of those strong bonds that first attracted you to each other.



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