

ANGER PROBLEMS

*A Mental Health Educational Series brought to you by:
Innovative Psychological Consultants*

Description

Anger is an automatic reaction to a perception of injustice and is designed to energize people to take action and correct the wrong. For instance, if your neighbor stole your car stereo, you would become angry and the anger would cause you to want to confront your neighbor and seek justice. Most people are somewhat passive to mildly assertive and anger pushes them up the spectrum to become more assertive in handling problems. Anger gets a bad reputation when people behave in aggressive ways such as assaulting others. So long as anger can be controlled and channeled in productive ways, it is actually a constructive emotion.

Poorly handled reactions of anger can result in a variety of consequences including: legal, financial (destroying property), occupational, relational, and physical (injury or long term effects). Many people struggle with anger for a variety of reasons. Some people have never really learned how to handle and manage emotions and continue to struggle into adulthood. Other people have been over-controlling emotion by suppressing it. Suppressed emotion builds internally and can result in explosive outbursts, which seem out of proportion to the event, but are really an accumulation of emotion that is discharged all at once. The intensity of that emotion makes it difficult to control as it comes out.

Symptoms & Features

Anger, like most emotions, is activated in the emotion center of the brain; the limbic system. The emotion then triggers a reaction of physiological and biological changes. The brain triggers the release of certain chemicals into the body such as adrenaline, noradrenaline, and other hormones. Most people are familiar with this process and know it as “fight or flight”. In the case of anger, it is our fight response. Our blood pressure and heart rate rise, energy levels increase, and people may experience some of the following internal or external symptoms: shallow rapid breathing, clenched fists or jaw, flushing or a hot sensation, tensing of muscles, tightness in the chest, trembling, dry mouth, or light headedness to name a few.

Often we see that anger can be the result of other problems. Anger is often seen when people are abusing or withdrawing from alcohol or drugs. Increased anger, irritation, and frustration are a common manifestation of depression; especially in men. Anger can also be a secondary reaction to other emotions such as grief, anxiety, or jealousy. Repressed anger can result in long term problems such as depression, heart problems, and high blood pressure. There is no diagnosis for anger problems except intermittent explosive disorder, but this is more of an impulse control disorder and rarely diagnosed in people with ordinary anger problems.

Treatment

For some people anger is secondary to issues with depression or anxiety and they might consult a physician about medicinal treatments for those conditions such as Anti-depressants or Anti-anxiety medications. Most people seek the assistance of psychologists or counselors who help people learn to reduce the intensity of the anger reaction, control some of the physiological reaction, learn to regulate emotions, and ultimately learn to change thoughts and beliefs that are likely at the source of the anger.

What Can I Do To Help Myself

If you have anger problems, you should consult one of the therapists at I.P.C. to help determine if there are other mental health issues going on. You can also learn breathing and relaxation tools, walk away when you are getting angry, take your mind off whatever is angering you by distracting yourself, or talk through problems with family and friends you trust.