



Understanding anger

for 11-18 year olds

Learning what anger means
and how to manage it



What is anger?

Anger is a normal emotion that we all feel sometimes. While anger isn't a mental health problem, it can affect our mental wellbeing.

We might experience anger when we're frustrated, stressed or feel like someone has treated us badly. Sometimes we might find anger unhelpful, but at other times anger can help us.

However we experience anger, we can find ways to express it safely and learn how to manage it.

Why might we get angry?

We might relate to some difficult experiences that can lead to anger, like:

- Losing someone close to us
- Going through relationship problems or feeling lonely
- Seeing difficult things in the news or in the world, like racism or climate change
- Seeing or experiencing other people act with aggression or violence
- Using alcohol or drugs to cope
- Things happening at school, college or work
- Not liking our bodies and the way we look
- Going through something that affects our lives or future plans
- Experiencing discrimination, abuse or unfair treatment, or seeing this happen
- Things happening in our bodies, like hunger, pain, tiredness, or puberty and hormones
- Bullying

It's not your fault if you're being bullied. And it's not okay to bully other people. We can all find ways to manage anger without hurting others.

Discrimination, abuse or bullying are never okay. It is not something that any of us should have to put up with. You deserve support.

We might also have **difficult feelings** that can lead to anger, like feeling:

- Unsafe, attacked or threatened
- Frustrated or powerless
- As if people don't respect or appreciate us
- Ashamed or embarrassed
- Low in confidence or self-esteem
- Guilty or regretful about choices we've made
- Judged or misunderstood by other people
- Unable to talk about or understand our feelings
- Overwhelmed or acting on impulse
- Stressed and under pressure, like with exam stress and burnout

We might experience some of these difficult feelings because we're neurodivergent, like being autistic or having ADHD.



The anger I felt was mainly due to being misunderstood and vulnerable. I felt like I had to stick up for myself.



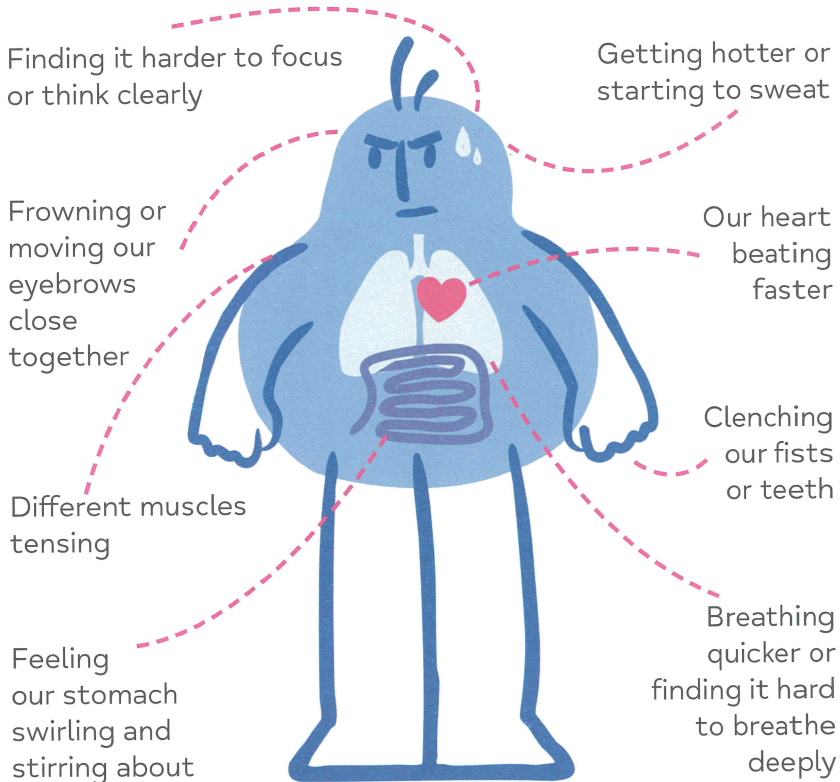
I can be frustrated and I try not to take it out on other people, but sometimes I can't.



We might feel angry for reasons that aren't listed in this booklet. Some of us might not know why we feel angry, and that's okay. But it can feel frustrating or scary if we don't know the reasons behind feeling angry.

Signs of anger

When we start to get angry, we might notice changes in how we feel or behave, like:



Why does our body do this?

Our brain responds to what it sees as 'danger'. It uses these signs to try and keep us safe, by making our body ready for action.

These signs might make it seem like we're not in control and make us feel unsafe. But over time, we can **learn to notice the signs of anger and slow ourselves down**. This can give us time to think about how we want to react to the situation.

When might anger become a problem?

Anger might become a problem when we can't manage it well and feel like it's **getting out of control**.

Problems might start if we take anger out on ourselves, which can be a type of self-harm. Or if we take anger out on others, through aggression or violence.

If anger turns into aggression or violence, this can scare or hurt people around us. It could make arguments worse. And it could even lead to serious problems, like at school or with the police.

The anger iceberg

The iceberg diagram shows what problems with anger might look like to others 'on the surface'. But it also shows the difficult feelings or experiences that we might be going through 'below the surface'.



How to manage anger in the moment

It can be scary when anger takes over and we feel like we've lost control. But we can learn safer, more helpful ways to manage anger as soon as we feel it.

Take time out Getting away from the situation, even for a few seconds, can help us work out how we want to react. You could go for a walk outside, or ask to take a break and come back to the situation later. If there's a quiet room or safe space where you can go during a break, this might help.

Express anger in helpful ways Try out activities like:

- Smashing ice cubes or splashing cold water
- Tensing and relaxing different muscles, like in your shoulders or face
- Hitting, squeezing or screaming into a pillow
- Popping bubble wrap
- Scribbling on paper
- Breathing more slowly, or breathing out for longer than you breathe in
- Eating sour sweets
- Squeezing or bouncing a stress ball
- Listening to music through headphones

Separate yourself from people who make you angry At school or college for example, you could ask to change seats in the classroom, join a different class or use the quiet room.

Online or in messages, think about if you should reply and what to say Try noticing how you talk to others online. If you're looking for conflicts on purpose, or being online is making you feel worse, you might be trying to hurt yourself or make yourself angry.

Coping with anger in the long term

Learn your triggers You could keep a mood diary or journal to make notes about what happens before, during and after you feel angry.

Work out what's in your control Some things that make us angry might be in our control, like choosing whether to fix a mistake or how to react if someone judges us. But we have less or no control over other things. We should try to respond differently to things we can and can't control.

Try some regular movement Activity that gets our heart rate up can help us calm down. It does this by using up energy.

Build confidence and self-esteem Doing this could help improve the way we see ourselves. In turn, this can help us understand and manage anger.

Make a safety plan Having a safety plan means you have a quick way to remember:

- What to do if you need help
- Your warning signs of anger
- Things you can try to help you feel calmer

Find ways to look after your wellbeing Looking after our wellbeing can help us feel calmer and less overwhelmed. This can help us to manage anger.



Get lots of detailed tips and ideas about looking after your wellbeing on our website.

mind.org.uk/wellbeingtips

Where can I find more support?

If you want to talk to someone by phone or text, you can contact these free services anytime.

You can talk to them about things you've read in this booklet, or anything else about mental health and wellbeing.

Childline 0800 1111

Offers a 24/7 helpline, plus counselling in English and Welsh. You can also post on message boards to talk to other young people. **childline.org.uk**

Samaritans 116 123

Helpline open 24/7 for people to talk about any concerns, worries and troubles they're going through.

samaritans.org

Shout Text SHOUT to 85258

A confidential and anonymous 24/7 text support service for anyone struggling to cope.

giveusashout.org

Find us online

mind.org.uk/young-people

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youngpeopleinfo@mind.org.uk

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