

Resources for Survivors

Dealing with anger



Anger is a common emotion.

Anger as a reaction to sexual violence

Men who have been sexually abused can feel anger

- That they were sexually abused.
- That they had trusted the person who abused them.
- That the person who abused them, was meant to be looking after them.

Anger can be a positive emotion – it can lead you to want changes to the system.

Anger can be a negative or destructive emotion, badly impacting your close relationships. By being angry you might frighten and push away those who are close to you.



Being angry all the time is not good for us

Intense and prolonged anger can

- Stress your heart leading to higher blood pressure, strokes and heart attacks.
- Impact your gut leading to reflux, stomach and bowel problems.
- Impact your immune system reducing your ability to manage chronic illnesses.
- Increase sleep difficulties.

Become aware of the signs that anger is there

There may be changes in your body, for example:

- Tightness in your chest.
- Increased heart rate.
- Clenching teeth, jaw or fists.

There may be changes in your thoughts, for example:

- A sense of injustice "It's unfair."

There may be changes in your voice, for example:

- Becoming short, losing your patience with someone.
- Raising your voice.

Responding to anger in helpful ways

Breathe

Take some deep breaths, slow your breathing and use grounding exercises. A good grounding exercise is to breathe in for a count of 3, hold your breath for a count of 4 and breathe out for a count of 5 and repeat.

Take time out

Remove yourself from stressful situations – this can help break the circuit which is increasing your anger. When you leave the situation for example take a walk around the block, use the time to calm yourself.

Notice your thoughts and choose the ones you spend time with

You might find that you are getting worked up and angry about negative thoughts about someone or a situation. If you keep thinking about that person or the situation, you will find that that will increase your angry feelings.

Try instead to:

- Focus on positive self-talk.
- Remind yourself that you can handle difficult situations.
- Keep telling yourself this will pass.

Become more aware of your emotions

Sometimes we say we are angry when in fact there are other emotions at work. We may think we are feeling angry, when in fact it could be we are feeling agitated, frustrated, resentful, anxious, humiliated or overwhelmed.

If you can more accurately identify your feelings, you can handle your feelings appropriately. If you are feeling anxious, you could think about how you could reduce the anxiety for example by telling your friends that you may need extra support right now.

