



Tempering the Tyrant: Finding Anger's Rightful Place

Being able to see and cope with anger is important for everyone. This is useful for caregivers who try to care for their own needs while caring for another. Angry feelings happen when needs are not being met, or when your safety has been threatened. To recognize anger is the first step towards improved self-care.

How do you notice you are angry?

- face becomes red or hot
- hands clench or your teeth clamp down
- muscles tense or tighten
- voice rises
- stomp your feet
- feel a rush, heart racing
- talk louder or faster, swearing
- have difficulty thinking clearly
- become too focused on the source of your anger

What purpose does it serve to get angry?

- Angry feelings are a warning sign or red flag that needs are not being met or boundaries are threatened.
- Instinctive angry behaviors are meant to warn others to back off.
- Anger stirs energy and prepares us to stand up and take care of ourselves.

How do you express your anger?

- **Quiet** – not talking, moving back, or turning anger inside.
- **Loud** – Using hands or words in hurtful acts, shouting, name calling, unsafe driving, or breaking things.
- **Tempered** - wait to react long enough to get some perspective so actions are thoughtful and balanced.



Skills for Tempering the Tyrant

Breathe

There is one simple, very powerful, and effective way, to let go of anger. That way is to breathe. When you are reacting in anger, breathing constricts and becomes shallow. A few deep breaths could change things, give you that moment to slow down and get perspective.

- Breathe deeply. Take a few deep breaths, deep enough to make your belly stick out.
- A breath can give you that moment to slow down, get perspective, and hold off on a reaction.

Pay attention to yourself. Observe.

- Pay attention to yourself. Notice your feelings. Recognize what you need and take responsibility for the warning signs as they occur.
- Self-awareness can help us pause and reflect when we are feeling angry. This may prevent reacting in anger.

Talking Points

- Start by becoming clear. Slow down and listen to yourself. Listen to what you feel and need.
- Find calm. Wait until you feel less stress and more in control of your emotions so that you don't react and communicate in a manner you may regret.
- Make "I" statements.
- Describe your observations. State what you see, hear, or notice, in specific terms without judgment. "I noticed___", or "I observed___."
- Share your feeling using a one-word, such as "I feel sad, scared, worried, or confused."
- Next, add the need that that you have. "I feel ___ because I need or want ___."
- Finally make a request that is clear, specific, and say the action you want the person to take. "I feel ___ because I need___. Would you be willing to ___?"