



All About Anger

A Self Help Guide for
Students and Parents

All About: Anger

Anger is a normal reaction. It energises us into action and can help us make life saving and vital actions. Anger can be very useful in getting things done or making things happen. However, it can become a problem if it seems like we're getting angry very often, and it is affecting our mood, school life and how we get on with others. If we are hurting others through our words or actions this is another sign that our anger is boiling over and we need to cool it down.



After an angry outburst, we can think very critically of ourselves and our actions, leading us to feel guilty, ashamed and lower our mood, which might result in our withdrawing from others or not wanting to do anything.

When there is real, or we believe there is a real, threat or danger, our bodies' automatic survival mechanism kicks in very quickly. This helps energise us to fight or run away ('fight or flight response').

Physical Sensations

We will notice lots of physical sensations:

- heart racing or pounding
- breathing quickly
- tense muscles - a state of readiness to fight or flee
- shaking
- hot, sweating
- light-headed
- stomach churning or butterflies
- fist or teeth clenching
- physical urge to go towards whatever is making us angry

Angry Behaviours

- attack
- aggressive body posture
- staring & facial expression
- move towards what is making us angry
- hit out (or urge to hit out)
- argue
- shout
- run or storm away
- don't talk
- sulk

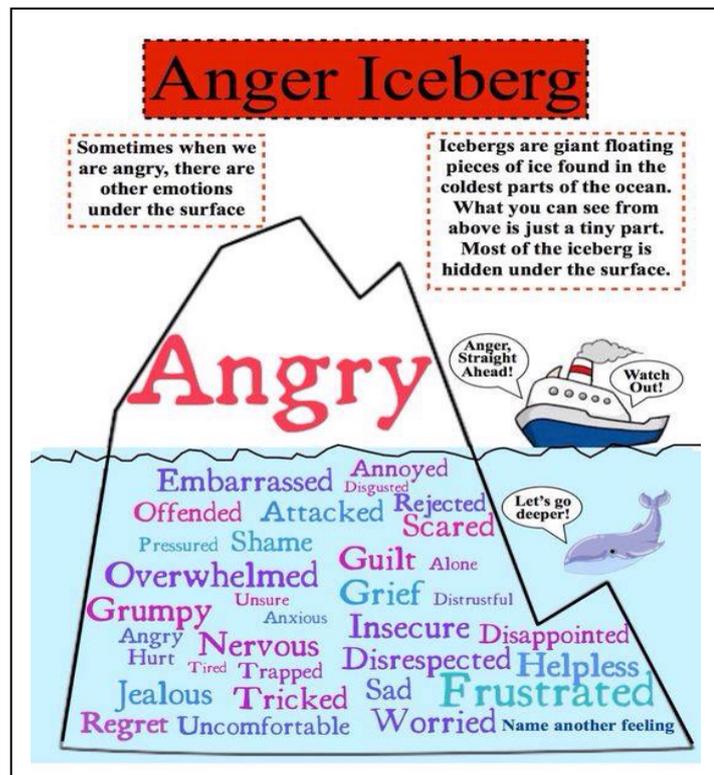
To help overcome a persistent anger problem, we need to understand what we are REALLY angry about - which may well be NOT what we are directing our anger towards at that time. It is often due to something related to something from our past, and the current situation FEELS similar, so it triggers our angry response now.

Anger is only what we show and what other people see. However, there can be a lot of other stuff underneath that anger – but we can't or don't know how to understand or stop those uncomfortable feelings. So we are angry instead as it can discharge these emotions and make us feel some relief – but only for a short while.

Take a look at the Anger Iceberg. Here you can see some possible emotions that are sometimes sitting underneath the anger that other people can't see.

Do you recognise any of these?

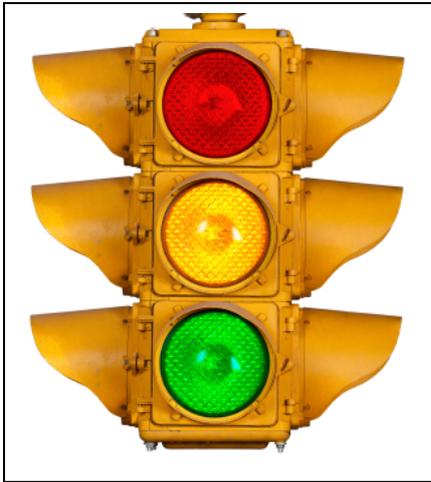
What does your Anger Iceberg look like?



What To Do About Anger

Prevention is better than cure. Have you ever heard that before? It means that it is easier to prevent something than waiting until it happens and then trying to deal with it then. Well this is especially true when it comes to anger. When we get really angry – some people describe it as a 'Red Mist' it is very hard to make that stop. But if we find a way to deal with the feelings we have before they turn to anger (see Anger Iceberg) this can prevent angry outbursts and doing things that we might regret later.

Make a list of the triggers of this that do or have made you angry in the past. Anything you notice on this? Be aware that tiredness and the state of our health and wellbeing can make us more irritable so it is important to take care of ourselves. Being aware of what makes us angry means that we are better prepared when this happens and we can deal with the triggers before the fuse burns down and the anger is detonated!



Think of traffic lights as a signal of your feelings. The red light is anger, the amber is a flashing warning and green light is when you are calm and able to cope with things that come your way.

Which traffic light do you sit on most of the time? The more time we spend on green the calmer we will feel and less likely we will be to jump to red.

It is also helpful to recognise when you are on amber as this is when it is most helpful to deal with the thoughts, sensations and angry behaviours before they get too 'hot'.

This is when we need to **STOP!!**

Stop – Just pause for a second, don't act immediately

Take a breath – in and out a few times to calm the physical sensations you may be experiencing

Observe – What am I reacting to? Is this a trigger for me that really winds me up? Or is this about another feeling which makes me angry? Eg Stress, Fear, Frustration or Embarrassment.....

Pull Back – This is what we do to cope with the anger. Imagine yourself hitting the zoom button and enlarging the situation you find yourself in. This will give you the perspective to ask some of the following questions:

- Is there another way of looking at this?
- Is what I'm reacting to a genuine fact or just my opinion?
- How does this affect others?
- How important is this really?
- What would somebody else say about this situation?
- What advice would you give someone else if it was happening to them?
- Am I getting things out of proportion?
- What harm has actually been done?
- What would be the consequences of responding angrily?
- Is there another way of dealing with this?
- Am I expecting something from this person or situation which is unrealistic?
- What would be helpful for me to remember?
- **What is the BEST thing to do right now?**