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# Anger's Partners

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Have you been feeling angry? Anger can feel like a slow simmer under the skin. It is always there. It might make you feel touchy. It is hard to be patient when you feel this kind of anger.

That slow anger could boil up at any time. It could explode. It could become loud and dangerous anger. That kind of anger can lead you to hurt things and people. It can feel like poison. It might feel like a release when you express that anger, but it can be the start of other problems.

The thing about anger is that it never comes to a party alone. Anger always comes with a partner. Anger is called a “*secondary emotion*.” That means that other emotions come first.

- Maybe you feel frustrated. You just can't reach the outcomes you want. So you get angry.
- Or maybe you are embarrassed. You made a mistake. You feel foolish. It is easier to get angry than to admit your mistake. You might feel like someone else did something to make you look bad.
- Sometimes sadness or grief can lead to anger. You want to feel happy again. You are angry that things are not working outright. You feel you deserve better breaks in life.
- You might feel hurt or betrayed by someone. Maybe you thought you could trust that person. But that person did something that hurt you. Then you got angry.

Pay attention to when anger starts to rise up. The first thing to do when anger comes knocking is to avoid making things worse. Don't let it take over. When anger starts to boil or explode, do three things:

- **Stop**

Stop what you were doing. Stop what you were saying (or getting ready to say).

- **Breathe**

Breathe in while you count to 4. Breathe out while you count to 4. Do this at least 3 times.

- **Shift Gears**

Get ready to use your thinking brain instead of your emotional brain.

You also can notice when anger is growing in someone else. Maybe you can see it your children. Or you might see it in another family member or a coworker. You might encourage that person to take the same steps — stop, breathe, and shift gears. Breathe with them. Offer the think things through with them.

But sometimes you will see that anger has taken over. You might see that the other person can no longer stop and breathe. Maybe that person is a child. You might be able to pick up that child and put him or her in time out in a safe place like a bed. Leave the child alone until the child is ready to calm down and talk or rock and listen to quiet music.

But maybe that person who is losing control is a larger child or an adult. Then you should put yourself in a safe place. Do not touch the person or express your emotion. That could make things worse. Get out of the way until the anger passes. Then you can talk about solving the problem after things are calm again.

Now you should be ready to start solving the problem. The best way to deal with anger is to figure out who anger's partner is. Who brought your anger (or the other person's anger) to the party? What feelings go along with the anger you are feeling? Dealing with those feelings will help you deal with your anger. Here are some ideas.

- **Frustrated or embarrassed**

Those emotions might mean that you could work on building some new skills. You could learn to do some things better. Maybe you could communicate better. Or you could learn to solve problems better. Or you could just learn to laugh at yourself. Maybe you take yourself too seriously. That could solve the anger problem.

- **Sadness and grief**

Give yourself time to say goodbye to things you have lost. Maybe you lost a relationship. Maybe you lost a job or a dream. That is part of life. Sadness and grief are normal. Let yourself have those feelings. Talk with someone about them. Remember the good times before the loss. Look at photos and tell stories with people who were part of those times. Find ways to hold onto some parts of those times. Then look for new dreams. Make lists of what is good about what you have now. That might keep the anger at bay.

- **Hurt and betrayal**

You might feel like the world is not fair. You don't want to trust anyone or anything now. Remember that you are giving the other person a lot of power when you focus on those feelings. Maybe the other person did treat you badly. But you can take power back by being strong. You can show that you can move on despite that bad treatment. Your anger hurts you more than the other person. Take control and take the next steps on your own.

There is another kind of anger you might feel. It is sometimes called righteous anger. It is anger that grows from injustice. It is another kind of anger that is cured by taking control and being strong. It is a kind of anger that gives you energy instead of taking it away. It might be anger you feel for someone else. The best way to take care of that anger might be by making a change in policies or rules. You might want to change the system. You might want to work with others make the world a better place. That kind of anger feels different from the other kinds. It does not boil and explode. It grows and pushes you forward to grow.

Anger can be scary, but you can learn to understand it. When you understand it, you can start to control it. Remember, anger always has a partner. Find out who the partner is. When you take care of the partner, you take care of the anger.

### **Sources**

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