



Canadian Mental  
Health Association  
British Columbia  
*Mental health for all*

# ANGER



Anger is a normal feeling. Everyone feels angry at times. Different people feel and show anger in different ways.

Anger can mean:

- You cannot get something you want.
- You see something that is not fair.
- You are upset about something.
- You are hurt.
- You are scared.
- You are tired.
- You are feeling too much stress.

**If you are thinking about ending your life, call 1-800-SUICIDE. It stands for 1-800-784-2433. If you think that a loved one is in danger, call 9-1-1.**

Anger can look like:

- Yelling
- Swearing
- Slamming doors
- Throwing things or wanting to throw things
- Feeling out of control

Anger can come from a lot of different feelings. You may feel angry when a friend hurts your feelings. You may feel angry when you have too much work. Understanding where anger comes from will help you manage anger in healthy ways.

## WHEN IS ANGER GOOD?

Anger can help when you are threatened. It makes your body ready to fight. It helps you move quickly or fight strongly. Anger can help you make a change or speak up for yourself.



## WHEN IS ANGER A PROBLEM?

Feeling angry all the time can cause problems. Acting out in anger can also cause problems. You can hurt yourself and can hurt other people. Anger is not “wrong,” but acting out in anger usually makes things worse.



There are signs that show anger may be a problem. If you notice these signs, you may need help

- You often hold in your anger. This can make you feel badly about yourself and other people.

- You often get into fights with other people like your friends and family members. You may yell and say hurtful things.
- You often threaten to hurt other people or damage other people's things.
- You start fights or hurt other people.
- You feel like you cannot control yourself when you get angry.
- Your anger lasts a long time or scares you.
- You have problems with the law.

## HOW CAN I MANAGE MY ANGER?

When you feel angry, it is important to manage those feelings in a healthy way. Managing anger does not mean you ignore anger. Managing anger means being able to notice when you are having angry feelings and solving problems or looking deeper at what is causing anger. Then you can find solutions or healthy ways to manage difficult feelings.



Managing anger in a healthy way is a skill. Here are three skills to practice:

### 1. Learn how to solve problems

It is easy to get angry when something is not working. Solving problems means that you find helpful ways to deal with things that make you angry. Here is one way to solve problems:

1. Decide what the problem is.
2. Decide what the end goal should be.
3. Decide how you will reach your goal. If it will take a lot of work to solve the problem, you can break your plan into small steps.
4. Follow your plan.
5. Look back to see if your plan worked.

Sometimes it is hard to fix a problem when you are in the middle of it. Maybe the bus was late and you are mad. Wait until you are calm to solve the problem. That is the best time to think of a plan in case the problem happens again.

## 2. Learn how to be assertive

Being assertive means that you directly talk about what you think, feel and need. But you also think about the other person's point of view. You are honest with people but you are not mean. This can be very hard to do. It helps if you practice what you will say before you say it.

Here is an example of assertiveness:

Pretend your friend is always late.

If you act in anger, you might say: "Why are you always so late? It's so rude!"

To be assertive, you might say: "I see that you are very busy, but it makes me feel angry when you are late. It makes me feel like you do not respect my time. Next time, please call me and tell me if you are running late."

Using assertiveness puts your feelings into words so other people understand your point of view. This also makes it easier to solve problems.



## 3. Learn helpful thinking skills

Helpful thinking is balanced thinking. It means figuring out what really happened and not letting your feelings tell you what happened.

Pretend that you are upset because your friend cancelled plans to see a movie. An angry thought

might be, “My friend ruined my afternoon!” You might not want to talk to your friend after that. These thoughts might make you feel even worse.

A more balanced thought would be, “I am sad, but I should find out what happened before I get mad at my friend.” It is okay to feel sad because you were looking forward to a fun afternoon. Your friend may have cancelled because something serious came up, so it is better to get the whole story.

## TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

It is easier to feel angry when you already feel stressed or have too much to do. Small steps to take care of yourself every day can make it much easier to manage anger.

- Learn ways to relax like deep breathing, yoga, going for a walk, listening to music, exercising, or writing your thoughts. Even a few minutes every day can make a big difference over time.
- Try to get some exercise every day. Exercise is a good outlet for anger.
- Try to get enough sleep. It is easy to feel upset when you are tired.
- Eat regularly. Many people find that hunger makes anger feel worse.
- Spend time with others. Time with family and friends is good for mental health. Talking with others is also a good way to get another point of view when a problem makes you feel angry.
- Spending time outdoors can help lower stress.
- Put yourself in the other person's place. This can help you see that someone was not trying to make you mad on purpose.



- Practice taking a break when you feel angry. Try counting to ten or imagining a very peaceful place. It is very easy to react or snap back when you feel angry. Taking a short break gives you time to think about the situation before you say something that may cause problems later.



## WHEN TO FIND HELP

Talk to a doctor or a counselor if anger is causing a lot of problems in your life. Problems with depression, stress or anxiety can also make people feel angry more easily. It is good to make sure your doctor knows about other feelings you may be having. They can help you find someone with special training if they think it will help you.



---

## Where do I go from here?

You can learn more about anger from these resources:

### Wellness Modules

The Mood Disorders Association is for people who have depression and other mood problems. They have support groups and other programs to help people. The Mood Disorders Association has groups across BC. To find a group in your community, visit their website at [www.mdabc.net](http://www.mdabc.net) or call 604-873-0103.

### BC Mental Health Support Line

This phone service can help you when you are worried, stressed or upset. They can help with a lot of other problems, too. They can help you find services in your community. You can also call if you just need to talk to someone. Call **310-6789** (do not add an area code) any time of day or night. You can talk to someone right away. Translators can help you in many different languages. Say the name of the language you need in English to get an interpreter

### BounceBack® program

BounceBack is for people dealing with low mood, stress, or anxiety. You learn skills in an online course. You can also talk with a trained worker called a “coach” on the phone. The program is free. Telephone coaches speak English, French, Cantonese, Mandarin, and Punjabi. Bounce Back is run by the Canadian Mental Health Association. Visit [www.bouncebackbc.ca](http://www.bouncebackbc.ca) for information on the BounceBack program.

---

This booklet was written by the Canadian Mental Health Association’s BC Division. It is based on current research and resources. We also check key facts with doctors and other mental health experts. Please contact us if you want to know what resources we used.

**Founded in 1918, CMHA is a national charity that helps maintain and improve mental health for all Canadians.**

[bc.cmha.ca](http://bc.cmha.ca)



Canadian Mental  
Health Association  
British Columbia  
*Mental health for all*

Association canadienne  
pour la santé mentale  
Colombie-Britannique  
*La santé mentale pour tous*



**heretohelp**  
Mental health and substance use  
information you can trust