

Anger Management

This fact sheet will give some background information to what anger is and how it can be managed, together with help from voluntary organisations in Harrow and nationally. If you find it difficult to address your anger and it is affecting your life, below is contact information where you can seek further help and support in dealing with your anger.

What is anger?

We all feel angry at times – it's part of being human. Anger is a normal, healthy emotion, which we might experience if we feel attacked, deceived, invalidated or unfairly treated. Anger isn't necessarily a 'bad' emotion and in fact it can sometimes be useful. For example, feeling angry about something can:

- help us identify problems or things that are hurting us
- motivate us to create change, achieve our goals and move on
- help us stay safe and defend ourselves in dangerous situations by giving us a burst of energy as part of our fight or flight system

Most people will experience episodes of anger which feel manageable and don't have a big impact on their lives. Learning healthy ways to recognise, express and deal with anger is important for our mental and physical health.

When anger becomes a problem

If anger builds inside a person, it can become prolonged and easily triggered, which can impact negatively on relationships, work, social life, self esteem and concentration. On the other hand if someone is afraid to display anger, it usually

comes out in other ways, such as through physical problems or perhaps mental health issues such as depression.

Anger only becomes a problem when it gets out of control and harms you or people around you. This can happen when:

- you regularly express your anger through unhelpful or destructive behaviour
- your anger is having a negative impact on your overall mental and physical health
- anger becomes your go-to emotion, blocking out your ability to feel other emotions
- you haven't developed healthy ways to express your anger

Different forms of anger

Anger can occur suddenly when something happens, but can just as easily evaporate after a few minutes. For example, if someone bumps into you on the street and apologises, you may feel angry briefly and then it disappears.

Another type of anger is an emotion you may carry around with you a lot of the time, stemming from your past. The result of this is that when something annoys you, it taps into the old anger so that you explode, or you may find it difficult to calm down afterwards. Extreme anger may be expressed as physical violence.

People can interpret situations differently, so a situation that makes you feel very angry may not make someone else feel angry at all (for example, other reactions could include annoyance, hurt or amusement). But just because we can interpret things differently, it doesn't mean that you're interpreting things 'wrong' if you get angry.

How you interpret and react to a situation can depend on lots of factors in your life, including: your childhood and upbringing, your past experiences or your current circumstances. Whether your anger is about something that happened in the past or something that's going on right now, thinking about how and why we interpret and react to situations can help us learn how to cope with our emotions better. It can also help us find productive strategies to handle our anger.

Not everyone expresses anger in the same way. For example, some unhelpful ways you may have learned to express anger include:

- Outward aggression and violence - such as shouting, swearing, slamming doors, hitting or throwing things and being physically violent or verbally abusive and threatening towards others.
- Inward aggression - such as telling yourself that you hate yourself, denying yourself your basic needs (like food, or things that might make you happy), cutting yourself off from the world and self-harming.
- Non-violent or passive aggression - such as ignoring people or refusing to speak to them, refusing to do tasks, or deliberately doing things poorly, late or at the last possible minute, and being sarcastic or sulky while not saying anything explicitly

If you find you express your anger through outward aggression and violence, this can be extremely frightening and damaging for people around you - especially children. And it can have serious consequences: it could mean you lose your family, job and get into trouble with the law. In this case it's very important to seek treatment and support.

But even if you're never outwardly violent or aggressive towards others, and never even raise your voice, you might still recognise some of these angry behaviours and feel that they're a problem for you. For example, you turn your anger inwards and self-harm or deny yourself food.

What can I do to manage my anger?

It can be frightening when your anger overwhelms you. But there are ways you can learn to manage your anger when you find yourself in difficult situations. You can: look out for warning signs, buy yourself time to think or try some calming techniques. Remember that if your outbursts can be violent or abusive this can cause serious problems in your life and relationships, and can be very damaging to the people around you. In this case, it's essential to seek professional treatment and support for your anger.

Look out for warning signs

Anger can cause a rush of adrenaline through your body, so before you recognise the emotion you're feeling you might notice:

- your heart is beating faster
- your breathing is quicker
- your body is becoming tense

- your feet are tapping
- you're clenching your jaw or fists

Recognising these signs gives you the chance to think about how you want to react to a situation before doing anything. This can be difficult in the heat of the moment, but the earlier you notice how you're feeling, the easier it can be to choose how to manage your anger.

Buy yourself time to think

Sometimes when we're feeling angry, we just need to walk away from the situation for a while. This can give you time to work out what you're thinking about the situation, decide how you want to react to it and feel more in control. Some ways you can buy yourself time to think are:

- Counting to 10 before you react.
- Taking yourself out of the situation by going for a short walk – even if it's just around your block or local area.
- Talking to a trusted person who's not connected to the situation, such as a friend, family member, counsellor or peer support group. Expressing your thoughts out loud can help you understand why you're angry and help calm you down.

Try some techniques to manage your feelings

There are many ways to calm down and let go of angry feelings, depending on what suits you and what's convenient at the time you are angry. Not all of these techniques will work for you but it is important to try them out and be patient, eventually you will find something that gives you better control over your anger.

- Breathe slowly – try to breathe out for longer than you breathe in and focus on each breath as you take it.
- Relax your body – if you can feel your body getting tense, try focusing on each part of your body in turn to tense and then relax your muscles.
- Try mindfulness techniques – mindfulness can help you to be aware of when you're getting angry and can help calm your body and mind down.
- Exercise – try to work off your anger through exercise. Sports like football, running or boxing can be really helpful for releasing pent up energy.

- Use up your energy safely in other ways – this can help relieve some of your angry feelings in a way that doesn't hurt yourself or others. For example, you could try tearing up a newspaper, hitting a pillow or smashing ice cubes in a sink.
- Do something to distract yourself mentally or physically – anything that completely changes your situation, thoughts or patterns can help stop your anger escalating. For example, you could try: putting on upbeat music and dancing, doing something with your hands, doing something creative, taking a cold shower

How can I control my anger long term?

If you think about how to manage your anger when you're feeling calmer, you can avoid feeling overwhelmed by it in the heat of the moment. If you are able to look at periods when you have felt angry in the past then over a longer period of time you might be able to determine what causes your anger and how best you can avoid feeling angry.

Learn your triggers

Understanding what sort of situations trigger your anger means you can develop strategies to cope and think about how to react before the situation happens. You might find it helpful to keep a diary or make notes about the times you have felt angry. You could record:

- What were the circumstances?
- Did someone say or do something to trigger your anger?
- How did you feel?
- How did you behave?
- How did you feel afterwards?

If you do this for a while, you might start to see patterns emerging. You could do this yourself using a mood diary (many are available online for free or as an app) or you could find a professional therapist to help you.

Examine your thought patterns

If you're feeling upset or angry, you might find yourself automatically thinking or saying things like:

- "This is all their fault."
- "They never listen."
- "This always happens to me."
- "Other people should behave better."

But often there are lots of different ways we could interpret a situation. It can make you feel worse if you think in terms of 'always', 'never' and 'should', because in reality things are rarely so black and white. Making an effort to replace these words with softer terms like 'sometimes' or 'could' when thinking about your situation might help you to break up negative thought patterns, reflect more calmly on your situation and find new ways through conflicts.

Develop your communication skills

Being excessively angry and aggressive can get in the way of communicating your feelings and thoughts effectively. People may focus on your anger, and find it hard to listen to what you're saying. On the other hand, if you are able to express your anger by talking in an assertive, respectful way about what has made you angry, then you're more likely to be understood by others.

Being assertive means standing up for yourself while still respecting other people and their opinions. It can make communication easier and stop tense situations getting out of control, it can also benefit your relationships and self-esteem.

Learning to be assertive might not feel easy to start with, but here are some things to try:

- Think about the outcome you want to achieve. What's making you angry, and what do you want to change? Is it enough just to explain what you are angry about?
- Be specific. For example, you could open your statement with, "I feel angry with you because..." Using the phrase 'I feel' avoids blaming anyone and the other person is less likely to feel attacked.
- Really listen to the other person's response and try to understand their point of view.
- Be prepared for the conversation to go wrong and try to spot when this is happening. If you feel yourself getting angry, you might want to come back to the conversation another time.

Look at your lifestyle

Looking after your wellbeing more generally could help you feel calmer and more in control when things happen that make you feel angry. You might want to:

- Avoid drugs and alcohol. Although you might feel this could help you cope in the short term, alcohol and drugs can both affect your ability to control your emotions and actions, and can be a factor in violence. For information and support to stop using drugs or alcohol you can contact Turning Point or Alcoholics Anonymous.
- Be more active. Being active can help let out any tension you're feeling, as well as having benefits to your self-esteem. Even gentle exercise like going for a walk can make a difference.
- Get good sleep. Not sleeping well can have a huge impact on how we're feeling, and how well we cope with things that happen to us.
- Look at what you're eating and drinking.
- Learn to deal with pressure. We can feel pressured or stressed for lots of different reasons, but taking some time to learn how to deal with pressure can help us feel more in control of difficult situations.
- Develop your emotional resilience. Emotional resilience helps us feel more able to handle difficult emotions.

Where can you get support?

GP

Your GP could be the first person to approach to assist in referring you on to appropriate local services to help you.

Assertiveness Training

This training can help you learn to express your anger appropriately in the context of the event.

Talking Treatments

Counselling can help you examine your thinking and behaviour behind the anger.

Anger Management Programmes

This can assist with you if you have been violent in the past and would like to work on making changes. You may find one-day courses, weekend courses or longer programmes lasting up to eight weeks.

Domestic violence

Domestic violence programmes can be vital if you can't control your violent behaviour, and want to change. A commitment to the programmes, such as motivation to change, a reduction in alcohol or drug intake, etc is required.

Useful Organisations - Voluntary Sector

Harrow Talking Therapies

Offers advice and counselling including Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) on how to constructively deal with anger issues. You can self-refer online or be referred through the NHS

12-14 Station Road, Harrow, HA1 2SL

Telephone: 020 8515 5015

Email: harrow.iapt@nhs.net

<https://talkingtherapies.cnwl.nhs.uk/harrow>

HOPE Harrow

Runs parental workshops and one on Anger Management for parents with children age 3-13

The Lodge, 64 Pinner Road, Harrow, HA1 4HZ

Tel: 020 8863 7319

Email info@hopeharrow.org.uk

Web: www.hopeharrow.org.uk

Harrow Horizons

Harrow Horizons offers anger management counselling for young people up to the age of 18-or 25 if you have Special Educational Needs or Disabilities

Tel: 020 8427 1322

Email: harrowhorizons@barnardos.org.uk

Email: harrow.horizons@nhs.net for referrals from NHS services

Web: <https://www.harrowlocaloffer.co.uk/services/health/harrow-horizons>

Address: The 21 Building, 21 Pinner Road, Harrow, HA1 4ES

Need to Talk Harrow

Need to Talk run a series of workshops throughout the year on assertiveness and anger management

Email: info@needtotalk.london

Tel: 07745 510 651

Website: <https://needtotalk.london/>

The Lodge, 64 Pinner Rd, Harrow HA1 4HZ

Useful Organisations - National Sector

Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) Britain

They run interactive workshops with fees at a sliding scale depending on income, with the goal of building resilience and teaching people better ways to manage conflict

The Brick Yard, 28 Charles Square, London N1 6HT

Tel: 020 7324 4755

Web: www.avpbritain.org.uk

Email: info@avpbritain.org.uk

British Association of Anger Management (BAAM)

Hold interactive workshops both online and in person to teach people how to better manage their anger and negative emotions

The Studio, 14 Railway Approach, East Grinstead, West Sussex, RH19 1BP

Tel. 0345 1300 286 (Open Monday to Friday, 09:00am-5:00pm)

Email: contact@angermanage.co.uk

web: www.angermanage.co.uk

SupportLine

Helpline for problems, including child abuse, bullying, depression, anxiety, domestic violence and sexual assault and anger.

PO Box 2860,

Romford

Essex RM7 1JA

helpline: 01708 765200

Email: info@supportline.org.uk

web: <https://www.supportline.org.uk/>

Respect

Offers help to perpetrators of abuse, male victims of abuse and young people in abusive relationships

4th Floor, Development House

56-64 Leonard Street, London EC2A 4LT

Email: info@respect.uk.net

Web: www.respect.uk.net

Respect Phone line for perpetrators of domestic abuse in heterosexual or same-sex relationships

Phone: 0808 8024040

Open Monday–Thursday 10am–8pm and Friday 10am–5pm

Email: info@respectphoneline.org.uk

Web: www.respectphoneline.org.uk

Men's Advice Line (for male victims of domestic violence): 0808 801 0327 (free from landlines and most mobiles)

Open Monday–Friday 9am–5pm

Email: info@mensadviceline.org.uk

Web: www.mensadviceline.org.uk

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)

Offers counselling and therapies on a wide array of topics including regarding anger and abuse.

BACP House,

15 St John's Business Park

Lutterworth, Leicestershire LE17 4HB

tel. 01455 883300

website: www.bacp.co.uk

Email: bacp@bacp.co.uk

Refuge

24-hour freephone domestic violence helpline.

Refuges tel. 0808 200 0247

Email: info@refuge.org.uk

web: www.refuge.org.uk

Please call Mind in Harrow on 020 8426 0929 for a large print version of this factsheet or a summary translation.

Mind in Harrow's Mental Health Information Service is a part of SWiSH, a consortium of five local charities, offering the local Care Act Information & Advice Service for Harrow residents, funded by the Council. www.harrowca.org.uk

This factsheet was produced by Mind in Harrow



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