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# STAYING WELL AT HOME

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## **Coping with feelings of frustration and anger**

A FREE workbook for young  
people aged 11–19 years old

[www.vanessarogers.co.uk](http://www.vanessarogers.co.uk)

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Whilst a few months ago the prospect of doing nothing for weeks on end probably looked fun, the reality is that long hours confined at home can put a strain on even the best relationships, especially if you don't have a garden to escape to when tensions threaten to erupt into arguments. Without the day-to-day support of friends and peers and school, youth clubs and sports to add structure to endless days, boredom, anxiety and loneliness can mean that little arguments build and build until everyone is feeling frustrated, stressed and misunderstood.

Time to stop. Anger is a normal, healthy response but in these extraordinary times this FREE resource pack of activities, exercises and worksheets can help you explore your feelings and better understand your anger triggers, the things that really drive you mad, to develop positive coping strategies to use now and back in the real world. Print off and work your way through the different activities or save to a device to complete electronically, this has been specifically developed for you to do alone or with the support of a professional (or other trusted adult) via social media, helping you keep mentally and emotionally healthy during lockdown.

So, whilst we are all doing our bit self-isolating for medical needs or following Government instructions for social distancing, let's do our best to try and make it through to the other side as conflict free as possible.

Wishing you health, happiness and better times,

*Vanessa*

# **ANGER SELF ASSESSMENT**

## **Aim**

Start exploring the way you deal with conflict by completing this self-assessment worksheet.

## **You will need**

A self assessment and pen

## **How to do it**

Go through the self-assessment, scoring yourself as honestly as possible, to better understand the situations that you find challenging and identify areas that you could work on.

Add up your score and write it at the bottom of the worksheet. Remember, there is nothing wrong with feeling angry, it's how you behave when you are angry that can cause problems for you and others.

There is an action plan at the end of the resource pack to help review your learning and identify new strategies to try next time arguments threaten.

## **Scores:**

40–48

You tend to get angry quickly and may find it hard to cope with the negative feelings this sparks. Learning positive ways to say what you think and verbalise what you want without it escalating into aggression may help reduce the number of conflict situations you get into and make you feel your voice is being heard.

29–39

Some things just wind you up! Learning what they are and how to stop and think things through before responding is likely to mean fewer arguments, which is going to help both now and in the future. Being assertive is always preferable to being aggressive and you are more likely to get a positive outcome.

19–28

You are more of a slow burner but it's still a good idea to learn positive ways of expressing anger to keep emotionally healthy. If you find you are holding in what you really think but inside are raging, learning assertiveness skills will help you express yourself and make it less likely you hang onto negative energy and become resentful.

0–18

You are so laid back! Whilst staying calm in difficult situations is great, it is important that this isn't at the expense of saying what you think, want or need. Learning to speak up for yourself in a way that is respectful of the feelings and opinions of others is a positive skill that will help you at home and back in the real world.

## **SELF ASSESSMENT**

This is a self-assessment to help you look at challenging situations and your current coping skills. It will help you see the things you do well and identify areas you could work on.

After each statement please use the 1-4 scale below.

1 = Never   2 = Sometimes   3 = Usually   4 = Always

1. I get frustrated when I can't solve a problem. \_\_\_\_\_
2. If someone doesn't agree with me, I get angry. \_\_\_\_\_
3. I don't find it easy to say what I think. \_\_\_\_\_
4. I find it hard to handle difficult situations without aggression. \_\_\_\_\_
5. If I get into an argument I find it hard to back down. \_\_\_\_\_
6. After an argument it takes me ages to calm down. \_\_\_\_\_
7. If someone isn't listening to me, I shout louder. \_\_\_\_\_
8. When confronted with anger, I fight back. \_\_\_\_\_
9. I get angry when someone tells me what to do. \_\_\_\_\_
10. If someone tells me off, I lose my temper. \_\_\_\_\_
11. I get angry when I feel ignored. \_\_\_\_\_
12. If someone criticises me I get angry. \_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL SCORE** \_\_\_\_\_

# **TIPS FOR HANDLING DIFFICULT SITUATIONS**

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When you are faced with a situation learn to stop and think before responding.

## **Step one**

Immediately stop at the first sign you are getting angry. If imagery helps, imagine a big red stop sign.

## **Step two**

Try to identify the trigger that has set you off. Ask yourself:

- What thoughts are going through my head?
- How am I feeling?
- What is my body doing?
- Am I responding to a real problem or am I making assumptions?
- What do I want to happen now?
- What are the likely consequences if I act in an aggressive, angry way?
- How else could I respond to help resolve things rather than make them worse?

## **Step three**

Choose how you want to respond, come up with an assertive response rather than an aggressive one and then do it. If you can't take a break from the situation:

1. Make intermittent eye contact with the person but don't stare. Staring is often perceived as aggressive.
2. Use "I" statements to express your feelings or make a request. The goal is to let the other person know where you stand.
3. Actively listen. Don't interrupt or "yes, but". This turns the spotlight away from the person you are responding to and back onto yourself.

## TIPS FOR HANDLING DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

4. Respectfully state your needs/ opinions/ wants. This can be difficult if you're feeling angry and defensive, but it helps create an empathetic mood and they are more likely to listen to you.
5. Assess whether or not you've been heard. Did the person hear and understand you? Keep in mind that the person you are talking to might also feel angry, and may not be able to use the same control techniques you are.
6. If it seems that communication is impossible, leave it until another time. If your choice is to either lose control of yourself, or leave the situation, then choose to leave the situation. You can always try again when things have calmed down.
7. Accept that people won't always agree with you. Show that you are willing to work towards a compromise.

# **HOW ANGER LOOKS**

## **Aim**

This is a personal journey to explore the changes your body goes through as you get angry and understand how this might look to the rest of your family. Identifying the different stages you go through will help you recognise the point that you need to take positive action to prevent your feelings erupting into something you may regret later.

## **You will need**

The How Anger Looks worksheet and coloured pens

## **How to do it**

Look at the worksheet. The bottom of the thermometer represents you, before anything has happened to trigger angry feelings. This is your 'baseline' state. The top of the thermometer represents you at your angriest.

Your task is to use the thermometer to show how you feel and look from the bottom to the top.

Use the left hand side to record the different feelings you have, starting off when you get a bit irritated right through to when you are raging.

On the right, detail how you look on the outside. This could include clenching your fists, pacing about, going red or grinding your teeth as well as more subtle clues like talking faster or tapping fingernails. These are called 'anger cues' and they are the verbal and non-verbal signals our bodies give to tell us how we feel. They are also cues for other people to better understand our moods and changing emotions. Sometimes conflict happens because we are so busy experiencing our own emotions that we do not recognise that someone else is getting angry too. This can lead to arguments and ultimately aggression or in extreme cases violence. Being aware of our own anger cues and those of others can help reduce conflict.



## HOW ANGER LOOKS

Now go back to review your work. What can you do at different stages to reduce tensions? Is there a point of no return, where you become so angry that you explode? Remember, no matter how angry you feel you are always responsible for your actions so it makes sense to try and learn some coping skills.

Look through the 30 Tips for Cooling Down to see which ones might work for you. Identify some to try out next time you begin to feel angry. Keep trying as different things work for different people and it may take a few goes to get the right ones for you.



## **30 TIPS FOR COOLING DOWN**

We are all different some people take ages to cool off after an argument whilst for others it is over in a flash. With that in mind here are 30 ideas for taking the heat out of the situation whilst remaining safely at home.

1. Count to 10 before speaking
2. Take yourself off to another room until you feel calm enough to respond
3. Put on headphones and listen to your favourite music
4. Play a game on your device
5. Call a friend or trusted adult and let it all out
6. Find a funny post on social media to distract you
7. Make yourself a drink
8. Stroke a pet
9. Take deep breaths, slowly inhaling to fill your lungs and then exhaling in a slow, controlled way.
10. Eat a banana. They contain tryptophan, an amino acid, that the body converts into serotonin, which is responsible for making people feel happier.
11. Take a shower and sing loudly
12. Light a candle and relax by focusing on the flame
13. Have a long, hot bubble bath
14. Exercise – e.g. 20 star jumps
15. Put on your favourite track and dance
16. Lay on your bed, close your eyes and listen to sound clouds of rain or waves etc
17. Tightly cuddle a soft toy
18. Put on a track with words that reflect how you feel and sing loudly
19. Run cold water on your wrists or other pulse points
20. Get the paints out and use colour to depict how you feel
21. Mediate or do yoga (there are free meditation apps available)
22. Jog or skip on the spot
23. Watch a feel good movie
24. Write in an anger diary
25. Use social media to contact friends and get support
26. Go somewhere quiet and have a good cry
27. Squeeze a stress ball
28. Make a list of good things to do once lockdown is over
29. Do something physical like gardening or cleaning
30. Remind yourself that bad feelings pass and that you will feel better

# **HOW ANGER FEELS**

## **Aim**

This worksheet helps you better understand how our thoughts and emotions link to our behaviour. This can help you plan strategies for managing your anger so you aren't flooded with negative emotions, which can lead to stress and anxiety, and help you express them in more positive ways.

## **You will need**

A copy of the worksheet and a pen

## **How to do it**

Read this quote:

“Anger is okay, it is a feeling like any other feeling. It is how you behave that matters.”

What do you think about this statement?

Now complete the worksheet, focussing on the negative feelings and emotions that feeling angry can provoke.

Next have a look at what helps or doesn't help when you feel angry. This is likely to be different for different people as we are all unique. For example, some people find it really helps to have other people around them when they feel angry whilst others prefer to be alone. Both responses are equally valid, the important thing is to find out what works best for you before you get into a conflict situation so you have a 'go to' way of dealing with it.

If you have a phone, go to the notes section, and write down three strategies that you can use next time you feel angry. If one of your strategies is to talk to a friend or trusted adult then put their name and number there. You could also add their name and number to your 'favourites' contact list so you can call easily. If you don't

## HOW ANGER FEELS

have a phone or tablet, write the information down and leave it somewhere you can see to remind you.

Next time you begin to feel angry, visualise a large 'STOP!' sign in front of you. Take a few deep breaths and then use one of your strategies. You don't have to go and look it up (although if it helps, you can), just stopping for a moment should prompt you to remember this exercise and help you feel more in control and better able to manage the conflict without it escalating.

# HOW ANGER FEELS

Name .....

Date .....

What words do you associate with anger?

Write them in the box below:

What feelings are usually behind your anger? Circle all that apply to you:

- |             |               |          |              |           |
|-------------|---------------|----------|--------------|-----------|
| Shame       | Embarrassment | Pain     | Sadness      | Pride     |
| Frustration | Misunderstood | Anxiety  | Unfairness   | Attacked  |
| Grief       | Depression    | Insulted | Threatened   | Defensive |
| Criticised  | Worthless     | Guilt    | Disrespected | Hurt      |
| Jealousy    | Aggression    | Unloved  | Vulnerable   | Loyalty   |
| Rejection   | Threatened    | Fear     | Protective   | Doubt     |

Write any extra words to describe how you feel here: .....

.....

What makes you even angrier?

1. Things I do: .....

.....

HOW ANGER FEELS

2. Things other people do: .....

.....

3. Things happening around me: .....

.....

What helps you calm down? .....

.....

What other things could you do to express your emotions? .....

.....

Who could help you? .....

.....

**My anger strategies**

Strategy 1	Strategy 2	Strategy 3

# **THAT MAKES ME ANGRY!**

## **Aim**

This worksheet helps you to identify personal triggers and consider the links between thinking, feelings and behaviour.

## **You will need**

A worksheet and pen

## **How to do it**

Most angry outbursts are a response to an external 'trigger' that sets off a trail of thoughts, feelings and physiological changes in the body. This can be due to a build up of things that have happened over a long or short period of time, but some triggers will always have the power to irritate and accelerate the anger process, almost like a shortcut.

Identifying your own personal triggers helps you better understand what makes you angry and why. From here you can devise ways to cope with angry feelings and express yourself without harming yourself or others. By knowing your triggers you can also find ways to avoid them or work out coping strategies in advance.

Complete the worksheet by reading each statement and then placing a tick in the box if it is something that irritates or annoys you.

What do you think when this happens?

*E.g. negative thought patterns*

How do you feel when this happens?

*E.g. hurt, sad, embarrassed, shamed etc.*

What changes do you notice in your body?

*E.g. heart beating faster, red face, clenched fists, sweating, tears etc.*

How are you likely to behave?

*E.g. shouting, being aggressive, intimidating, threatening etc.*



It is perfectly normal to have angry feelings but important to find ways to express them positively.

Think back to the last argument you had at home, did you get what you wanted or needed? Apply the following questions to the situation to 'test' your perceptions against the realities of the situation.

**Step 1: Is this true? Where is my evidence?**

**Step 2: What do I want to happen? (Is it realistic? Is it fair? Is it safe?)**

**Step 3: How do I choose to react? (What are the likely consequences?)**

In times of conflict things can escalate due to unrealistic expectations and / or unmet needs, particularly in situations where someone feels hurt, threatened or shamed. Then ask yourself what you want to happen, again testing this to check if it is a realistic expectation and fair, rather than a punishment to try and block out unpleasant feelings and make yourself feel better. Remember, you are responsible for your feelings and actions and slowing things down at this stage makes it less likely that things will escalate out of control.

**Step 4: Choose**

Having thought through all of the options and considered the likely consequences of different actions make a positive choice about how to respond. This should be a choice that you are prepared to take responsibility for.

**EXAMPLE STAY AT HOME SITUATION:**

*'When you tell me off for something I haven't done in front of the family I think you are treating me like a child. I feel shamed and embarrassed, my body is hot and flushed and I have unexpected tears that I don't want you to see.*

*I know that previous situations like this have ended in a big row and I say things I regret later.'*

**MY CHOICES:**

- A. Aggressive response: I hit you to block out those feelings and to distract you from my tears in case you think that I'm weak. This leads to the police being called and even though I was originally the victim of an unjust accusation, no one listens to me they just see the violence. I feel worse and nothing is resolved.
- B. Passive response: I pretend I haven't heard you and swallow down my feelings. These will simmer inside me and I will feel increasingly unhappy but at least I won't have to deal with the situation. I will avoid you in future and nothing is resolved.
- C. Passive aggressive response: I pretend I can't hear you but then spend ages planning my revenge and dragging other people into it, which makes matters worse and doesn't resolve the original conflict situation.
- D. Assertive response: As my feelings threaten to overwhelm me, I state the problem and how I feel and then use my strength to walk away. I remind myself that I do not want this to get physical and use positive self talk to reinforce my decision. Once I have time to reflect on what has happened I can decide how best to resolve the conflict assertively but without aggression.

**Step 5: Do it**

An assertive response is usually likely to be the best option. You will have identified the problem, said what you think and feel, explained what you would like to happen, making it much more likely that the other person will listen, understand and feel more inclined to work together to resolve things.

Whatever happens, if the 5 steps have been followed any action is likely to be well thought through resulting in an action that can be lived with.

## THAT MAKES ME ANGRY!

Have a look through the following and tick those that you consider personal anger triggers:

- Being told lies
- Being blamed for something I didn't do
- Someone taking my things without asking
- Hearing bad things said about my family
- Being shouted at
- Someone pushing/touching me
- My ex going out with someone else
- Not feeling listened to
- Having to do things I don't want to
- People not doing what they say they will
- When other people get angry
- When I feel embarrassed
- Not understanding what's being asked of me
- Not winning a game/match
- Feeling physically threatened
- When someone is staring at me
- Being laughed at

Choose the THREE that are most likely to provoke angry feelings:

THAT MAKES ME ANGRY!

If this happens:

1. What do you think? .....

.....

2. How do you feel? .....

.....

3. What happens to your body? .....

.....

4. How are you likely to behave? .....

.....

**STOP! Ask yourself:**

**Step 1:** Is this true? Where is my evidence?

**Step 2:** What do I want to happen? (Is it realistic? Is it fair?  
Is it safe?)

**Step 3:** How do I choose to react? (What are the likely  
consequences?)

**Step 4:** Choose

**Step 5:** Do it

# **TREE OF DECISIONS**

## **Aim**

This exercise is particularly good for recurring disagreements as it can be used to explore different choices and potential outcomes before deciding on a strategy.

## **You will need**

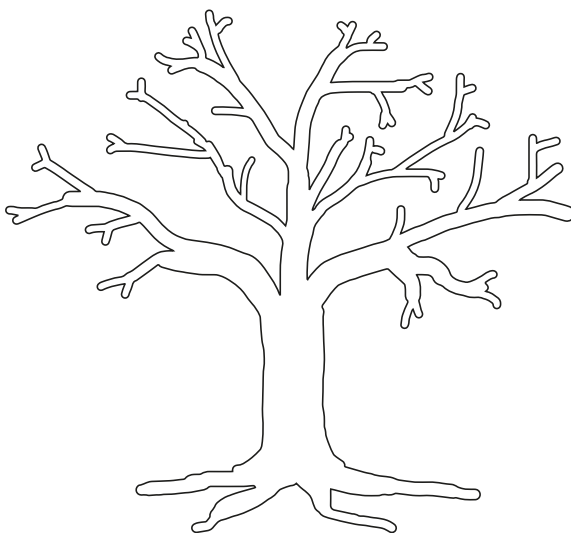
Paper and pens

## **How to do it**

Take a piece of paper and draw the outline of a large tree trunk and some branches in the middle of it. Don't worry if you aren't a skilled artist, there is no need for detail as you are going to be writing on it.

Think back to the last time you had an argument or lost your temper with someone at home. This might be a one-off or a recurring argument, e.g. over things like the washing up, tidying your room or bedtime. Write down what it is that you felt angry or upset about inside the trunk of the tree.

Example:



## TREE OF DECISIONS

Next, draw in the roots of the trees. Each root will represent a 'trigger' or action that led up to the situation. Put in as many roots as you need to fully detail the sequence of events leading up to the argument, for example what was said, how it was said, what else was going on, who else was there and how they responded.

Move on to work on the branches. These represent the different ways that you could have handled the situation to explore what might have happened. Make sure you include the option to do nothing and to walk away as well as what you actually did, even if you aren't happy with the outcome. Explore both positive and negative ideas by adding twigs to each branch and following each possible outcome as far as you can go until you reach a natural conclusion. A simple way to do this is to ask, 'and then what would happen?' after every potential action.

Finally add some leaves. These represent things that can help you manage in a difficult situation, for example counting to 10 before responding, calling a friend, taking a deep breath, having a drink of water, listening to music. These should be things you can do whilst isolating at home rather than strategies you might use to manage angry feelings at other times, for example playing sport or going out.

Review the 'Tree of decision' to see which option is most likely to resolve the situation in a way that is acceptable to you and those you live with.

Consider displaying your tree in your room to help remind you that you do have choices even in very difficult circumstances.

# **CONFLICT ACTION PLAN**

## **Aim**

This action plan is a tool to reflect on what you have learnt about the way you experience anger and set some goals for the future.

## **You will need**

A copy of the 'Conflict Action Plan' and a pen

## **How to do it**

Remind yourself that anger is one of the most strongly felt emotions and that it is normal to feel angry sometimes. Reflect on the work you have done so far and the new skills you have been developing to express your anger in more positive ways.

Complete the Conflict Action Plan.

Put it somewhere safe that you can refer back to easily to keep yourself on track.

# **CONFLICT ACTION PLAN**

Name .....

Date .....

Three things that make me angry are:

1. ....

2. ....

3. ....

Thoughts I have are:

1. ....

2. ....

3. ....

Feelings and emotions that might trigger angry outbursts are:

1. ....

2. ....

3. ....

Things that happen to my body when I feel angry are:

1. ....

2. ....

3. ....



CONFLICT ACTION PLAN

Things I can do if this happens are:

1. ....

2. ....

3. ....

Someone I can talk to is: .....

