

4 Methods To Deal With Anger

Anger is just like standing in front of a giant vacuum—it will grab you & hold on tight, & our only 2 options are to turn it off, or get out of its way. The following methods are focused on managing anger by moving out of the way.

Anger-Dousing Method 1: Take A Break

Taking a Break From Anger: walk away from the scene of your anger to calm yourself down & think clearly. As soon as you step away, you break anger's hold on you. Stepping away does not mean you are giving in! It just means you are taking a break. This can happen in ways such as having alone time, playing a sport, reading, or petting your dog. Taking a break allows for you to come up with a solution to what is bothering you, & less likely to make decisions that get you in trouble.

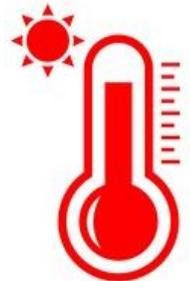


What are 4 things you can do while taking a break from an angry situation?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Anger-Dousing Method 2: Think Cool Thoughts

Does it feel like there is a voice inside your head commenting on everything you see, do, & feel? This voice is actually your thoughts, an important part of who you are. When we are angry, the first thoughts that our brains churn out are **HOT** ones. When we get mad, we then start thinking about & talking to ourselves about being mad. These **HOT** thoughts actually keep our anger going, they fuel the fire. **HOT** thought examples: I hate that! No fair! I never get what I want! She always gets her way!



Read the situation & write down the first **HOT thought that arises in your mind.**

Situation	Your First HOT Thought
You are playing your favourite game & you are significantly losing.	
Your partner serves you a food that you do not like, even after telling them you do not like it just the day before.	
You are working on a project for work & you hit a road block that you have no idea how to solve.	
Your friend, who promised to go for a walk after work, cancels last minute.	

What do we do when our **HOT** thoughts arise? We can use method 1 & take a break or we can try to put out the fire more quickly—think **COOL** thoughts! **COOL** thought examples: Oh well. Getting angry isn't going to help. I will survive. I can deal with this. This isn't worth getting angry about. Whatever. Ignoring our **HOT** thoughts is seldom effective, but shifting to **COOL** thoughts works well because it is an active process. **COOL** thoughts put out the fire of **HOT** thoughts.



Read the situation & write a COOL thought. You can use the examples above as a guide, or create your own.

Situation	Your COOL Thought
You are on a baseball team with your friends, & during your first game, you strike out at bat.	
Your partner yells at you for something you did not do.	
You cannot find your car keys & you are running late for work.	
You are out for a walk on a hot day & you need a drink of water, but realize there is no water fountain around.	

It is best to say **COOL** thoughts to yourself, even if you do not fully believe them. Interestingly, the more you tell yourself a **COOL** thought, the more true it becomes. You can't help the **HOT** thoughts that arise in your head, but you can decide not to foster those **HOT** thoughts. Move away from them, replace them with **COOL** thoughts, & you will start to feel better.

Anger-Dousing Method 3: Release Anger Safely

Our brain sees anger as danger. When we get angry, our bodies respond by increasing heart rate, tensing muscles, breathing heavily, readying us for action. Angry thoughts fuel our body's reaction—the more angry thoughts we have, the hotter, tighter, & angrier we feel. For some, anger quickly moves from a thought to a whole body feeling, resulting in a surge of energy. This kind of body anger makes us feel like we have to kick, smash, or hit something, for example, to get the anger out. Although **COOL** thoughts help, sometimes they are not enough. When anger has taken over the whole body, it needs to be released to help the body feel okay again. There are 2 different ways to get this whole body release: the active method, and the slowing down method.

Active Method: Method to burn off our angry energy. Physical activity of high intensity & speed are most effective—exercise that uses our muscles, gets the heart rate up, & breaks a sweat. These activities will burn off the angry energy, leaving us feeling good inside.



Use the chart below to brainstorm activities you can do in the places where anger causes the most trouble for you.

Location	Active Way to Burn off Anger Energy
Work	
Home	
Outside	
Other (any situation that causes whole body anger for you)	



Slowing Down Method: Method to manage anger racing through the body using quiet strategies. Breathing is an important part of each slowing down method. The most effective breathing technique for slowing your body down is taking a 3 second inhale through the nose and a 4 second exhale through the nose. Take a short pause between breaths before repeating the slowed nose breathing. Choose one of the following to get the rest of your body involved while breathing:

1 – Stretch: Using the above breathing method, perform stretches such as raising your arms up over head, folding forward toward your toes, or rolling your head gently from side to side.

2 – Squeeze: While performing the above breathing method, lie down & squeeze a pillow as tightly as you can during the inhale. While exhaling, loosen your grip on the pillow & relax everything. Once you are fully relaxed, go through one complete inhale & exhale without squeezing, prior to repeating the squeezing process.



3 – Tap: Cross your arms to make an X across your chest. Tap your right shoulder with your left hand, then your left shoulder with your right hand, & repeat. As you tap, count once for each tap you complete in your head. Breathe in & out slowly through your nose. Keep tapping back & forth until you get to 100. Take 2 breaths following the above breathing technique prior to repeating 100 taps again.

Slowing down methods work best if they are practiced first without being angry. For the next week, practice your favourite slowing down method daily for 5-10 minutes. For the following week, do something really active for 10 minutes to get your heart rate up, then practice your favourite slowing down method. Practicing this way will help you learn to actually slow your heart & calm your body, exactly what you need to do when you are angry.

Which method will you practice for the next 2 weeks? _____

Anger-Dousing Method 4: Solve The Problem

When you are angry, the thinking part of your brain shuts off, & all you can see or feel is your anger. We must release our to re-settle the body & re-open the thinking brain to actually deal with the problem. Once you are able to think clearly, there are 2 good choices to solve the problem: work it out, or move on.

Work It Out: Face the problem head on & decide to do something to better the situation. Use these for 4 steps:

Step 1: Assert yourself—speak up calmly & clearly, not yelling—to say what the problem is.

Step 2: Think about what you want. Be sure to consider what you want & what is actually possible.

Step 3: Be flexible, or able to accept something slightly different from your original want.

Step 4: Know when to compromise. This is particularly important when agreement seems like an impossibility with those involved. Compromise allows everyone to feel okay with the resolution, but no one is getting exactly what they want.



Read the situation & come up with a flexible solution. Brainstorm additional solutions for each situation if you can.

Situation	Flexible Solution
You love to play football at your Sunday family gathering at the park, but no one remembered to bring a football.	
You are in the mood for Chinese food, but your family is going to an Italian restaurant for dinner.	
You have almost beaten your video game, but the dog accidentally pulls the cord from the wall, turning off the game.	

Read the situation & think of a compromise to solve the problem.

Situation	Compromise
You are starving at 4pm, but the rule in your family is that dinner is not until 6pm.	
You want to go to the park with the kids, but your partner wants to take them shopping.	
You want to go out with friends but your parents, who you have not seen in a long time, have invited you for dinner.	

Moving On: Stop thinking or working on the problem, even if there is no resolution. You must let go of the problem—no exploding, fuming, grudges, brainstorming, or talking it out. Moving on is not giving up or giving in. You won't waste your time or energy fighting something that does not really matter. It feels good to learn how to shrug things off sometimes. Just moving on statement examples: Whatever. Oh well. It's not that big a deal. It's not worth getting angry about. That's the way things go sometimes.



Read each situation & write down whether you would Work It Out or Move On. There is no wrong decision.

Situation	Work It Out or Move On?
You are in line at the coffee shop & someone cuts in front of you.	
Your friend promised to go for lunch with you but they went to run errands instead.	
Your partner just got home from work & just snapped at you for something you did not do.	
Your best friend told you they can't make it to your birthday dinner.	
You are in the middle of doing something & your partner calls you to help put the kids to bed.	
A family member calls you a name just to make you angry.	

As you improve on working problems out or just moving on, you will not get angry as often. Knowing you will be able to handle problems that arise makes you less likely to have **HOT** thoughts, & instead think a set of **COOL** thoughts.

Reflection: Be sure to reflect daily about any problems you handled well. Use the following questions as a guide.

- How did you keep yourself calm?
- How did you solve the problem? Or, did you just move on?
- How did you feel afterwards?