

WELLNESS WEDNESDAY

Managing Anger

Frustration is an unavoidable part of life. Whether it arises from a misunderstanding, a perceived insult, or things just not happening the way we would prefer, our frustration can easily turn into anger that we express to anyone in the general vicinity. While we will always feel these things, to some extent, we can regulate ourselves and learn to manage them in a constructive way that also spares innocent (more or less) bystanders.

When we are strongly discontented, our brain's limbic system can perceive the situation as a threat, and launch the fight-or-flight response. If we don't sense an immediate concern for our physical survival, it's easy to go the "fight" route and attempt to control the situation by expressing our displeasure in many colorful ways like yelling, demeaning, or complaining. Since this often triggers a similar reaction in the recipient, it seldom resolves the issue.

To mitigate this unpleasant and ineffective approach, we have to outsmart our instincts. If we can control our physiological reactions, it will be possible to take a more productive course of action, while sparing ourselves the negative health and social impacts of chronic frustration and anger.

Be more aware. Sure, we might have not handled something ideally, but what contributed to that? Are we sleeping enough? Is there unresolved stress in other areas? Often, these are the things we really need to work on, rather than simply attempting to restrain our temper in a given situation.

Breathe and relax. When we're caught up in the moment, we can calm ourselves by remembering to breathe deeply and relax our muscles. Take a minute, if necessary! This lets the primitive parts of our brains know things are okay, because it mimics what we naturally do when a threat has resolved.

While we never may be completely calm in the face of frustrations, over time we can train our instinctive reactions to give way to considered responses. While we may still experience anger, we will become increasingly able to use it to constructively address situations, rather than just to blow off steam!

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/do-i-have-to-yell-so-much-196912312622>

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“Please leave a message and I’ll call you back as soon as I can tolerate the sound of a human voice again.”

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