



## May is Mental Health Month

# Dealing with anger and frustration

In difficult times, you may find that you have little patience with other people or get upset about little things. Anger and frustration are complicated emotions that often stem from other feelings such as disappointment, anxiety and stress. Taking some extra steps to reduce your overall tension can prevent your feelings and the reactions they cause from spiraling out of control.

### Pause before you react

If you feel yourself getting mad, take a moment to notice what you are thinking, then take a few deep breaths or count to ten in your head. By giving yourself a few seconds before you react, you can create a certain emotional distance between yourself and what excites you—and you might even realize that you are actually tense because of something else.

### Change your environment

Anger can make you feel trapped. Whether you are angry with someone in the same room as you, or just angry with the world, sometimes a physical move can help you calm down. Go to another room or step outside for a few minutes of fresh air to help disrupt the track that your mind is on.

### Get it all out

Keeping your feelings bottled up never works, so allow yourself time to be angry and complain. As long as you don't focus too much on it, venting can be a healthy outlet for your anger. You can open up to a trusted friend or write everything down in a journal. Sometimes, it's better to pretend to speak directly to the person or situation you're angry with—choose an empty chair, pretend they're sitting in it and say what you need to get off of your chest.

### Organize yourself

If things around you feel chaotic, it is often much easier to get frustrated and snap at people. Devote a few minutes each day to tidying up, planning or reorganizing. Implementing a routine can also help you gain more control over things by giving structure and security to your daily life.

### Manage your expectations

Negative feelings often stem from people or situations that do not meet your standards or assumptions. It is frustrating to feel let down but recognize that you cannot fully predict the behavior of others or how situations will play out.

## Release built-up energy

Anger is a high-energy emotion, and we store that energy and tension physically in our bodies. Exercise is a great way to get rid of extra energy and can improve your mood. Some people find grounding exercises such as meditation or deep breathing helpful to soothe intense feelings, while others prefer higher impact activities such as running or weightlifting. Think about what you normally do to decompress, such as taking a hot shower or playing your favorite music and use the tools you know work for you.

## Eliminate stressors if possible

Sometimes there is no way to get rid of a big problem altogether, but often more than one issue contributes to your frustration. Things like an excessive workload or an unhealthy relationship can make you feel on edge. Pay attention to how and why you feel stressed and see if you can make small changes to improve a challenging situation to make it less stressful.

## Don't be afraid to ask for help

If you are working to deal with your anger, but feel unable to handle it, it is time to seek additional support. Anger can fester and become explosive if it is not resolved. Several mental illnesses can manifest as anger, so this can actually be a sign of depression or anxiety—treating an underlying illness can also help to heal your anger.

**For more information, visit [www.AFPC.AF.MIL/EAP](http://www.AFPC.AF.MIL/EAP) or call your Air Force EAP at 1-866-580-9078 (TTY 711) for compassionate and caring support.**