

## What is Everyone So Angry About? A discussion about Anger

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An elderly woman in front of you is driving 25 miles per hour as you rush to work. How do you react? Your child spills his drink all over your newly cleaned floor. How do you react? These and many other every day situations are enough to get some people very angry. Yet others would be unfazed or react calmly. What is the difference between these two types of people and how can the angry reactor modify his behavior? Anger is a secondary emotion that commonly masks other more vulnerable emotions. Feelings like hurt, jealousy, guilt and sadness for some are more easily expressed through anger. Even if the emotion is unstated, it is often easier to feel angry at someone than acknowledge that they hurt your feelings. The problem with anger is that it often gets out of control. If expressed too aggressively it can hurt others and damage relationships. If unexpressed and held in, it can manifest itself physically through headaches or other somatic symptoms. Also unexpressed anger seems to feed itself and grow and at times may begin to feel like an obsession. So what should we do with our anger? Anger is a normal reaction to many events. It should be validated and recognized but in order to express it in a healthy way, it should be examined. Here are some questions to ask yourself when thinking about your anger. Is my feeling of anger proportionate to its trigger? In other words, do you get just as angry when your kids spill a drink as you do when they talk back to you? If so, you might think about what else is feeding your anger. What do you do when you are angry? Do you throw things, fume silently or attack others? Have relationships been effected by your anger? If there are negative consequences after an anger filled event it might be worth examining the origins of your anger. What triggers my anger? Is it the little things that push you over the edge? Is there a feeling that triggers anger? For example, do you lash out when you begin to feel vulnerable or guilty. Understanding one's triggers is the first step in modifying behavior. How do I feel when I start to get angry? It is easier to calm down when feeling a little angry. If you can begin to notice how your body feels as you begin to get angry, you can use other techniques to calm yourself down before the anger accelerates. What works to calm me down? Pay attention to ways that have worked in the past. Some examples are listening to music, taking a walk or using humor. Anger is a common and complicated emotion. If your anger is negatively impacting important relationships in your life or you are using alcohol or drugs to calm yourself, seek professional help in examining the sources of your anger.