Anger Management for Stress Relief

It is natural to get angry sometimes, and doing so can actually be healthy, too. Anger serves some important functions, particularly that of moving us to action when things need changing in our lives. Therefore, setting a goal of never experiencing anger probably would not be desirable, even if it were possible reach. Those who try for a complete lack of anger often end up just ‘stuffing’ their emotions, then ‘blowing up’ at inopportune times and causing more problems for themselves than if they had expressed their anger in healthy ways. The goal of anger management is twofold: to eliminate unnecessary anger, and to express necessary anger in healthy ways.

The following anger management tips and exercises can help you with the dual goals of anger management, enabling you to enjoy healthier relationships and less stress in your life.

Examine Your Beliefs

This one can be tricky, but it is a way to prevent some of your feelings from turning into anger in the first place -- a way to eliminate unnecessary anger. When you get angry, you can often (some experts even go so far as to say always) trace the emotion back to a belief that what happened was wrong, not supposed to have happened, was due to someone else’s negligence or lack of caring, etc. Pinpointing the exact thoughts that are tied to your anger can enable you to talk yourself out of anger, or realize that whatever it is that is triggering your anger may not necessarily need to lead to an anger response.

Eliminate some of your “Anger Triggers”

Once you are aware of what types of things make you angry, you can start cutting some of these triggers out of your life. For example, if you find that you often get angry in the car when you are in a hurry and slow traffic makes you late, you can work on reorganizing your schedule to find a few extra minutes to accommodate traffic. You can play music in your car to relax you, or use stress management techniques to calm your physiology. If you have a friend who constantly triggers your anger, you may want to look at the beliefs behind your anger with this person, or limit your contact. The point is, if you already know what things seem to bring about an anger response, and you can cut them out of your life, why not do so in the interest of anger management?
Develop Effective Communication Skills

Much of our anger tends to get directed at other people. Effective communication skills and conflict resolution techniques can help in two ways: They can help us communicate our boundaries to others so that we are less likely to feel frustration and anger in our relationships, and they help us to do so in a way that does not provoke anger in others.

Take Care of Yourself

If your body is under a lot of stress and strain, you may be more prone to anger in your daily life. For example, sleep-deprived people are often cranky; the same holds for hungry people. If you are able to create a nice work-life balance so that you have enough time outside of work to get quality sleep, eat a healthy diet, and have some time for hobbies, creativity and relationships, you should find yourself less tense and anger-prone.

Keep some Stress Relievers Handy

When you are having one of those days that you will scream if one more thing goes wrong, you usually do end up yelling at some point (figuratively or literally). Added stress can make you more anger-prone. Therefore, having stress management techniques on-hand to quiet the storm can help you soften or eliminate anger in your life. Breathing exercises are one of my favorite techniques; a few deep breaths can calm your stress response and enable you to feel more in control in virtually any situation. Progressive muscle relaxation can also offer some fast benefits, especially when practiced regularly. Cognitive restructuring can also be great for stress relief as well as anger management. As for ongoing practices, meditation can provide some lasting benefits; not only do you feel better when you are practicing it, but it can help you be less reactive to stress overall. Exercise carries similar benefits.

Get Support if you need it

While anger can push people away, it can also be a cry for help. If you find yourself angry more often than you would like, you may just need more help and support from others. For example, if a messy house puts you on edge, enlisting cleaning help may be an effective anger management technique for you. If you find that you are angry over constant ‘little things,’ perhaps you are too busy and overwhelmed, and you need to cut back on your lifestyle stress. Do not be afraid to ask others to help take some of the burden off, if they are able.

Finally, if you feel that your anger management efforts are not as effective as you would like, it might be useful to enlist the support of a therapist, who can help you take a deeper look at your anger and find ways to work through it and express it in healthy ways. Because of the negative effects of anger, it is important to prioritize anger management if you find yourself angry more often than you would like. With a little work, you can make anger work for you (as a motivator for change), rather than against you (as a threat to your health and happiness).