Anger, Hostility, and Violent Behaviour

If you are angry, hostile, or violent, it's important to find help. You can learn ways to manage your feelings and actions.

There are some things you can do to try to manage any feelings of anger or hostility and avoid violence.

* Think before you act.

Take time to stop and cool down when you feel yourself getting angry. Count to 10, or practice some other form of mental relaxation.

* Know what your feelings can do.

Recognize feelings that often lead to angry outbursts. Anger and hostility may be a symptom of unhappy feelings or [depression](https://myhealth.alberta.ca/health/pages/conditions.aspx?hwid=std120700&lang=en-ca#std120700-sec) about your job, your relationship, or other aspects of your personal life.

* Think about why you're angry.

Come up with a reasonable explanation of why you are angry. If a person makes you angry, suggest to yourself that maybe the person is having a bad day.

* Avoid things that often lead to angry outbursts.

Avoid situations that lead to anger. For example, do errands at less-busy times if standing in line bothers you.

* Express anger in a healthy way.
  + Go for a short walk or jog.
  + Draw, paint, or listen to music to release the anger.
  + Write in a daily journal.
  + Use "I" statements, not "you" statements, to discuss your anger. Say "I don't feel valued when my needs aren't being met" instead of "You make me mad when you are so inconsiderate."
* Take care of yourself.
  + Exercise regularly.
  + Eat a variety of healthy foods. Don't skip meals.
  + Try to get 8 hours of sleep each night.
  + Limit your use of alcohol, and don't use drugs.
  + Practice a relaxation technique such as yoga, meditation, or tai chi.
* Find where to get help.

Explore other resources that may be available through your job or your community.

* + Contact your human resources department at work to see if you have services available through an employee assistance program.
  + Contact your local hospital, mental health facility, or health unit to see what types of programs or support groups are available in your area.

**Managing anger**

The first step to managing anger is to be more aware of it. Note the thoughts, feelings, and emotions that you have when you get angry. Practice noticing these signs of anger when you are calm. If you are more aware of the signs of anger, you can take steps to manage it. Here are a few tips:

* Think before you act. Take time to stop and cool down when you feel yourself getting angry. Count to 10 while you take slow, steady breaths. Practice some other form of mental relaxation.
* Learn the feelings that lead to angry outbursts. Anger and hostility may be a symptom of unhappy feelings or depression about your job, your relationship, or other aspects of your personal life.
* Avoid situations that lead to angry outbursts. If standing in line bothers you, do errands at less busy times.
* Express anger in a healthy way. You might:
  + Go for a short walk or jog.
  + Draw, paint, or listen to music to release the anger.
  + Write in a daily journal.
  + Use "I" statements, not "you" statements, to discuss your anger. Say "I don't feel valued when my needs are not being met" instead of "You make me mad when you are so inconsiderate."
* Take care of yourself.
  + Exercise regularly.
  + Eat a variety of healthy foods. Don't skip meals.
  + Try to get 8 hours of sleep each night.
  + Limit your use of alcohol, and don't use drugs.
  + Practice yoga, meditation, or tai chi to relax.
* Explore other resources that may be available through your job or your community.
  + Contact your human resources department at work. You might be able to get services through an employee assistance program.
  + Contact your local hospital, mental health facility, or health unit. Ask what types of programs or support groups are available in your area.
* Do not keep guns in your home. If you must have guns in your home, unload them and lock them up. Lock ammunition in a separate place. Keep guns away from children.

**Getting help for anger problems**

If you are angry or hostile or you have violent behaviour, it is important to find help. You can learn ways to manage your feelings and actions.

Use one of the following resources if you are or know of a parent or caregiver having trouble managing angry feelings. Actions done in moments of anger can be harmful and abusive.

* **Check your provincial website or local phone book** for resources on getting help in your area.
* **Parents Anonymous**. Self-help groups serving parents under stress, as well as children who have been abused, are available throughout Canada, Europe, and the United States. To find a group in your area, search online or in your phone book under Parents Anonymous.
* **Social service departments**. Many social service agencies involved with child abuse investigation also offer services to parents under stress. Search online, or agencies are listed in the phone book, usually under provincial services.
* **Kids Help Phone.** Kids and teens can call 1-800-668-6868.

**When to call for help during self-care**

Call your doctor if feelings of anger, hostility, or violent behaviour occur more often or are more severe.

If you are angry or hostile or if you have violent behaviour, it's important to find help. Your area may have help lines you can call. Or maybe you can get help through social organizations. Check online, or ask your doctor. You can learn ways to manage your feelings and actions.

**Anger**

Anger signals your body to prepare for a fight. This reaction is often called "fight or flight." When you get angry, adrenaline and other hormones are released into the bloodstream. Then your blood pressure goes up, your heart beats faster, and you breathe faster.

**Hostility**

Hostility is being ready for a fight all the time. Hostile people are often stubborn, impatient, hotheaded, or have an "attitude." They are often in fights. Or they may say that they feel like hitting something or someone. Hostility isolates you from other people.

Anger and constant hostility keep your [blood pressure high](https://myhealth.alberta.ca/health/pages/conditions.aspx?hwid=sth149819&lang=en-ca#sth149819-sec). And they increase your chances of having another health problem, such as [depression](https://myhealth.alberta.ca/health/pages/conditions.aspx?hwid=std120700&lang=en-ca#std120700-sec), a [heart attack](https://myhealth.alberta.ca/health/pages/conditions.aspx?hwid=sth149627&lang=en-ca#sth149627-sec), or a [stroke](https://myhealth.alberta.ca/health/pages/conditions.aspx?hwid=sts15140&lang=en-ca#sts15140-sec).

**Violent behaviour**

Violent behaviour often starts with verbal threats or fairly minor incidents. But over time, it can involve physical harm. This behaviour is very damaging, both physically and emotionally. It can include physical, verbal, or sexual abuse of an intimate partner ([domestic violence](https://myhealth.alberta.ca/health/pages/conditions.aspx?hwid=te7756&lang=en-ca#te7756-sec)), a child ([child abuse](https://myhealth.alberta.ca/health/pages/conditions.aspx?hwid=ue5243&lang=en-ca#ue5243-sec)), or an older adult (elder abuse).