

exercise: anger map

Use this blank anger map to map out what leads up to your angry behavior. Keep mapping your anger while you use this workbook.

	Events	Anger Detours
Calm Start		
Pre-events		
Critical Incident		
Afterward		

CALM log: (Cope with Anger and Live Mindfully)

To improve your self-control, fill out this log every day. Record the triggers that started an angry event. Identify your thoughts, feelings and physical sensations; record your reaction urge and rate its intensity; and identify alternatives you could have focused on. Finally, write down what a mindful response might have been.

Identify the external events or inner thoughts and feelings that triggered your anger.

What did you notice happening in your body and mind?

Thoughts: _____

Feelings: _____

Physical sensations: _____

What was your first urge to react? _____

Rate your urge on a scale from 1–5, with 5 being most intense: _____

If you acted on your urge, describe what happened. _____

What alternative thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations could you have focused on?

Alternative thoughts: _____

Alternative feelings: _____

Alternative physical sensations: _____

How could you have responded to this event more mindfully?

anger styles

masked anger (questions 1–9)

When people try to hide their angry feelings, their anger is masked. The three types of masked anger are people pleasing, sneaky, and self-blaming.

1. People Pleasing (questions 1-3)

People pleasers want to keep everyone happy. They always try to be “nice” or “good” and avoid anger at all costs. They may think that people won’t like them or be their friends if they show even the slightest bit of upset. They also do their best to avoid others’ anger.

Sam never seems to get mad, and he always tries to be nice and understanding to everyone. Max told Sam he would hang out with him after school. But instead Max blew Sam off for the third time to hang out with other kids. When Max made an excuse the next day at school, Sam said, “It’s no big deal. I understand.”

What’s the Problem?

People pleasers often put their needs and wants last, or do not express or acknowledge them at all, even to themselves. As a result, they may develop low self-esteem. They have trouble being assertive or standing up for themselves when something is wrong, and can be taken advantage of by others. People pleasers sometimes hope that others will be “mind readers” and magically just know that they are upset without their ever expressing it, but friends and family may not even know that they are not in agreement with them.

What to Work On

Learn that anger is okay if expressed appropriately and that disagreement does not necessarily lead to losing the people close to you. Practice being assertive and expressing directly what you are feeling even if it does not please the other person.

2. Sneaky (questions 4–6)

People who rely on sneaky anger frustrate or let down others without ever expressing how they feel directly; for example, by always being late for important things or saying that they’ll do something but “forgetting.” Because they are angry and resentful deep down, they are secretly getting back at people, often explaining “It’s not my fault.” Without acknowledging their anger, they get back at people.

When Julie and Maria go to the movies, Julie always expects Maria to pick her up. She often says she is short of money and asks Maria to pay for her ticket. One day, Maria shows up a half hour late so they have to cancel the movie plans. When Julie gets mad at her, Maria starts to cry, saying she tried her best to get there. Deep down, Maria is sick of Julie’s taking advantage of her, but she would never say anything. Instead, she “accidentally” messes things up, then gets upset when Julie blames her.

What's the Problem?

People who exhibit sneaky anger often don't know exactly what they want. They don't assert themselves or ask directly for what they need. Their behavior leaves others confused, frustrated, and without a clear idea why they are upset or what can be done differently.

What to Work On

Be direct and say that you are upset about something. Let the other person know that something is bothering you. Don't hold on to resentments and then let them come out in a seemingly accidental way. If you commit to doing something, do it. Catch yourself when you are trying to avoid or ignore others' requests because you are resentful or want to get back at them.

3. Self-Blaming (questions 7–9)

Sometimes we actually do something wrong and should take responsibility for our actions. But people who constantly blame themselves for problems have learned that it safer to direct their anger at themselves instead of the person they are angry with. They may have learned early in life that expressing anger out loud is not useful, or worse, gets the other person even more angry. So they turn their anger inward and blame themselves for everything that is going wrong.

Vanessa and Fred have a roller-coaster relationship. Vanessa makes plans with Fred, but changes them at the last minute. She regularly threatens to break up with him. Fred blames all their problems on himself. He thinks, If I were nicer she would have remembered our plans; or, If I were cooler she wouldn't threaten to end it. For Fred it is much safer to get mad at himself than to risk expressing his anger at Vanessa.

What's the Problem?

Self-blaming anger can cause damage to our self-esteem and make us feel hopeless and helpless. If we are told over and over that everything that is wrong is our fault, we begin to believe that. Self-blame gets in the way of healthy anger and of being able to assert ourselves when someone else is responsible for things not going right. Self-blaming anger can develop for kids who grew up in homes where there was a lot of conflict, or for people who may be in unhealthy or abusive relationships. This type of anger can cause you to feel depressed and powerless.

What to Work On

If you tend to blame yourself for everything, start considering other explanations. Take a look at the problem situation and imagine a friend in the role you're in. Would you still blame your friend for the problem? Try to understand where you learned the message that everything that goes wrong is somehow your fault. Practice your assertiveness skills and explain—to yourself and the other person—why the problem is not entirely your fault. Try to find a solution that does not put all the responsibility for things going well (or badly) on you.

explosive anger (questions 10–21)

People who rely on this pattern tend to lose control of their anger easily and can at times hurt others, physically or with words. The four types of explosive anger are volcanic, defensive, intimidating, and raging.

1. Volcanic (questions 10–12)

People with the volcanic anger style suddenly explode and let all their anger out at once. Often they are not aware of their anger building before it explodes. This anger style provides them some level of relief because they release all of their intense, bottled-up feelings, but afterward they may regret how angry they got or feel that their anger was bigger than the situation warranted.

Peter finds out that his girlfriend, Cindy, can't come over tonight because her family has plans. Enraged, he yells at her over the phone and hangs up. Then he pushes his younger brother, snaps at his mom, and slams his bedroom door. After a half hour of playing video games, he forgets about being upset. But everyone else is still hurt by his behavior.

What's the Problem?

This style of anger can feel out of control, both to the person expressing it and those around him or her. It can cause a lot of problems and may hurt the feelings of others.

What to Work On

People who express anger like a volcano need to work on regulating their physical and emotional intensity. If this tends to be your style of anger, work on noticing the early signs that you are becoming angry. Use some of the Cooling Wisdom techniques taught in this book to physically calm yourself before expressing your anger. Go for a walk, listen to some music, or do something else to bring down the intensity before expressing what you are upset about.

2. Defensive (questions 13–15)

Under their anger, people who use this style may not feel very good about themselves. They tend to be very sensitive to criticism. When someone else says "I don't like this," the angry person hears "I don't like you." Rather than facing their own feelings of shame (which are usually much more intense than necessary), they make the other person feel bad.

Annie's mom walks into the living room and says, "This house is a mess." Annie jumps up from the couch and screams, "You're not fair! I do everything around here. I cleaned my room, I did laundry, and I emptied the dishwasher." Annie's mom is confused and says, "I didn't say it was your fault. All I said was that the house was messy."

What's the Problem?

This anger style damages the angry person as much as anyone else. The person who is always defensive can't tolerate even the slightest disagreement or criticism from others.

They take anything negative as proof of their lack of worth rather than as feedback on a specific behavior. This style often ends up making the problem worse; by making the person feel more shame afterward, defensive anger reinforces their idea that they are “bad.”

What to Work On

Watch your own self-judgments, and pay close attention to what people are saying. If someone says, “I wish you hadn’t been late,” focus simply on being late and don’t let your shame lead you to thoughts like *I’m such a bad friend* or *I always screw up*. That’s your shame clouding the issue. Remind yourself that you are a good person with good qualities, and that you can make mistakes. Focus on behaviors rather than taking everything as a personal statement about you.

3. Intimidating (questions 16–18)

Intimidating anger is intended to get what you want. You can intimidate others in many ways; for example, by being scary, out of control, or having a complete meltdown. This anger style is intentional and often goes away as soon as you get what you want. In the short run, it serves the purpose of helping you achieve your goal.

Patton’s dad told her that she couldn’t go out with her friends this weekend because she got two Ds on her report card. Patton glares at her dad and stomps off, shouting that she may just as well be dead if she can’t go. Her dad is worried that she may hurt herself, so he finally tells her she can go this time. A half hour later, Patton is happily getting ready to go out and gives her dad a good-night kiss as she walks out the door.

What’s the Problem?

This anger style does not help build meaningful relationships of any kind. People don’t like to be bullied or threatened with out-of-control behavior. Eventually they avoid intimidators, or they bully back. Sometimes people with more authority, like school principals or law-enforcement officers, step in and the intimidator gets punished or controlled. In the long run, this style is not very effective and usually leaves the intimidators feeling alone and bad about themselves.

What to Work On

If you tend to be an intimidator, work on compromise. If you can directly express what you want and are willing to negotiate, you will probably be able to work things out with others without resorting to threatening them. You may also need to learn to tolerate not getting your way all the time. In the long run, you will have more healthy and meaningful relationships based on equality rather than overpowering people.

4. Raging (questions 19–21)

This style of anger is all about the adrenaline rush and surge of power you feel when you get angry. People who tend to use this style love the excitement that comes with a fight, whether verbal or physical. Life without the drama seems boring and dull.

Carlos is always looking for a fight. After school he tells his friends, "I really want to kick someone's ass." He starts to jump around, saying how much a fight gives him a rush. But when he's in class or doing other things, he's kind of quiet and withdrawn.

What's the Problem?

This anger pattern can lead to a crazy up-and-down lifestyle. People can become addicted to the rush and drama of fighting all the time. Rage-aholics are not comfortable with things being peaceful and calm. The chaos and excitement of constant conflict may come to dominate their lives.

What to Work On

Rage-aholics need to build a lifestyle that is less intense. They can try to find healthier ways to get that adrenaline rush, like sports or music. Or they can work toward appreciating life on an even keel, without the dramatic highs and lows.

chronic anger (questions 22–33)

People who have developed this pattern have made anger part of their lifestyle. There are four types: grumpy, suspicious, self-righteous, and vengeful.

1. Grumpy (questions 22–24)

People who have this style have formed a habit of being negative in order to protect themselves from getting hurt or being taken advantage of. They look at life as a glass that is half empty, convinced that people are out to get them.

Steven usually wakes up mad. He complains as he gets his breakfast and leaves for school. He even gets pissed at his friends easily. Whenever they suggest something to do, he has a reason why it's stupid. He starts arguments with his parents over everything. Steven wishes he wasn't so irritable all the time, but he doesn't know how to change his mood.

What's the Problem?

People who use this style are always pessimistic, looking at what is wrong with everything and everyone. Grumpy people are not usually much fun to be around. Their perpetual negativity may stem from an underlying depression.

What to Work On

If you tend to be grumpy and habitually hostile, try to increase the positive activities and experiences in your life. Rather than looking for what is wrong, focus your attention on what is positive in yourself and others. Try to do something you like to do daily and rate your mood before and after. You may need some additional help; consider talking to a concerned adult about the possibility that you have some level of depression.

2. Suspicious (questions 25–27)

People who rely on this style constantly feel threatened by others. By keeping them on guard all the time, their anger gives them the illusion of protecting them from getting hurt. It can come in the form of jealousy or suspicion of other people.

Emily is in love with Ian, but she is constantly afraid she will lose him. She's always suspicious that he's cheating on her, so she checks his text and phone messages and always asks his friends what he's doing. If he doesn't call her exactly when he said he would, she goes into a rage. Her jealousy is driving Ian crazy, because no matter what he does, Emily won't believe that he is faithful. Ian is ready to give up.

What's the Problem?

People with suspicious anger become convinced that others want to take what is theirs. As a result, they spend most of their time jealously guarding against others, which makes it very difficult to form any kind of trusting relationship with anyone—friends, family, or partners. Their jealousy and distrust often end up pushing away those same people they are trying to keep from losing.

What to Work On

If you tend toward suspicious anger, you need to work toward developing trust. Focus on times when people have been honest and fair, and remind yourself that people are usually well intentioned (even if they make hurtful mistakes). Recognize that trying to control others will not actually prevent them from doing what you fear. In other words, you may need to let go and realize that people might hurt you. But trying to control them all the time is no way to live or to have decent relationships with others.

3. Moral (questions 28–30)

This style is about acting like the “justice police.” People who act this way feel that it is their duty to make everyone else follow their rules of behavior and morality. Those who rely on moral anger often feel a certain level of self-righteousness, and superiority over those they are angry with. In the right kind of situations, this style of anger can be useful for standing up to injustice.

Annabelle believes that she is a good person with strong values and that it is her job to make sure everyone else is honest and follows the rules. When she finds out that a group of students cheated on their math final, she is angry at the idea that they might get higher grades than hers and decides that telling the principal is the right thing.

What's the Problem?

This style of anger can be very judgmental, and most people don't like to be constantly judged. When used all the time, moral anger can come across as arrogant or controlling. For those who rely on this style, their black-and-white thinking and focusing on others' flaws rather than their own shortcomings can cause difficulty in forming and maintaining relationships.

What to Work On

If you feel you need to act as the justice police, try to work on flexibility and on viewing conflicts from different perspectives. Most problems are not black-and-white, but rather tend to have shades of gray. Instead of finding ways to strengthen your viewpoint, learn to listen to the reasoning of the other side.

4. Vengeful (questions 31–33)

Vengeful anger involves intense resentment and hatred toward another person. It is often born out of deep pain and blaming someone else as the cause of one's suffering. People who engage in this style want revenge and spend a lot of time plotting ways to get back at the people they believe have wronged them. In its milder form, vengeful anger can be a way to stand up for oneself after being wronged; it can serve as a form of justice, providing a momentary sense of enjoyment at making someone else suffer.

Erika will never stop hating her former friend Allyson. Six months after Erika broke up with Kirk, Allyson started to date him. That was two years ago, and Allyson and Kirk are not even together anymore, but Erika refuses to let it go. She continues to do things to get back at Allyson, posting online lies about her and starting rumors at school. She can't stop think about ways to punish Allyson for what she did in the past.

What's the Problem?

Resentment can lead to the extreme of seeking revenge, or it can have a more subtle effect of never allowing those who use this style to let go and move on. It can cause them to be depressed or habitually miserable. The vengeful side of resentment can lead them to do very destructive things, like physically attacking an enemy or spreading vicious rumors over the Internet. Ultimately, revenge does nothing to relieve the pain the angry person has suffered; it just spreads it around like a disease.

What to Work On

Work on letting go of your hatred. You may have suffered in a way that is too painful to forgive, and that is understandable. But try to let go, if only for your own sake and healing. Recognize that making the other person's life miserable will be only momentarily satisfying; the person will either retaliate, or your resentment will return. The real way to move past vengeful anger is to let go of your hatred and desire for revenge. Recognize that letting go and moving on is not an act of cowardice, but instead the ultimate act of bravery. As the saying goes, "The best form of revenge is to be happy."