

Beating

ANGER

Arkesie Self Help Series

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A Self- Help Guide

Anger

- Have you found yourself feeling acrimonious, confrontational or irritated by the smallest of things?
- Do you find yourself launching into confrontational scenarios easily, then blurting out hurtful comments?
- Have you ever broken or destroyed something as a result of feeling angry?
- Have you ever found yourself being verbally or physically aggressive towards anyone?

If you have found that you have answered ‘yes’ then you might be experiencing difficulties managing your anger. This *Self-Help Guide* aims to equip you with a number of tools and strategies to help you take control of these feelings and your reactions to them too.

This *Self-Help Guide* aims to assist you in:

- Establishing that you may be experiencing anger-related problems.
- Understanding more about anger, where it comes from and what could be fuelling it.
- Using a number of helpful strategies and approaches to help you manage the anger you are experiencing.

Strategies:

- Understand more about what anger is.
- Learn ways to confront your negative thoughts and challenge them in a helpful and realistic way.
- Develop ways in which you can relax, both mentally and physically.
- Fine tune your problem-solving skills.
- Think about ways in which you can make healthy choices that will change your life in a positive way.
- Enhance your communication skills.

It is crucial that you follow the steps detailed in this book at your own pace. Please feel free to return back to sections and to reach out and to ask questions too.

Is your anger becoming a problem?

Please put a tick next to the symptoms that resonate with you. These have been categorised into feelings, physical symptoms, behavioural traits and thoughts.

Feelings:

Frustration	
Fury/ Rage	
Annoyed	
Stressed	
Invalidated	

Physical Symptoms:

Headache	
Stomach ache	
Muscle Tension/ Pain	
Nausea/ Light-headedness	
Racing heart-beat	
Shaking/ Trembling	
Sweating	

Thoughts:

Everything is ruined/ destroyed	
I have to sort this out/ challenge this	
This is unacceptable/ or unfair	
They have disappointed me again	
This is what they deserve	
They should be punished	
I look like a fool	

Behaviour:

Pacing around/ Cannot remain still	
Swearing	
Arguing	

Physically aggressive to inanimate objects or people	
Leaving a situation prematurely	
Shouting	
Having a “short fuse” / easily annoyed	

You may have found that you have ticked a number of boxes from the list of symptoms above. If so, you may be experiencing problems harnessing your anger. Although it can be overwhelming to consider this, remember that you have already made the first step towards managing the extreme feelings that you are experiencing.

This *Self-Help Guide* aims to provide you with a number of effective skills to help you cope. Once you have begun to follow the guide with the strategies that it offers, you will find that your situation will substantially improve.

Understanding Anger

Anger is a natural response to the feeling of fear. It is an emotion that everyone experiences in healthy doses, however it is how often and extreme that this emotion is that determines whether or not it is a problem. When anger is rearing its head at an inappropriate time, or continues for longer periods than necessary, then we can assume that this emotion has become a growing issue in our lives.

It is important to know when to draw the line between anger manifesting as the feeling of a small annoyance at an injustice, to uncontrollable shouting, swearing or being verbally or physically aggressive to those around us.

Anger has a destructive impact on our relationships within our families, friends and work too. When anger becomes a re-occurring issue in our lives, it can change the way in which we see ourselves, impacting on our self-esteem.

Have you ever found yourself blaming other people for the way in which you reacted to something that made you angry? Or maybe you blamed a situation for the way you reacted too? More often than not, our anger often stems from a feeling of injustice or disappointment. It can sometimes root from the feeling of being deprived of something, or feeling mistreated.

Physical Feelings:

Some of the physical feelings that you might have ticked in the boxes in the last chapter were due to our bodies reacting as a response to fear, worry or stress in general. Our ‘fight of flight’ response to these fears is what makes each and every one of us unique. Some of us will feel the need to run a million miles away, while others tend to challenge their fears head-on. No matter what way we each might react, this response often causes a “knee-jerk” reaction of symptoms in times of stress. This is actually a healthy response to ensure that our bodies move quickly to or from what we perceive as a threat.

Physical Feelings Explained:

- Increased heart-beat and breathing – This ensures that our blood cells are being quickly oxygenated. The blood then feeds into our muscles, which respond quickly when we are feeling threatened, allowing us to move to or from danger.
- Muscle tension – Prepares our body for the next reaction (to move to or from danger).
- Stopping other body functions temporarily (e.g., the digestive system– this is not a priority at the moment of experiencing fear.)

- Sweating – Cools us down when we are feeling stressed. It also acts as a response to an increase in respiration.
- Rushing thoughts – Quickly analysing what is happening and taking into consideration the situation before settling on a decision that will dictate how we respond.

It is understandable why we would have many of these physical symptoms of anger, especially given our development as early human beings. This reaction would initially serve to protect us from predators, as well as provide us with a quick response when hunting for food too. The difficulty lies in finding ways to manage this primitive response to physical fear in the 21st Century. Fear is prevalent in our everyday lives but in more diverse and passive ways.

For example, it would be inappropriate to club someone over the head if you were working in a classroom environment as a school teacher; experiencing high levels of stress and emotional intensity on a regular basis. However, it would be understandable that an early human settler may have effectively used this response when faced with a hungry predator.

In the modern world that we live in, we are faced with the difficulty of managing a response to a survival instinct in situations that demand negotiation skills, not physical violence. In our current lives, the extreme symptoms of anger that we experience can actually be counter-productive, unhelpful and confusing.

It is important that we understand that anger is a natural response. This will then help us to find ways to manage our physical responses, without fearing or worrying what could happen. The ‘fight or flight’ response has served the human race well in ensuring our survival for thousands of years. However, it can be difficult to tailor this instinctive response to the difficulties that we face in our day-to-day lives in 2021. Believe it or not, you really do have the power to determine whether or not you are going to allow the physical symptoms to pass by. This *Self-Help Guide* will serve to enable you to manage the symptoms of anger you are feeling.

How is the anger response triggered?

Life Events/ Past Experiences:

It is only natural that we learn from past experiences, in order to teach and prepare us for valuable life lessons that may benefit us in the future. However, if we have suffered from unresolved past trauma, have been victim to an injustice, or have been exposed to a specific event that may have left us feeling threatened, then we are likely to experience anger from a similar scenario. If you have experienced specific events that have involved conflict or bullying and were not able to express your negative feelings at the time, you may experience difficulties with anger in a similar scenario at a later date.

For example:

You might see someone being bullied and remember how it felt to be the victim of a similar attack. You respond to this situation by challenging the bully directly by shouting, swearing and resorting to physical aggression.

Our thoughts:

Our perspective of a particular event or situation will inform how we respond to it. Our interpretation might result in an angry response, especially if we feel threatened, personally attacked, or wronged in some way. If we believe there is also an element of injustice, we are more likely to respond in a negative way too. It is important to gain a more in-depth understanding of anger, so that we can inform our responses to be better equipped to handling tense situations. We can use strategies to create

a safe and healthy environment to express our negative feelings, rather than dismissing (or bottling it up) our needs.

Behavioural Patterns:

We often find it difficult to sit quietly and tolerate a scenario where we might be feeling powerless, undermined or uncomfortable. We may have learned ways in how to manage our emotions (positive or negative) and reactions to other people's behaviour that may not actually be helpful. This often reduces to a pattern or a vicious-cycle of uncontrollable angry behaviour. If left untreated, this pattern can be harder to challenge and manage.

There are many different ways in which anger can be caused. The approaches listed above provide three practical reasons why our anger can be fuelled easily. While it is important that you understand these explanations, it is crucial that you acknowledge these points as something to empower you to move towards your goal of making healthy changes.

What fuels our anger?

Anger often follows similar patterns. These could be triggered by environmental factors such as getting into the car or going into a space that reminds you of unresolved conflict or past trauma. Common reasons to anger are; conversations about money, driving, memories of an enraging event, personal problems such as an injustice at work (perhaps you are not appreciated for your hard work) or relationship difficulties. Similarly, it can be frustrating if plans are changed halfway through or even cancelled.

It is easy to perceive anger to have short-term benefits, such as silencing other people in a noisy room or jump-starting people to respond to you effectively when you are feeling ignored. However positive the short-term benefits might seem, more often than not, they do not correlate with a positive outcome further on down the line. Swift bouts of extreme anger can damage relationships, destroy trust and subsequently lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness. Although it can be hard to remember these consequences when we are "wound up" in a moment of rage, it is important to consider the long-term effects of our responses to this extreme emotion.

Through understanding how our behaviour, thoughts, feelings and physical symptoms all communicate with each other, we can establish ways in which we can manage and overcome our problems with anger.

Why Do We Feel Angry?

One of the patterns that anger follows is a vicious cycle of responses resulting from linked situations. Once we are able to establish a pattern of linked responses, we are on our way to understanding why we react to our feelings and will be in a better position to control our anger.

For example:

1. **Situation** → Flight has been cancelled.
2. **Thoughts** → *I am going to be delayed, the hotel probably won't allow me to change the booking or even refund me. I do not have the money for this. Where will I stay now?*
3. **Feelings** → Worried, anxious, irritated and frustrated.
4. **Behaviour** → Tutting, pacing around, gesticulating at members of staff at the airport.
5. **Physical Symptoms** → Increased heartbeat, sweating and a headache arises.
6. **Thoughts** → *This stupid airline could have told me earlier and then I would have cancelled the hotel earlier too. They don't care.*

7. **Behaviour** → Slamming down luggage and storms over to the Help Desk.
8. **Thoughts** → *They need to know that this is not acceptable and how their actions have affected me. They need to pay me back and offer me some free accommodation, otherwise I am going to show them!*
9. **Situation** → An angry outburst erupts from the Help Desk following the pattern of negative thoughts and behaviours.

From reading the example of the pattern of causes of anger, consider the last time that you felt angry and associate each part of the scenario with the cycle listed in bold above.

Coping Mechanisms

Establishing the skills to stop and reflect on our responses to potential triggers may help to break the vicious cycle of patterns that fuel our anger.

Try to consider this thought:

- *Is this helping to **better** the situation or is it contributing to it getting worse? How will this help the situation in the **long-term**?*

For example:

- Avoiding talking about how you feel after a co-worker has upset you. Instead, you sever communication with that person and ignore them altogether.

Another way of reflecting on our behaviour and reactions is to:

- Consider how we might have reacted to a similar situation in the past that you handled well. How did you do it? How did you achieve a positive outcome in that scenario?
- Think about something that is currently going well and is a positive factor in your life. Remind yourself of the reasons as to why it is going well.
- What specific coping strategies have you used to date that have actually **helped** you out?

Think about trying to make better use of any available support:

- Problem Solving – Consider the problems that you are facing and think about the possible solutions. Try to weigh up the most effective ones with the most positive outcome and stick to that as a solution. If it doesn't work, either combine your idea with another one, or simply try another solution too. Remember to be patient with yourself as this will take time, repetition and commitment from you.
- Finding the time to relax and self-care.

- Having a heightened sense of self-awareness and accountability. This includes understanding how you respond to specific scenarios i.e., your feelings, behaviour, thoughts and physical reactions.
- Self -Esteem – Having the confidence in your own ability to deal with situations by yourself.
- Peer Support – Speaking more openly to those around you that you trust. i.e., family, friends or colleagues.

Confronting Negative Thoughts

The way in which we think about something can directly affect our mood and how we combat stress. Our thoughts are mostly out of our control; however, it is important to remind ourselves that they are only thoughts and not necessarily based on concrete evidence. Just because we think that something is factually accurate, does not necessarily mean that it is. It can be easy to believe negative thoughts, however we must try to consciously question or challenge them. Assuming that something may be accurate, does not necessarily mean that it is.

This section aims to help you to consciously differentiate thoughts that are unhelpful or unrealistic. Once we are able to focus on a more realistic approach to our thoughts then we will be better equipped to manage those feelings of anger.

Here are some examples of negative or unhelpful thoughts and feelings:

About ourselves:

- I must stand up or protect myself
- I do not have to tolerate frustration or annoyance from others
- I must have certain things

About other people:

- Everyone has a problem with me
- No one ever backs me up or supports me
- It's always someone else's fault.

About feeling angry:

- I need to get this out
- It is important that others know how I feel because it is not fair
- I shouldn't bottle up this strong feeling

Have you ever found yourself thinking similar thoughts to the ones listed above? If so, please write them in the space below:

If you are finding it hard to complete this task, you might find it helpful to remember a scenario when you feeling angry. Consider your thoughts at the time and how you reacted.

Patterns of Negative Thoughts

Now that we can successfully recognise an unhelpful or negative thought, we can now begin to challenge them. Often a series of negative thoughts can establish patterns of thinking that can function as kindling to those burning feelings of anger.

Here are some examples of how negative or unhelpful thoughts can develop into a pattern:

Predicting the Future

Have you ever noticed that you might start to worry about what might happen in the future and how a scenario might go wrong? This often leads to a chain of thoughts where we play out the worst-case-scenario. Those thoughts often start with ‘what if’ – does this ring any bells? More often than not, if we don’t challenge these thoughts, we find that we start to believe that these things predictions will actually happen. This is when that spark of rage might ignite and the feelings of anger begin to manifest.

It is important to challenge our unhelpful thoughts at this point and try to develop an approach of ‘letting things be.’ The truth is, anything could happen in the future!

Taking things personally and jumping to conclusions

Let’s be honest, we’ve all been there. We have all experienced moments when we may have jumped to conclusions about how we think someone else might be thinking and then taken something personally as a result. When we are feeling vulnerable, we often find that we are more sensitive to the feelings and behaviours of other people. Have you ever found yourself assuming how someone else might be feeling based on how they are fiddling with their hands, or touching their hair, or shifting in their seat? Although it can be a good thing to be sensitive to the reactions of others, focusing too much on trying to read other people can result in drawing a conclusion too hastily.

For example:

- They think I am not intelligent
- They don't like me
- They did that deliberately

Focusing on the Negatives

Patterns of unhelpful thinking can often run out of control when we spend too much time actually focusing on the negatives. This can lead us to develop an overly critical approach to both ourselves and other people too. Furthermore, this could also result in us setting impossibly high standards too and develop a sense of perfectionism. As a result, we are not able to recognise when we (or others) have achieved something positive or done something well.

For example:

- Sharon gave me a filthy look when she gave me that dress earlier.
- The dinner party was great, despite the burned starter.
- My friend said she would help us set up earlier before the wedding, she's probably doing that because she is a control freak.

All or Nothing "Should"

Have you ever found that things seem to fall into a black-and-white style of thinking? This polarised approach to what we perceive to be 'right' and 'wrong' could result in perfectionism and having impossibly high standards for both ourselves and others. It is important to remind ourselves that a situation will have grey areas too and that this is all part of being human.

For example:

- They hate me.
- Why did they do that? They know that was wrong.
- I should have passed that exam.

Over Generalising/ Labelling Others

As human beings, it is in our nature to use our past experiences to inform ourselves of how to handle present situations. However, a pattern of unhelpful thinking might stem from over-generalising something based on one isolated incident. We are therefore assuming that something will follow the same path in the future. This does not necessarily mean we only label other people in this way. More often than not, those who find themselves over-generalising others are their own worst critic. Speaking to ourselves unkindly will directly

impact our self-esteem and confidence.

For example:

- My sister's cat scratched me. All cats are vicious.
- I am a loser.
- Failing my exam means that I am unintelligent.

Try to recall some of your own unhelpful thoughts that follow similar patterns:

It is important to recognise our own negative or unhelpful thoughts and to challenge them directly. This will help to lift our mood and prevent those symptoms of anger from resurfacing. From challenging an unhelpful thought, you may find that you will then develop a more realistic one which will be more accurate, reasonable and based on evidence.

Strategies to Challenge Unhelpful Thoughts

Now that we can recognise those unhelpful thoughts and understand that it is important to challenge them, we need to equip ourselves with a successful way to do just that!

Try to break down what you are experiencing into three points; the situation, how you are feeling and the unhelpful thought.

For example:

- **Situation** → You are having a birthday meal out with your family in a restaurant and a stranger from another table looks in your direction.
- **How you are feeling** → Anxious, worried and uncomfortable
- **Negative or Unhelpful Thought** → They are watching you eat. They think that you are disgusting.

Now that you have established those three points, try breaking down the scenario into these categories:

- **Is there any concrete evidence behind this unhelpful thought?**
 - *No, I have no idea who that person is.*

- **Can you recognise any of the patterns of unhelpful thoughts that you identified earlier in this *Self Help Guide*?**
 - *Yes, I am predicting that person's thoughts based on their behaviour and am now jumping to conclusions.*
- **What would you say to a friend or loved on in a similar scenario?**
 - *I would say, "Don't be silly! You don't even know that person, you have no idea what he is thinking or why he might be looking this way."*
- **What are the benefits to thinking this way? Are there any pros and cons?**
 - *There aren't any benefits. I feel more anxious, self-conscious and critical right now.*
- **How would you feel about this in the future, say, a year from now?**
 - *I probably won't ever remember this.*
- **Is there another way of perceiving this situation?**
 - *Yes, he might be looking for someone in the room, or staring vacantly ahead. He might not even be aware that he is looking this way.*

You will find that after asking these questions and breaking down your experience into manageable bites will help you able to process those unhelpful thoughts. Moreover, you will also discover that through regularly applying this step-by-step strategy to similar scenarios that you will develop a more balanced and realistic approach to your thinking.

Relax and Unwind

Ensuring that we take the time to stop and relax is an important factor in applying strategies to help cope with our feelings of anger. It is easy to for those patterns of negative thoughts to manifest and spin out of control when we don't allow ourselves time to enjoy ourselves and to focus on something positive.

You will find that relaxation will come naturally as a result of doing something that you enjoy. These don't have to be costly or expensive, in fact a lot of enjoyable things are free of charge and easy to access.

For example:

- Taking exercise. This does not have to be stressful; it could simply involve going to a walk into an open area like a park.
- Read a book, listen to a calming podcast or YouTube video.
- Taking the time to visualise a quiet and relaxing place like an expansive green field or a pristine beach in the Caribbean.

- Paint or do something creative. There are some great free tutorials online for you to learn a new creative hobby.
- Singing or playing music. If you don't know how to play an instrument, listen to music that you like.
- Read a book or watch a film.

List three things you would enjoy doing below:

1. 2. 3.

It may be difficult to find the time every day to relax, especially if you have a busy work schedule, are coping with the demands of a new course, have family or others who are dependent on you. However, even committing to do something like having a bath with a few candles, or listening to some calming music while you do the washing up will contribute to easing the persistence of those unhelpful thoughts and help you manage your anger.

Controlled Breathing

A physical symptom to anger is feeling like you struggling to breathe or that you are 'running out of air.' This can lead us to feeling trapped and suffocated.

The following activity is designed to help you slow down and regulate your breathing. In turn, this will lower your stress level and help ease the feeling of being stuck in a very unpleasant scenario. Through learning Controlled Breathing techniques, you are giving your body a chance to calm down and take a break from what might seem uncontrollable around you. This strategy will also help to slow down those rushing unhelpful thoughts and give you a chance to catch up and challenge them before they begin to form a vicious cycle of patterns and responses.

Give it a try!

START: Make sure you are comfortable, albeit seating or standing.

MIDDLE: Work out a steady breathing rhythm. This is completely up to you, so don't panic when trying to remember something specific. You could try to breathe in for four seconds, hold your breath for two second, and then out for four seconds. Once you have found your rhythm, repeat it. I can be useful to count aloud (or in your head) as you go along.

Breathe in * 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 * Hold it *1- 2* Breathe out *1 - 2- 3- 4*

END: Repeat this routine for a few minutes and you will start to feel the stress drift away. Likewise, if you are experiencing the physical symptoms such as dizziness, nausea or even having heart palpitations, this exercise will be useful in helping lift those too.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

You may have experienced the some of the physical symptoms of anger such as headaches, a tight feeling in your chest or muscle pain. This is due to built-up of tension from the periods of excessive stress. These symptoms can feel physically painful and even contribute to accumulating feelings of tension too.

The following exercise will require you to intermittently tense and relax your muscles. Try to focus your thoughts and feelings while you are doing this too. This will help you learn to recognise when you are experiencing physical tension and will equip you with the tools to respond and manage it automatically too.

Like any physical exercise routine, you can choose whether you would prefer to focus on a specific muscle group or work on your body as a whole. Either way, you can start to get into a routine that you will be able to easily remember.

If you commit yourself to practising your routine every day, you will notice an improvement after just a couple of weeks.

Start: Find somewhere quiet and private where you will not be interrupted. You can choose to either sit down or even lie down for this activity. Start by focusing on your breathing in much the same way as we discussed in the *Controlled Breathing* chapter. Choose a simple and regular pattern and stick to it for a couple of minutes. This will help you begin to relax.

Middle: Tense a chosen muscle group for five seconds, but not too tight, this should not hurt. Then, keeping your breathing controlled at that same pace, move on to another muscle group and keep this area tense for five seconds.

Suggestion:

- Legs - Stretch out your feet as if you are about to stand up and walk. Point your toes too, this will help to create more of a stretch.
- Stomach - Tighten your muscles
- Arms - Tense your muscles and curl your hands into a fist
- Shoulders - Pull your shoulders up to your ears
- Face - Bury your eyebrows, wrinkle your nose and grit your teeth. That's right, you look really angry there!

End: Lie flat-out on your back and allow your body to relax into a limp state. Take the time to think about where you might be feeling any left-over muscular tension. Consciously try to ensure that area is now relaxed too. If you find that you can't wind down the tension in a specific area, then leave it. It is important that you are still maintaining the same controlled breathing technique. Throughout this part too. Finally, when you feel ready, count back down from five slowly.

5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 - 0

Now slowly stand up and try to maintain that lovely relaxed demeanour with you for as long as possible. It will not last forever, but you can always return back and try both the Controlled Breathing and Progressive Muscle Relaxation techniques to help you unwind again.

Distract Yourself

If you are a busy person and are finding it difficult to assign time to commit to doing the strategies listed above then it can be beneficial to find ways to distract your thinking from the steady stream of worries. Distraction is a good method of diverting your attention away from those patterns of unhelpful thinking.

These are a few ways to help distract you:

- Try to imagine you are in a beautiful, calm and safe environment, such as an untouched beach, or an open field. Your choice of location is completely up to you, just make sure it is somewhere where you want to go.

- Notice the details in some of the things around you. This technique is called ‘grounding.’

Think about:

- 5 things you can see,
- 4 things you can feel,
- 3 things you can hear,
- 2 things that you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste.

You could also try to:

- Listen to your favourite song and try to pick out specific instruments or motifs that you can hear.
- Count your breathing in and out.
- Count backwards from 1000, dividing by 9 each time.
- Listen to a podcast.

Do not panic if this does not work straight away. As with all of the strategies that this *Self-Help Guide* offers, it takes a combination of repetition of the exercises, patience and time to master each approach. Through doing this, you can integrate them as a regular go-to strategy that you use whenever those unwarranted thoughts occur.

Problem Solving

It can be difficult to even begin to challenge our unhelpful thoughts when we have what feels like an array of problems firing off in our head, let alone try to resolve any of them. This further adds to our feelings of anger, as well as disrupts our sleeping patterns and contributes to more stress.

Finding strategies to help cope with our unresolved problems can add structure to our lives when everything else feels chaotic. Using the techniques below, we can develop ways to improve our ability to problem-solve, just by consciously following a few steps.

Identifying the Problem

Ask yourself, “What is the problem?” It is important that you try to be as specific and honest as possible here.

- I am going to fail this exam.
- I will not be liked by others at the party and left alone.
- I will not get the job that I applied for.

Considering the Possible Solutions

List the possible outcomes. You do not have to be realistic at this point, just list as many outcomes as you can. You might find that the best solutions to your problems are the ones that you have figured out yourself. After all, no one really understands our problems better than we do.

Try thinking about:

- How you have solved similar situations before.
- What the people that know you (family or friends) would advise and suggest.
- How you would like to see yourself solving the problem in an ideal world.

Choosing a Solution

Now that you have thought your list of solutions, consider which one would be best suited to your problem. Give yourself plenty of time to think about this and if it helps to weigh up a ‘for’ and ‘against’ table to balance out your ideas then go for it. Consider that it doesn’t always take one approach to cleanly solve a problem. Feel free to try out a number of the solutions that you have listed until you have found the way to resolve the issue. There is no harm in going back and trying again.

Dissecting the Solution

It can help to take your chosen solution and break it down into smaller steps. There are no specific number of steps, simply because every problem and solution are different in their size and complexity. By breaking down the solution into manageable bites, we are making it easier for us to solve.

For example:

Someone who wants to save up for the deposit for a mortgage would need to find a job. That person would:

1. Go online and search for jobs that match their skills.
2. Update their CV
3. Apply for the job advertised online and send in their copy of their updated CV
4. Confirm an interview
5. Go shopping and buy some appropriate clothes for the interview
6. Prepare for the interview and apply techniques to harness their worries or stress
7. Ace the interview
8. Get the job
9. Save up for the deposit for the desired house

Putting the Solution to the Test

Try out your solution and follow the bite-sized steps to help you resolve your problem. Try not to rush yourself, this only adds more pressure and will make you feel anxious. Remember to take it all at your own steady pace.

Is the Problem Resolved?

Now that you have applied your solution to the problem, review how it went. Is your problem solved? If the problem still exists then do not give up. Try another of the solutions that you listed earlier. Sometimes it can help to think about whether there are any other solutions you might not have already considered, or you could even try to combine a couple of your ideas.

A useful point to consider is that problems are not always out of our control. If we believe that it is impossible to find a solution, then we are not allowing ourselves an opportunity to apply these steps to help manage the problem.

If you feel you have tried to apply the steps and considered all the possible outcomes and it still has not worked, then it might be worth giving yourself more time, or even accepting

someone else's help to take action. Sometimes we just cannot control a problem, nor the solution, however worrying about it will only make it even harder to cope.

Self-Care

We have established that ways in which we can prevent those periods of stress and anger are by taking the time to relax and do something we enjoy. Alongside this, it is also crucial that we take the necessary steps to look after ourselves by making healthy choices. Although it can be hard to change unhealthy habits, sometimes it is vitally important in order to care for ourselves and others too.

Alcohol

Many of us like to have a drink. It is an easy way for us to relax, let our hair down and even feel more confident. The issue with alcohol is that it can impair our ability to control our own behaviour. This can be problematic when we are trying to overcome difficulties with anger. Furthermore, it can also interfere with our mood and disturb our quality of sleep. This is often hard to believe, however, our body processes alcohol overnight and it can actually wake us up. Another reason why many of us enjoy alcohol is because of its numbing effect. This can seem like it is helping us cope with the stresses of pressures from work, relationship difficulties or other amounting worries. More often than not, this view can actually make our situations worse and through regular misuse can be highly addictive too.

Drugs

The sedative or stimulant side effects of drugs can directly affect our mood, emotions and sleep. Although taking drugs can provide a distraction to facing difficult problems, they can actually make things worse. Drugs are also be highly addictive, so through developing a regular habit of misusing them could have an acutely damaging effect on our own health as well as our ability to safely regulate our own mood.

Smoking

A reason why people often turn to smoking is because of the nicotine acting as a stimulant. This can also have an impact on our ability to regulate our mood healthily, as well as our sleep pattern too. Although it is widely believed by many that smoking helps to ease stress,

it's impact on our physical health far outweigh the pros to this claim. Not only can smoking harm you, but those around you too.

Caffeine

Caffeine acts as a stimulant that triggers a physical reaction in our bodies that mirror that experienced when suffering from anxiety. Furthermore, it is not advised to consume products with caffeine in for at least four hours before bedtime. Do not be fooled, it is not only tea and coffee that contain caffeine, so do fizzy drinks, energy drinks and products containing chocolate too.

Friendships and Positive Relationships

Although it is beneficial to take time out to enjoy some peace and quiet in solitude, it is equally as important to build strong relationships with other people too. Humans are highly sociable and we have always depended on group settings for our survival as a species. Maintaining good relationships with family and friends can provide us with the support and advice when we are struggling with managing our emotions. A problem shared, is a problem halved and positive relationships help us overcome our difficulties more quickly. It is helpful to have a few people to be able to talk through our troubles with as they might be able to offer ways in which they have found solutions to similar problems that you might not have considered. You never know, by sharing something, you might be helping someone else out who is secretly facing the same difficulties.

A Healthy Diet

What we consume has a surprising impact on our emotions and sleep too. It is important to eat a consistently nutritious foods in order to maintain our physical health as well as our mental health too. Eating regular, wholesome meals and drinking plenty of water nourishes our body. Similarly, try to consider what you consume close to bedtime as having caffeine, alcohol or even a large meal can disturb our sleep routine.

Exercise

Maintaining a healthy body is important in harnessing the physical symptoms of extreme anger. Taking exercise releases endorphins which make us feel better. You do not have to do overly vigorous routines to achieve this. Even just going for a walk, or trying gentle exercises

regularly such as Pilates or Yoga will help ease that stress and tension. Examples of light exercise could be; gardening, cleaning for an extended period of time or joining a exercise class.

Routine

Creating a consistent routine can offer structure into our lives. Once we set in motion patterns that inform us to react the same way to the same situation, we are providing an element of safety and stability into our lives. Even something as taking time to relax at the same time every day, setting an alarm, or even deciding when to eat your meals can help us follow something structured.

Being Observant

Think carefully about the world around you and try to consider the noise, temperature and even how much light there is in your surroundings. This can have a direct impact on our feelings of safety as well as our mood in general. If you are keeping your home tidy or working environment comfortable, you are more likely to feel at ease and more relaxed. The environment that we are regularly in contact with can also have a direct impact on our ability to sleep sufficiently enough too.

The points listed above should provide you with some ideas on how to self-care and make healthy, responsible changes to your life. You should give these a try and be patient with yourself too as changes do not happen overnight. Even planning healthy meals, or creating a small routine can all help you make positive changes that will directly impact your physical and mental health.

Communication and Verbal Expression

Being able to clearly communicate how we feel allows others to gain a deeper understanding of us. Having strong communication skills enables us to feel as though we are better understood and offers others a chance to help and support you. Through reaching out to

people by communicating well, we are in a better position to build and maintain positive relationships.

Listening to others

- Listen carefully without getting distracted or interrupting the person speaking.
- Consider those unhelpful thoughts – try to avoid assuming what the other person is really saying as this was invariably result in further misunderstandings. You could test how well you have understood the other listener by repeating back what they just said.
- Ask questions if you don't know! It is invariably better to ask than to jump to conclusions. That way you can take what the other person is saying at face value and not try to mind-read.

Healthy ways of expressing yourself

- Give yourself time to think about what you mean to say before you blurt it out. Wait a couple of seconds before you begin talking. This will feel like a long, awkward silence for the first few times that you do it until you are used to giving yourself the time to answer correctly (in a way that accurately reflects the truth).
- Actively try to be as clear. In what you are saying as possible.
- Think about how the other person feels before jumping to conclusions and becoming defensive.
- Talk openly in an appropriate and considered way. Think about who you are speaking to and avoid using an aggressive or confrontational tone. Although you are on a path to self-improvement, the other person might not have the same understanding as you of their feelings. They might feel threatened and react out of fear.

Styles of Communication

Communication is a language that is responsible for building strong social structures as well as exchanging valuable information. There are different ways in which humans communicate. These are often through verbal, non-verbal and visual methods. Understanding the styles in which we communicate can be helpful in being more aware of our tone and the appropriateness of our behaviour.

There are three common styles of communication. These are; passive, aggressive and assertive.

Passive

When passive communication occurs, someone will prioritise the wants, feelings and needs of other people, at their own expense. It may seem like the person is being selfless as they do not openly express their own needs or stand up for them. Without realising it, others who are unaware of this person's needs can take advantage of them, even if they are well-intentioned.

Traits:

- Quiet
- Does not express their own wants or needs
- Puts others first
- Lacks confidence
- Maintains Poor Eye Contact
- Does not like to be criticised
- Fears people in positions of authority
- Finds it hard to say “no” to other people

Passive communication can often lead us to feeling ignored or walked over by other people. When others recognise patterns of this communication, they may not expect to hear you expressing your opinion and you may find that you are accepting to do more work or favours for others than way could be deemed as fair. It can also seem like a shock when you do establish your own thoughts and feelings, making it difficult to communicate them openly without a negative reaction.

Aggressive

Through aggressive communication we tend to prioritise our own needs, wants and feelings. This is a confrontational style of communication that can sometimes result in the other person being bullied, or their needs being ignored.

Traits:

- Forcing your point of view onto others

- You feel that you must get your own way
- Ignore other people's opinion or feelings
- Your needs come first
- Easily annoyed or irritated
- Can be critical and tend to humiliate others
- Dominate social interaction between people
- Can be disrespectful or unkind to others
- Not willing to compromise. "It is my way, or the highway!"

If your communication style is aggressive, then others may find it difficult to enjoy being in your company because you tend to steam-roll conversations and dominate interactions. It is also common for aggressive communicators to feel isolated or alienated because they do not take other people's feelings and opinions into consideration and are invariably left alone.

Assertive

This style of communication emphasises the need to compromise and consider a balance of importance between both people's needs. Assertive communicators are able to stand up for their own needs, while being able to carefully listen and respect the needs of other people too. The key to assertive communication is an interest or willingness to understand and listen to others, while having the confidence to establish your own needs too.

Traits:

- Listens carefully to others without interrupting them
- Stands up for themselves

- Confidence in both tone and body language
- Tries to compromise
- Is able to hold eye contact for appropriate periods of time
- Can clearly verbalises their needs
- Expresses their own opinion before negotiating in a polite and considerate way
- Has respect for themselves and other people

Having a calm and collected attitude, while expressing how you feel with confidence is important in establishing the ability to communicate in an assertive way. Assertive communication is essentially the balance between aggressive and passive communication styles. It can often be difficult to try to be assertive, but this approach will help you develop the skills to feeling less stressed. It is hard to remain balanced and just in a situation that can host you feeling scared or intimidated, however there are plenty of successful techniques that can help you stay assertive in times of conflict.

Strategies

It can be difficult to maintain a cool and collected demeanour when trying to communicate in stressful or hostile situations. These could be at work, at home or communicating with people in a position of authority.

Helpful hints to staying assertive:

- Communicate clearly
- Hold appropriate levels of eye-contact. Avoiding eye contact can be harmful, as is holding your gaze to too long (this may seem confrontational).
- Be polite, but firm.

- Open your shoulders and hold your head up. Even correcting your posture can help you establish confidence – even if you don't feel it. This will help you to stay calm too as you are physically facing the person you are talking to and not burying your head down.
- Be mindful of the tone that you are using. Is it respectful?

If you find yourself feeling anxious about facing a difficult situation, it could be helpful to practise some of the relaxation techniques at this point, that were discussed earlier in this *Self-Help Guide*.

Change to the “you” message to “I”

If someone is annoying you and you find yourself feeling challenged by their behaviour, it is vital that you try to communicate how you feel. Explaining how you feel helps to open the channels of communication without the other person feeling attacked or blamed.

For example:

Scenario: You had booked to see a film with a loved one, but they arrived late and you were not allowed into the cinema.

Try saying:

“I feel let-down that you have arrived late. I was looking forward to seeing that film and now we are not allowed into the cinema.”

Avoid saying:

“You are selfish. You knew what time the film was on and yet again you were late, as usual. I don't want to plan anything like this again because it is clear that you don't care.”

Repeating yourself

Another technique is to repeat yourself clearly when someone else is trying to divert away from your point. This does not mean shouting them down, but calmly re-instating the same point.

For example:

Scenario: You are at a department store to buy some jeans that you have had previously purchased before and liked.

You: *"I would like to order the Indigo jeans, in a size 8 please."*

Sales Assistant: *"I see... We have those jeans, but there are some others here that are part of a promotion"*

You: *"Thank you, but I would like the Indigo jeans in a size 8."*

Sales Assistant: *"Okay, we don't have any of them available in store. Would you like to try the ones that are part of the promotion?"*

You: *"No thank you. I would like to order the Indigo jeans in a size 8, please."*

Sales Assistant: *"I will order those for you, they will arrive in two to three working days."*

You: *"Great, thank you."*

Taking criticism in your stride

Although it can often feel like we are being attacked when others offer criticism, it can actually gift us a valuable opportunity to learn and grow. Constructive criticism can be quite helpful and it is important to listen carefully to what is being said by the other person, rather than jump to conclusions as a result of feeling defensive. If you are not sure what someone meant by what they said, make sure you check your understanding by asking them to repeat themselves, or alternatively, you could repeat what they said back. It can sting a little to hear a criticism at first, it is vital that you can stand your ground without flaring-up and becoming defensive.

For example:

Scenario: You are trying on a new pair of shoes in a shop, and you ask the assistant for their opinion.

You: *"Do you think these shoes suit me?"*

Shop Assistant: *"I think that the style does, but I am not sure about the colour."*

You: *"I always wear this colour and I haven't had a problem before. What colour would you recommend?"*

Shop Assistant: *"Why don't you try them in brown?"*

You: *“Brown doesn’t normally suit me. I like to only wear black shoes.”*

Shop Assistant: *“Well, I think brown is quite a flexible colour too and it might suit you.”*

An unhelpful response to the shop assistant would have been:

“Mind your own business. You don’t know me and you are probably trying to sell me something.”

A helpful response would be to compromise and try on the brown shoes. Sometimes other people really do have positive intentions and want to help you. Also, trying something new might offer you a different perspective too and if not, you can still assert your opinion without any harm being done to either person too.

For example: *“I will try them on, but if not, maybe you can help me choose a different style in black?”*

End Statement

I hope that you have found this *Self-Help Guide* useful in developing a better understanding of what anger is, how to manage it and how to use the suggested techniques to help you harness those feelings of stress and anger. By making a point to recognise when you experience unhelpful thoughts, you can then control the onset of patterns that could lead to symptoms of anger. Through applying some of the Controlled Breathing and Progressive Muscle Techniques to help you take time out to relax. It is also important that you allocate time in each day to doing something that you enjoy. This could be something as simple as taking a walk or listening to a podcast.

The key to successfully managing your anger is through regularly committing to practising the strategies highlighted in this *Self-Help Guide*. Remember, Rome was not built in a day and it will take time and patience to establish these strategies as normal ways of harnessing your anger. It is important to try to listen to others, while remaining assertive in maintaining your own opinion and prioritising your needs when communicating too.

If you have any further questions, reach out and ask for help. Remember to give yourself some credit for actively taking this first step to better understand some of those extreme feelings that you have been experiencing and to improve. You’ve got this

