

Anger & Irritability

Understanding anger as information while creating space between activation and action.

Anger is not the same as aggression

Anger can signal threat, injustice, blocked goals, shame, exhaustion, fear, or boundary violations. The goal is not to eliminate anger; it is to respond in ways that protect safety, relationships, and self-respect.

Early warning signs

- Jaw or fist tension.
- Heat, pressure, pacing, or rapid speech.
- Repeating the same argument mentally.
- A narrowing sense that only one response is possible.
- Urges to send messages, confront, drive fast, drink, or break things.

Skills that can help

- Use a time-out before escalation, with a clear plan to return to the conversation.
- Lower physiological arousal through movement, paced breathing, or grounding.
- Name the underlying concern: hurt, fear, disrespect, overload, grief, or helplessness.
- Use assertive language about the behavior and the need rather than attacking character.
- Address sleep, substance use, and chronic stress that lower the threshold for anger.

Try this reflection

What is the first body cue that tells you anger is becoming harder to manage?

Using this resource: For education and skill-building only; not diagnosis, medical advice, or crisis care. If you feel overwhelmed, pause and seek appropriate professional support. In the U.S., call or text 988 for crisis support; call 911 for an immediate emergency.