PMS or rage? [1]

Dear Alice,

I think I have severe PMS. I get so angry at times that I want to throw things and hit. I have no patience with my kids. It only lasts a couple of weeks, but I am worried I might hurt my children. I always manage to stop myself and leave the room, but what happens if I can't stop myself next time?

Please help.

? PMS?

Answer

Dear PMS?,

Feeling out of control must be frightening, and you deserve lots of credit for reaching out. Even though it can be difficult to ask for help, talking with a health care professional is the best way to determine the cause of your anger (which may or may not be linked to PMS), and then get the proper treatment.

Premenstrual Syndrome, also known as PMS, has a variety of physical and emotional symptoms, including feeling irritable or angry. A woman with PMS may experience mood swings causing her to feel happy one moment, and anxious the next. In rare cases, women experience a severe form of PMS called premenstrual dysphoric disorder, or PMDD [2]. Symptoms of PMDD include acute depression, loss of hopefulness, and extreme anger.

Often, women with PMDD have other psychiatric difficulties. Women who experience symptoms of PMS or PMDD and/or are diagnosed are often encouraged to exercise; avoid alcohol, caffeine, and sugar; take certain vitamins such as calcium and B-6 supplements; and, eat low-fat foods. A health care provider will be able to provide the best diagnosis and help you manage your negative emotions in a healthy way.

In the meantime, you might want to try different techniques to control your temper. When you feel yourself getting upset, try taking deep, calming breaths or counting to ten. Leaving the room as you’ve been doing is another good way to keep your cool. Learning more about what triggers your anger may also help you prevent your emotions from escalating. Do you tend to get angry when you are feeling rushed or stressed? Do you notice that you’re angrier when you’re tired from lack of sleep? Check out these anger management techniques [3] or find out about anger management group therapy [4]. Again, talking with a health care provider and/or a
counselor will enable you to get the best treatment. Prior to the day of your appointment, you may want to keep track of the symptoms you experience so you can easily explain to the provider what you’ve been experiencing.

Parenting can be stressful, and it’s not uncommon for a mother to lose her temper sometimes. However, if you fear that you are on the verge of physically harming your children or yourself, it’s important to talk with a health care professional. S/he will help you find ways to strengthen your coping mechanisms and take good care of yourself and your family.

Alice!
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