

## Anger management <sup>[1]</sup>

Dear Alice,

What about anger? How do I manage it when I am so angry I want to destroy something?

### Answer

Dear Reader,

Anger is a normal human emotion, just like happiness, sadness, and boredom, among many others. Some people experience anger due to stress or conflicts with friends and family, while others seem to always be a few notches away from their boiling point. Anger tends to be stigmatized because of its association with aggression (think: Incredible Hulk, the fictional superhero who turns into a big green monster that destroys everything when he's angry). Rather, anger isn't necessarily a harmful emotion in itself. However, when you start to feel so angry that it's difficult to control your behavior, then it might be time to turn to additional support to manage those feelings.

There are a couple of options that may be helpful for you in both the short-term and the long-term. In the moments when you notice yourself starting to get angry to the point of losing control, [Mayo Clinic](#) <sup>[2]</sup> has some tips you can follow to help manage those feelings. Some of these solutions include:

- Collecting your thoughts before you take action
- Expressing your anger with words, especially using "I" statements, such as "I'm feeling angry because..." (this works even if you are alone!)
- Participating in a physical activity
- Taking a break from what is making you angry, whether that is an argument with someone or frustration with a project
- Problem solving — what are some tangible steps you can take to solve the issue? (e.g., can someone else take a look at the project, can you look at the Internet for how-to videos?)
- Avoiding grudges, especially towards others who may be a source of support for you

- Laughing about it —?maybe you can picture yourself turning into a big green monster and becoming a superhero (seriously, how cool and funny would that be?)
- Trying different relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing, yoga, or journaling. You may check out [Stressed out and anxious from schoolwork and everything](#) [3] for some more tips on relaxation techniques you can do in the moment.

Anger can lead people to react impulsively in ways that they may regret later. In the moment, it may feel helpful and productive to destroy the nearest pillow or glass vase, but in the end it may make the situation even worse. Uncontrolled anger may lead to health issues in the long term, such as elevated blood pressure and heart diseases as well if it isn't addressed. Stopping for a moment by counting to ten or taking yourself out of the situation even temporarily may be a big help in calming down. It may also be helpful to identify common triggers of your anger. Thinking through some of the situations when you're angry may help you to manage them. For example, how are your anger levels affected when you feel stressed out? Are there certain people who you can only be around for short periods of time before you blow up? What are some topics that start to make you feel angry? These types of questions may help to identify triggers to avoid or manage. If these methods don't work for you, then it may be helpful to connect with a mental health professional to learn more about what might work for you.

Unlike other emotional issues such as anxiety or depression, uncontrollable anger doesn't lend itself to a formal diagnosis. However, that doesn't mean a professional support won't be useful —?75 percent?of individuals who seek treatment for their anger issues see improvements. The most common practice in tackling uncontrollable anger is cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). This technique focuses on identifying thoughts and patterns that contribute to anger in order to change beliefs. Mental health professionals may also use a technique called?stress inoculation,? in which you would be given scenarios that elicit anger in order to monitor your responses and adapt. There are also group therapies and anger management groups that use similar techniques to address uncontrollable anger. You may?consider speaking with a mental health professional to determine which approach is right for you. For more information on how to find a therapist you feel comfortable with, check out [How to find a therapist](#) [4].

Remember, the Hulk didn't solve his problems all on his own, and you don't have to either!

Alice!

Category:

[Emotional Health](#) [5]

[Counseling](#) [6]

[Miscellaneous](#) [7]

## Related questions

[Anger management group therapy?](#) [8]

[Meditation](#) [9]

[Types of therapists](#) [10]

[Finding low-cost counseling](#) [11]

## Resources

Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) (Morningside) [12]

Mental Health Services (CUIMC) [13]

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## Footer menu

- ▼ Contact Alice!
  - Content Use
  - Media Inquiries
  - Comments & Corrections
- ▼ Syndication & Licensing
  - Licensing Q&As
  - Get Alice! on Your Website
  - Full Site Syndication
  - Link to Go Ask Alice!

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### Links

[1] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/anger-management-2>

[2] <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/anger-management/art-20045434>

[3] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/stress-breaking-point>

[4] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/how-to-find-therapist>

[5] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/emotional-health>

[6] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/counseling>

[7] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/miscellaneous-0>

[8] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/anger-management-group-therapy-0>

[9] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/meditation-0>

[10] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/types-therapists-1>

[11] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/finding-low-cost-counseling-1>

[12] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/counseling-and-psychological-services-cps-morningside>

[13] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/mental-health-services-cuimc>