

Understanding anger

A reflective diary for recognising patterns and creating space before action

Anger is a normal human emotion. It can alert us to unfairness, threat, frustration, hurt, sensory overload, exhaustion, rejection or a boundary that has been crossed. The feeling itself is not wrong. The important question is how we respond when anger begins to rise.

Anger often has more than one layer

Beneath anger there may be fear, grief, shame, pain, helplessness, hunger, fatigue, confusion or feeling unheard. Sometimes anger is held in and becomes resentment, withdrawal or self-criticism. Sometimes it moves outward through shouting, threats, breaking things or aggression. A diary helps us slow the sequence down without shaming the emotion.

The sequence to notice

1. Trigger

Something happens inside or outside you: an interaction, demand, memory, thought, sensation or unmet need.

2. Warning signs

Your body and mind begin to change: heat, tension, faster heartbeat, harsh thoughts, urgency or a louder voice.

3. Response

You act, speak, withdraw, ruminate, suppress, seek relief or direct the anger towards yourself or someone else.

4. Outcome

There are consequences: a need is met or missed, the situation changes, relationships are affected, or repair is needed.

Pause before completing the diary

If anger is still very high, focus first on safety. Step away where possible, slow your breathing, unclench your hands and jaw, reduce noise or conversation, and give your body time to settle. Complete the diary when reflection is possible. Do not use it to continue an argument or prove that another person is entirely to blame.

If you may hurt yourself or someone else, move away from weapons or breakable objects.

Contact urgent support. Call emergency services if there is immediate danger.

Anger diary - entry 1

Record the episode after you are safe and calm enough to reflect

Date, time and place

Anger intensity: 0-10

Trigger - what happened just before?

Include the situation, words, memories, sensory demands or unmet needs.

Warning signs - what did I notice?

Body sensations, thoughts, feelings, urges and changes in my voice or behaviour.

Response - what did I do next?

What I said, did, avoided, held in, sent, broke, used or directed towards myself.

Outcome - what happened afterwards?

Immediate consequences, impact on others, repair, relief, regret or unfinished needs.

A safer or more helpful response I could try

One realistic action that creates time, protects safety or communicates the need beneath the anger.

Anger diary - entry 2

Record the episode after you are safe and calm enough to reflect

Date, time and place

Anger intensity: 0-10

Trigger - what happened just before?

Include the situation, words, memories, sensory demands or unmet needs.

Warning signs - what did I notice?

Body sensations, thoughts, feelings, urges and changes in my voice or behaviour.

Response - what did I do next?

What I said, did, avoided, held in, sent, broke, used or directed towards myself.

Outcome - what happened afterwards?

Immediate consequences, impact on others, repair, relief, regret or unfinished needs.

A safer or more helpful response I could try

One realistic action that creates time, protects safety or communicates the need beneath the anger.



Reviewing my anger patterns

Look for repeated needs and earlier opportunities to respond

Triggers or situations that appear repeatedly

My earliest physical and emotional warning signs

Thoughts or meanings that intensify the anger

Responses that help briefly but create problems later

My early-action plan

When I notice my first warning signs, I will...

Support and repair

Who can help, and what repair may be needed afterwards?
