

# PEACE

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*Empowering Youth to Be Ministers of Peace and Justice*

## Anger . . . Under Control



## Become Aware

Anger is a natural human response, one of our most powerful emotions, and a gift of expression from our Creator. All true, but these descriptors leave out the reality of consequences that can result from uncontrolled anger. The daily news provides a constant reminder of the danger that lingers in the depths of anger.

Road Rage Ends in Shooting  
Jealous "X" Arranges Fatal Accident  
Angry Teen Runs  
Parent Locks Disobedient Child in Cellar  
Rival Teams Put Teens in Hospital  
Shooting Spree at Local School  
Riot Erupts: Community Curfew Set

Anger is something everyone has experienced, even Jesus (see Matthew 21:12–13 below). Learning how to control your anger can make the difference between an anger that hurts and an anger that can actually turn into a building block of peace.

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

## Acknowledge Responsibility

- Have you ever witnessed anger that ended in violence?
- How did it make you feel, and what did you choose to do about it?
- What is one situation in which you are not proud of the way you reacted to anger?
- What were the issues underneath the anger?
- How many people were affected by this situation and your personal reaction to anger?
- If you had the opportunity, how would you change your response?
- What could you do even now to make amends for your actions?
- What works best for calming yourself down when you are really angry?

#### James 1:19—20 NRSV

You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; for your anger does not produce God's righteousness.

#### Proverbs 29:22 NRSV

One given to anger stirs up strife, and the hothead causes much transgression.

#### Matthew 5:38—44 NRSV

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone want to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you..."

#### Matthew 21:12—13 NRSV

Then Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who were selling and buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. He said to them "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer'; but you are making it a den of robbers."

## Take A Breath

There are hundreds of possible responses to the feeling of anger. While some are positive, obviously others are not. Make a list of actions that only serve to intensify anger. Make a second list of things you can do to calm anger. Decide what positive action best lends itself to each anger-causing situation. Discuss which anger-calming tools work best for you.

### NEGATIVE ACTIONS

hurt yourself, hurt others  
break things that should not be broken  
lash out verbally  
drink alcohol and/or take drugs  
destroy property  
commit a crime  
drive irrationally  
drink and drive  
pick up a weapon  
seek revenge  
run away  
react immediately  
shut everyone out

Great  
small  
group  
activity

### POSITIVE ACTIONS

stop and think  
count to ten  
walk away until you can think rationally  
use "I" phrases to "talk it out"  
write your feelings down  
breathe deeply  
pound a pillow  
sing, dance, play an instrument  
read a book  
meditate, listen to music, pray  
spend time with friends, cry, laugh  
take a soothing bath  
lift weights/exercise/walk/run/play a sport

## Acquire More Understanding

## Local News

Search newspapers for examples of ways people in your community and around the world are reacting to anger (both positive and negative). Discuss the consequences of their actions. Whose lives are most likely changed by these actions? What choices could have been made instead? Decide which actions would have been the most positive in each situation.

## The Search for More

Remember that websites change!  
Search the Internet for *anger management* to find more resources.

[www.manageanger.com](http://www.manageanger.com)

[www.apa.org/pubinfo/anger.html](http://www.apa.org/pubinfo/anger.html)

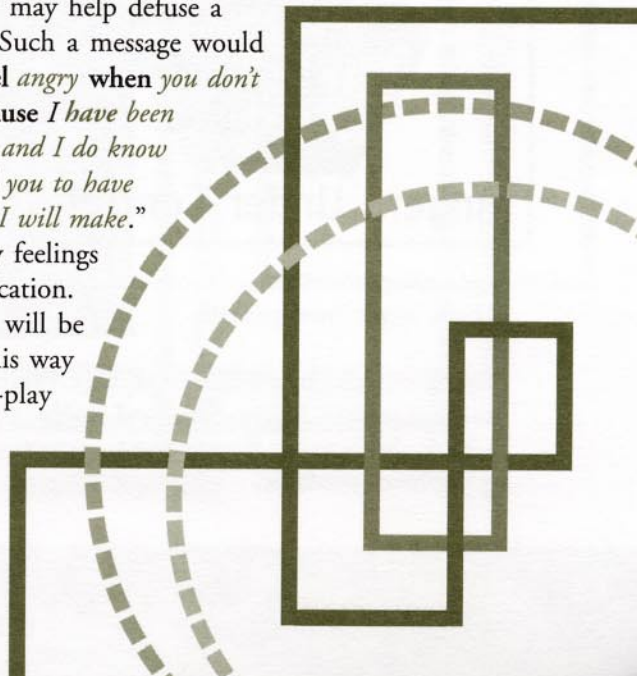
## Role-play

- You have just started driving. An older driver tailgates you for miles as you drive cautiously down the road.
- You study six hours for a test, then the teacher accuses you of cheating because your grade is so high.
- You are passed over for a promotion at work by a newer employee who just happens to be your employer's niece.
- Every day at school a group of "popular" kids tease you.
- Your girlfriend/boyfriend tells you they want to break up and date someone else.
- Your parents set your weekend curfew two hours earlier than your friends.
- You learn that untrue rumors are being spread about you at school.
- You discover that your friend has shared information you told them in confidence.
- Your sister/brother wears your clothes and uses your things without asking.

## Own Your Own Feelings

When the emotion of anger arises a first response is often to blame someone. Starting sentences with "you are...", "you didn't...", or "you should have..." only results in making situations worse. Using sentences that start with "I" may help defuse a potentially angry situation. Such a message would sound something like, "**I feel angry when you don't trust me with my friends because I have been listening to you all these years and I do know right from wrong and I need you to have faith in me and the decisions I will make.**"

"I messages" can help clarify feelings and open lines of communication. By practicing this skill, you will be more likely to respond in this way during real situations. Role-play responses to the situations on the left. What are your choices of response? What should you do? What should you say?



## Take Action

- Invite your school counselor to discuss appropriate ways to deal with anger conflicts at school.
- Arrange a panel discussion between adults and youth. Let the panel of youth share specific situations that cause them to become angry at adults. Let the panel of adults share situations that cause them to become angry at youth. Hear each side express their thoughts on what causes them anger and why, then let the other side share why they think the situations play out the way they do. Discuss how both the adults and the youth can help defuse these anger-causing situations before they ever happen.
- Practice anger-control skills with simple conflicts, so when confronted with situations that create strong feelings of anger, your instincts will guide you in the best direction.
- Keep a journal and use it to express your anger in a safe, productive way.
- Make a pact with friends and family to be each others' anger control coach (ACC). As an ACC you will:
  - step in when danger appears possible
  - remind each other to stop and think
  - be there to listen
  - try to help each other see all possible sides
  - pledge to get adult/or professional help when necessary

## Become an Advocate

- Attend an anger management class, workshop, or retreat. If none are available, become the advocate for your congregation to sponsor them for the community.
- Start an "Anger . . . Under Control" campaign. Create posters that say, "Stop, Think! Anger . . . Under Control." Get permission to hang the posters in schools, churches, and other public places such as libraries, shopping malls, and grocery stores.
- Campaign to keep violence from anger down in your community. Visit places where youth and/or families typically spend time: libraries, schools, churches, gyms and recreation centers, movie theaters,

restaurants, even doctors' offices. Ask them to display a poster along with pamphlets about anger management.

Pamphlets can be purchased in bulk from companies like Abbey Press and Sunburst. Check the Internet for the most current pamphlets available.

[www.onecaringplace.com](http://www.onecaringplace.com)  
<http://counseling.uchicago.edu/vpc>  
[www.sunburst.com](http://www.sunburst.com)

Sites change!  
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