

UNDERSTANDING ANGER

Individuals who have difficulty controlling their expression of anger often have difficulty noticing that they are becoming angry, and with expressing their anger in constructive ways. They often do not understand the process of anger, and they feel like they have no control of their anger. In cognitive-behavioral therapy, we can help people learn to notice their anger quickly and to make wise decisions about ways to express it.

Components of Anger:

- Physiological arousal (for example, increased heart rate and breathing, trembling, muscle tension)
- Angry emotion experienced
- Thoughts (for example, that someone is treating you unfairly, or is interfering with your reaching your goals)
- Behavior (for example, yelling, physical violence, threats, interfering with another person's actions, damaging objects or property, positive creative or athletic behavior)

Stimuli That Can Elicit Anger:

- Stress
- Frustration from interference with reaching your goals
- Feeling rejected or hurt by another person
- Feeling criticized by another person

Factors That Can Influence Anger

- Past learning concerning ways of expressing anger
- Past frustrations and hurtful experiences
- Current arousal
- Current situation (for example, frustrating experience, many stresses)
- Interpretation of the current situation (for example, thinking that another person was intentionally trying to harm you)
- Low self-esteem

(Source: Geffner, 2000)