

ANGER RITUALS

NAME IT

Start by naming it and acknowledging that you are feeling angry. Remember that it doesn't matter why you're feeling it, whose fault it is, whether you are right or wrong, whether there is any point or not, how others will judge you. Your job is to acknowledge that you are feeling angry and to start by naming it.

EXPRESS IT

Sometimes simply acknowledging it and naming that we feel angry is enough. We feel calmer and can move on. And sometimes we need more than that. If you can, find a way to express it straight away. **NOT to the person or people who you are angry with.** Take a moment out of the situation you are in and express it even if it's just for a few seconds, using one of the anger rituals on the next page. This can take a matter of seconds or minutes and can help you release the energy of anger and feel less angry immediately. And if you have time and space, you can give yourself as much as you need to express it in the way that you think will be most satisfying.

CONTAIN IT

If there is no space or time to express it in any way, acknowledge that you are angry and commit to containing it. This means that you deliberately choose to put it away, until later. In order to do this successfully you must also commit to coming back to it. Find a way to visually or somatically, actively, contain your anger. Let yourself know when you will open up the container and come back to your anger. Take a few deep breaths and go back to whatever you were doing, knowing that you are not stuffing your anger away, you will be returning to it.

What if when you go back to it, you don't feel angry any more? Sometimes just naming it and acknowledging it diffuses our anger and when we come back to it we just don't feel it anymore. That's fine. And check in - are you really not angry about this situation at all? If not then appreciate yourself for going through the process and move on. And sometimes, often in fact, gently encouraging ourselves can bring it back to the surface and we can express with it.

What if you really want to contain it but it feels impossible? Then it's likely that your container is too full. Maybe full of historical anger that needs acknowledging and expressing. Maybe you've been containing your anger for weeks and not attending to the expression of it. We can only contain limited amounts of anger. With practice you will discover your limits.

REFLECT OR TALK IT THROUGH

Once we've expressed our anger and the heat of it is dissipated we can think about it and reflect on it with genuine curiosity. We can allow ourselves to be interested in our reaction and to think about what, if any, action we may want to take. What stimulated our angry response? What kind of attack, threat or danger (maybe in the form of criticism, judgement, controlling behaviour...) did we experience or perceive? Would it be helpful to see if we can identify a pattern in our response? Is there a dynamic at play in our own patterns of response that may be worth exploring?

TAKE ACTION

Do we want to talk to the person or people, do we want to write, protest or do something about it?

ANGER RITUALS

IMPORTANT BOUNDARIES TO KEEP YOU AND OTHERS SAFE

1. Set a timer and STOP when the timer goes off. You can then re-set it as many times as you like. Start with a minute or two. You can always build up.
2. Make sure you are in a space where you are private and no one will be shocked or worried by your anger. You may need to let people know what you are doing if you live with others.
3. Commit to not hurting yourself or anyone else and not to breaking or damaging any item or property (unless it is a designated item like a cardboard box or paper to be ripped or ice to be smashed).
4. Keep your eyes OPEN the whole time.
5. Say something. Make some noise. It doesn't have to be loud. Keep it short and sweet if you are expressing physical anger, NO STORY - something like: NO, I'M ANGRY, I'M FURIOUS, FUCK OFF, HOW DARE YOU, ENOUGH...

It may help to play some music both to support yourself and to give yourself permission to make a noise. If you are expressing your anger physically tune in, where is it in your body? What would be satisfying to do? Do you want to use your hands, feet, whole body?

ANGRY LION

An open and expressive yoga pose. Feet hip-width apart, knees slightly bent, arms up and open, hands spread wide, eyes wide open, mouth wide open, tongue out. Open your whole body so that you can expel the emotion. It can feel a little like throwing up. You can imagine expelling the anger from your body.

STOMPING OR HAVING A TANTRUM

Let yourself stomp about and express the anger in any way that feels satisfying with your whole body. Imagine you are a little child with no inhibitions, how would you do it?

THROWING

Bean bags or ice cubes. Make sure you throw safely at the wall or the floor, do not throw items randomly around the room. Ice cubes can be thrown into the bath tub or at a wall or on the ground in the garden.

BATTING OR PUNCHING

Use a tennis or squash racquet or bat that is 100% foam or hollow plastic. Do not use wooden or children's rounders style bats which have a hard core. Position the cushions so that they are at the right height and distance so that you do not have to bend your back. Keeping your back straight will keep this process safe and you won't harm yourself. Hold the bat with TWO hands and only lift it directly over your head and bring it down with the flat side (if it's a racquet) onto the cushions. Practice a few times before you start to make sure the position is correct.

TWISTING A TOWEL

You can use a tea towel or hand towel or any other piece of fabric that you designate for this purpose. Use your hands to wring and twist the towel. Imagine all your anger and energy coming out of your body as you do this. Keep your eyes open.

KICKING - USING YOUR FEET

If you want to use your feet to kick something you can pile some cushions against the wall, or the side of the bed or couch and kick against them. Make sure that there is enough give and softness so that you don't hurt your feet. You might choose to have shoes on and if not then kick with the heel of your foot, not your toes. You can also kick light cushions across the room and if you do this make sure that nothing will be damaged by the cushion flying around the room.

You can also use your feet to stomp on cushions on the floor or to stamp on a cardboard box.

TEARING PAPER

You can tear sheets of paper or card of different thicknesses and resistance. You could write messages on the paper before you tear it. Be mindful of keeping an upright and open posture as you do this. Experiment with doing it standing up or sitting up straight with your chest open and head up.

PEN AND PAPER

Taking a biro and a pad of paper allow yourself to express your anger through your hand onto the page. Using the pen as a tool, drag, scratch, scribble... whatever feels right to you. You can allow the pen to dig into and tear through the paper, being mindful of not hurting your hand.

WRITING

Complete the sentence stem: I am angry... write those words over and over again and complete them with whatever you are angry about. It is important to write the words I am angry... over and over, as well as completing the sentence.

Write a letter: You can write a letter to the person you are angry with. Imagine allowing yourself to say anything you want to say, without censorship, without having to be reasonable or polite. This is a letter that YOU DO NOT SEND. It is for your benefit, for you to get the anger out of your body, not to resolve the situation with the other person.

Written rant: Allow yourself to rant and vent in writing, in your journal or on a piece of paper or on a computer. No censorship, no need to be polite or reasonable or to make sense. You don't need to re-read it or keep it. The act of writing is aimed at expelling the energy of anger from your body and your mind, this is not something to hold onto and re-read later on. You can tear it up or burn it when you have finished or simply throw it away.

REMEMBER...

With all of the above remember to focus on your emotion, on the feeling and expression of your anger, keep tuning in to your body and hold in mind that you are doing this to express the energy out of your body, so that you don't hold onto it, so that, in the Buddha's words, you do not get burned by it - whether that is slowly and constantly or sharply and suddenly. You are expressing it outwards, not at anyone or anything, this way no one gets burned and no one is hurt.

VERBAL ANGER EXPRESSION

Sometimes we want or need to be heard, we want to tell our story. It can help to express our anger with a witness, it may not feel satisfying enough to know that we have heard ourselves, that we are taking ourselves seriously and that we give ourselves permission to be angry, whatever the reason. On these occasions you can ask someone who understands this process to be your witness. Here are some ways to express the our with a witness.

VENTING, RANTING, MOANING

Venting, ranting or moaning is an anger ritual during which we express ourselves with a witness.

The person who agrees to be the witness is not there to receive your anger, they are there to bear witness to your expression of your anger.

Boundaries for venting:

1. Invite someone to be your witness by asking "Would you be willing to witness my vent, rant, moan?"

2. This ritual can be done in person, online or on the phone.
3. The witness' role is to listen, that's all. It is not their job to agree, to offer advice, to empathise or to ask questions. This is important. If they show they agree with you - they might also disagree with you sometimes and it is not their job to support you with the content of your anger at this moment, only with the expression of it. If you choose to talk it through with them after you have vented, they can offer their thoughts if you are open to them, but for expressing and venting their job is only to witness you with an open mind and an open heart.
4. The person doing the venting agrees to a time limit for their ritual with the witness. They agree to stop when the time is up and can negotiate more time if needed with the witness. They must honour the time boundary.
5. The witness identifies a stop signal and can stop the process at any time. The person venting stops if signalled to do so by the witness.
6. The person doing the venting can swear, by agreement with the witness.
7. When the time is up the witness does not say anything about what the person expressed. They can thank them or simply say "I heard you". Nothing else.

PROTESTING AND MARCHING

When our anger is about social or political injustice, being part of a group, protesting and marching can be a powerful way of expressing our anger. This is especially true given that social injustice is generally not something we can change as individuals, especially if we are the target of the injustice. Using the power of protest as a release of our anger can feel satisfying, even when we know that it is likely that the anger will rise in us again if there is no change in the situations or injustice we are protesting against. Using protest or marching in conjunction with other anger rituals can be a helpful way to support ourselves so that we can release some of the anger we hold in our bodies as energy.