

Chapter 24

How to Use Your Hot Temper in the Right Way

Last year I got into a fight with a kid; it was over my friend who was getting picked on by the kid I got into a fight with. My friend came over and said, "I'm really mad at this guy, and I want you to beat him up."

Then I said, "Me and Bobby will go and mess with him." So we went over to the kid who was picking on our friend and we started to mess with him. We started by just kinda play fighting with him, but it led further because I got too physical. I liked it too much, like playing football or something. He got mad at me for messing with him, so the next day at school we got into a fight. I got kicked out of school for five days, it wasn't a good thing.

If I had to give someone else advice about dealing with their hot temper I would tell them to just ask themselves beforehand what was going to happen, who would be mad at them after they exploded. You don't want people hating you, so you have to think about every little detail. It's really hard not to explode or to get into a fight. Most people do have hot



temper, I just think that most people don't show it. If you do flare out and let your temper show you're probably going to get yourself in trouble. You have to think about how your temper can help or hurt you. Most of the time your temper is going to hurt you. Like road rage, if you get behind the wheel you have to learn how to cool down, go with the flow and not worry about everything so much. You can still have a temper and get on with life. If someone is on your case just ignore them and go on with your day. Don't let your temper take over and ruin your life or your relationships.

Jared, 15

Anger is a response to hurt, frustration or fear. When you feel angry, you may become excited and feel energy rush through you, or you may feel like acting violently, or perhaps you just want to be alone and shut everyone else out. People act differently when they become angry. Some people can direct their anger in a helpful way, but others do not control it properly and end up hurting themselves and others.

Anger can be a very powerful emotion. Can you think of the last time you became really angry? How did you act? Do you think that your anger can be controlled? Are there some things worth getting angry over?

There is such a thing as righteous anger. Righteous anger is the anger you feel when something unrighteous, or morally wrong, has occurred. When you feel righteous anger, you may be able to use your feelings for the better. It is not necessarily bad to have strong feelings. It's how you use your strong feelings that matters.

What Makes You Angry?

Different people feel anger over different circumstances. Here are some of the situations that make some people angry, how about you?

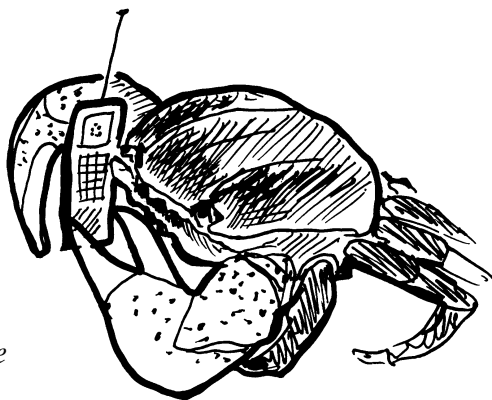
- ☞ *I get angry when people lie.*
- ☞ *I get angry when people try to cheat off me in school.*
- ☞ *I get angry when someone tells me they will do something and they don't.*
- ☞ *I get angry when I see people on the street with no money and no home.*
- ☞ *I get angry when someone calls me names.*

- ☉ *I get angry when someone tells my secrets to someone else.*
- ☉ *I get angry when my mom gets mad at me before she even talks to me about something.*
- ☉ *I get angry when I work really hard on something but get a bad grade.*
- ☉ *I get angry when someone tells me I can't do something I want to do.*
- ☉ *I get angry when people pick on smaller people.*
- ☉ *I get angry when people jump to conclusions.*
- ☉ *I get angry when I'm blamed for something I didn't do.*

What Do You Do When You Are Angry?

People deal with their anger in many ways. Some ways are more useful than others. Some ways of dealing with anger are destructive and hurt relationships. Anger can even ruin a relationship if a person allows his or her temper to get out of control. Here are some ways that people react when they are angry:

- ☉ *Run out of the room.*
- ☉ *Slam the door, slam down the phone, break things, tear things to pieces.*
- ☉ *Scream at the person who is making you angry.*
- ☉ *Say nasty things to hurt someone else.*
- ☉ *Kick the dog or cat.*
- ☉ *Call one of your friends and badmouth the person who made you angry.*
- ☉ *Brood for a long time and hold a grudge against the other person.*



You could probably add to the list. Unfortunately, we are all familiar with the ways people act when they are angry. The majority of people (including adults) don't know how to manage their anger. So, people scream and yell, say mean things to one another and talk badly about each other. We'll take a closer look at people who explode and people who hold it all in.

Exploding

Some people just explode when they get too angry. They may scream, shout, throw things, hurt themselves or hurt other people. Exploders are like balloons full of water—they take more and more until they can take no more and then they explode. POW! The explosion may just be verbal, but it can also be physical.

What are the consequences of exploding?

- ☉ *You may hurt someone.*
- ☉ *You may hurt yourself.*
- ☉ *You may lose your friends.*
- ☉ *You may damage your relationships.*
- ☉ *You may get in serious trouble if you explode in school.*
- ☉ *You may get in trouble with the law if you explode in public and hurt someone.*
- ☉ *You may feel guilty later for having exploded.*
- ☉ *You may feel anxiety for what problems you have caused by exploding.*
- ☉ *You may raise your blood pressure and suffer from other health problems later in life.*



Holding It All In

Another way some people deal with anger is that they hold it all inside and pretend that they are not angry. The problem with this is that when people hold in anger, they hurt themselves. Pent-up anger becomes like paint remover that wears away at a person. This suppressed anger often makes people sick and drains their energy.

What are the consequences of holding it all in?

- ☉ *Getting sick (backache, cold, runny nose, bad skin, headaches, ulcers...)*
- ☉ *Feelings of long-term anger against people you love. These bad feelings damage your relationships.*
- ☉ *Feelings of being depressed and lonely.*

Saying Mean Things

The last way in which people usually handle their anger is by saying unkind things that hurt other people. They do not tell people that they are angry. Instead they make fun of them, or insult them, but then say, *I'm just joking*. Usually when that happens, they are not really joking, and the other person, not knowing what he did wrong, feels hurt and may want to end the relationship.

Violence: It Never Works

When I was growing up I had a lot of anger. I felt left out and different. I hated school, even though I did well when I tried, and I didn't have many friends. I had a younger sister. She was only two years younger than me. When I came home from school I used to look for excuses to beat her up. Our parents were at work until late, and it was only the two of us. For some reason she never told them what I was doing. And she became my personal punching bag. One time I hit her really hard, and she fell on the floor. I thought that maybe I had killed her. It was an awful feeling. My aunt knew what was going on and she told me that I had to get control of my anger or that I would go from hitting my sister to hitting my future wife. She was right. Using my fists to get my anger out just became a habit, a really bad one. It took me a long time to realize how harmful it was. I wish that I had realized it when I was younger, I have a lot of regret about abusing people who were weaker than me.

Paul, 27

When we talked to a group of students about how they dealt with their anger, we were surprised to find that several of them thought that violence was a good way to express anger. Some argued that violence works. They asked if we had ever seen a movie where the hero said, *Let's sit down and talk about things?* It's true that many movies and TV programs show violence as the only answer. Have you ever thought about the consequences of the violence, though? Have you thought about all of the people who were injured or killed because of someone's uncontrolled temper? Every time a person uses violence to express anger, someone pays for it.

Using violence to solve problems is habit-forming. Like anything else, good or bad, the more you do something, the easier it is to do it. As a teenager, violence will get you into trouble in

school, but as an adult your unleashed anger may land you in prison. The best way to avoid the consequences of violent behavior is to figure out more constructive ways to deal with anger.



How Can You Manage Your Anger?

There is no easy answer to learning how to manage anger, and managing your anger does not mean that you never get angry. As we said

before, anger can be good sometimes. You don't like exploding, being angry inside or saying mean

things to people, but you still have to deal with anger when you feel angry. How can you manage your anger a little better next time? What can you do when it comes?

- ☉ **Stop!** Stop, take a few deep breaths and count to 10 before saying anything.
- ☉ **Think!** Think through the consequences of your anger. If you get into a fight at school, how will it affect you? What will happen if you injure another person? Is it worth it?
- ☉ **Calm Down!** Say to yourself: Calm down and don't do anything that you'll regret later. Take a walk or remove yourself from the situation for a few minutes to calm yourself down.
- ☉ **Alternatives!** Ask yourself if there is a better way to handle your anger than to explode, to keep it all in or to badmouth someone (we say there is!).
- ☉ **Who Else is Involved?** Try to understand the person you are angry with. Perhaps you misunderstood each other, or he hurt your feelings by mistake?
- ☉ **Talk!** After you have had time to think things through, try to forgive people who say and do things that hurt you. If the people you are angry with are close to you, then talk to them and tell them how you feel when they hurt you.
- ☉ **Turn the Tables!** Try to imagine being in the other person's shoes. (Practice your new empathy!) How does the other person feel? Ask yourself, "If I were her or him, how would I feel if I said... (fill in the blank with whatever you are going to say when you are angry)".

- ☉ **Seek Help!** *Talk to your parent, a teacher, a school counselor or someone else you trust. If you have a serious problem controlling your anger, look for help. You may be surprised at the support you receive.*

It is important to remember that it is not a bad thing to tell people how you feel and what hurts you. The important point is to be careful about how you say what you want to say. Anger is not bad. It is only badly managed by most people.

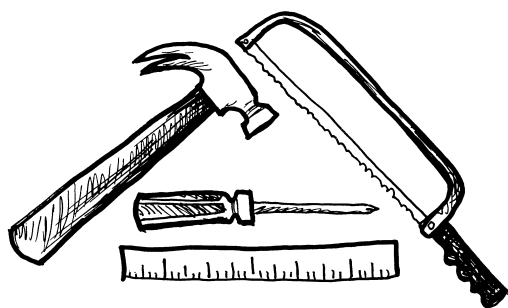
Righteous Anger

Anger can be used constructively and can give you the energy to do something positive about a bad situation. Not every situation should be tolerated. When people act in a way that is immoral and unjust, someone should have the courage to challenge them.

Righteous anger appears when a person becomes angry because someone is doing something that is wrong. The following list shows actions that might make a person feel righteous anger. Can you think of other situations to add to the list?

- ☉ *Someone kicks in the front of someone else's locker and the innocent person has to pay for the damages.*
- ☉ *The local supermarket is using a dangerous chemical to preserve food so it can remain on the shelf longer.*
- ☉ *The river next to your house is polluted because an oil company was careless.*
- ☉ *Students in a class are making fun of another student while the teacher is out.*
- ☉ *A man can't get a job, even though he is qualified, because he has a speech problem.*

If a person feels righteous anger what should be done about it? We talked a little bit about this in the chapter on fairness. Are you obligated to do something to make a situation better if you know about it? If a person feels righteous anger but doesn't do anything to make the situation better, is that person wrong also? Some people would say so. There is an expression that says *the worst evil is*



the silence of good people.

If you know that something wrong is happening, but you don't say anything, you are contributing to the problem. It hardly seems fair, but it is true. Many people are *apathetic*—this means that they don't care as long as something doesn't affect them personally. Although you may not be able to fight against every injustice (wrong) that you see, you can certainly fight against some injustices. You have to choose what you feel the most strongly about, and use your anger to make a situation better.

Here are some real examples of what righteous anger can accomplish.

- ☉ *A bully is forced to stop terrorizing other kids.*
- ☉ *A vandal is forced to pay for property damage.*
- ☉ *A law is made that says that people who are qualified for a job must have an equal opportunity to fill that job.*
- ☉ *An innocent political prisoner is freed.*
- ☉ *An innocent person is released from torture.*
- ☉ *A law is passed to make harsher punishments for drunken drivers.*
- ☉ *A tyrant is ousted (that means that a cruel person who is single-handedly running a country is kicked out of his position).*

If you feel righteous anger, that's good! Don't let go of that feeling. Seek other people who feel the same way you do and get together to make a change for the better.



Journal

Imagine that you had to give advice to someone with a hot temper. How would you try to help that person learn how to manage his anger?



To Do

1. Make your own list of the things that make you angry. Talk with a classmate about your list and how you behave when you become angry.
2. Draw a picture of a very angry person showing how she or he feels and how that person's feelings are shown through body language. What does her or his face look like? Are her

or his fists clenched? Can you see the veins on the neck sticking out? How do you think mismanaged anger affects people? Do you think that it can cause health problems?

3. Pick one of the situations in the section called Righteous Anger and explain what you would do if you were in that situation. Are there any situations in your school or your community that you feel righteous anger about? If so, is there anything you and your classmates can do to make that situation better?

Key Ideas

- ⊗ Anger can be used constructively depending on how you manage it.
- ⊗ Righteous anger often brings about positive change.



**When anger rises, think of
the consequences.**

Confucius

