

ANGER

...MAKING IT WORK FOR YOU, the art of
moving from **FURIOUS** TO **CURIOUS**

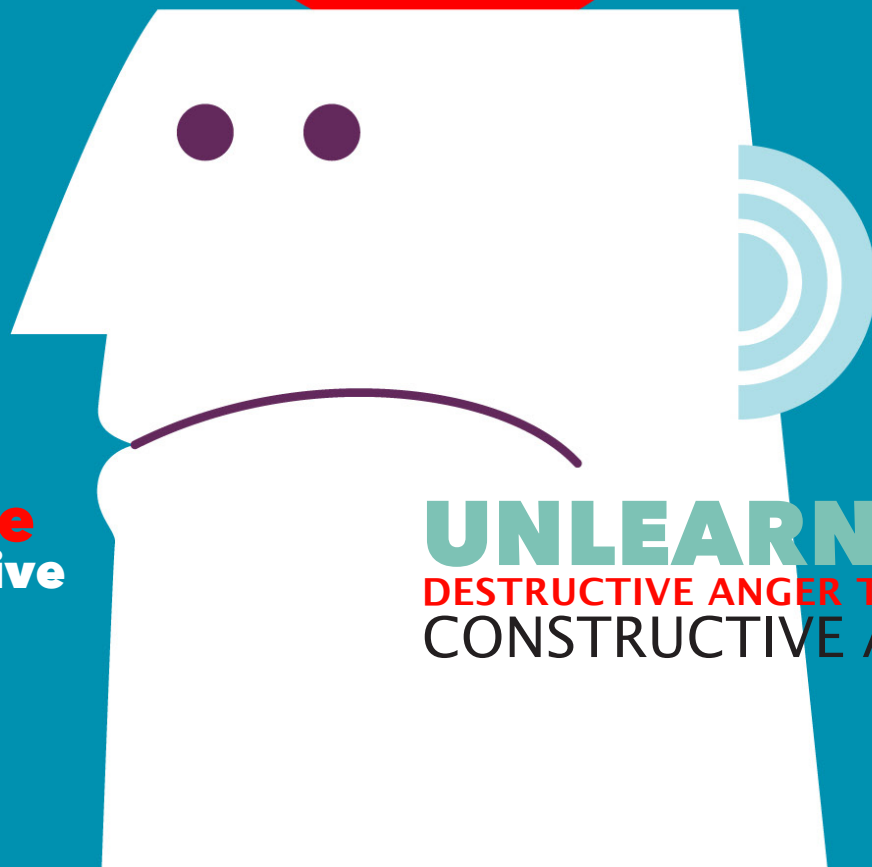
HOW
DESTRUCTIVE
EXPRESSION OF ANGER
IS DEVELOPED IN US

OUR
ANGER
FRIEND
OR FOE?

WHAT'S
THE **COST**
OF DESTRUCTIVE
ANGER?

Destructive
vs. Constructive
Expressions
of Anger

UNLEARNING
DESTRUCTIVE ANGER TO LEARN
CONSTRUCTIVE ANGER



OUR ANGER FRIEND



Anger: Is it constructive or destructive?

In a survey, 1000 people were asked what their experience of becoming angry was. Over 86% of those who responded described it as being negative. For them, anger usually results in negative outcomes and emotional pain. Although many people experience this emotion as being negative, our anger can actually be very helpful. The critical difference between whether anger is experienced as negative or helpful is determined by whether we express our angry emotions constructively or destructively.



ANGER: THE BODY'S ALARM SYSTEM

In many ways, our anger can be compared to a car alarm. It is a warning system that is designed to protect against threat. At its very core, anger is a basic survival response. Insults, criticisms, or some form of unfairness can be seen as threats that cause us to become angry. Much like a car alarm that goes off when a thief attempts to steal a vehicle, anger acts as the body's warning signal that something needs to be addressed. Suppressing our angry feelings or ignoring this warning can have serious and unwanted consequences. Likewise, expressing anger in a destructive manner can result in serious and unwanted consequences.

Anger: Expressing the emotion **without** destroying relationships or **getting stressed**



In order to avoid acting destructively, we need to learn to take a step back without impulsively reacting. Instead, we need to see our anger as a signal that something is not working. Responding constructively, when we feel anger, places us in a much better position to resolve the underlying problem. In fact, when anger is expressed in healthy ways, it can actually enhance our relationships and our mental health. When we express our anger destructively, it will tend to destroy our relationships and result in loneliness and isolation. The key to making this change from destructive to constructive expressions of anger is to shift from being furious to becoming curious about what our anger is trying to tell us. To accomplish this shift, we need to become aware of our own internal processes.

To create this awareness, take a step back and pay attention to the feeling arising inside of you. Be curious. Explore your thoughts. Identify your impulses. Notice the desire to react but refrain from reacting. This is the time to ask: What are my needs in this situation? What is not working for me? What do I desire? What would I like the outcome to be? Take a few moments to write out your answers to these questions. Now, reflect on how you might respond to the situation in a manner that is more likely to move you towards your desired outcome. When we take the time to examine our anger with curiosity, it enables us to gain greater understanding about our lives. Practicing this skill can become a powerful aid for enhancing your mental and relationship health.



BECOMING A STUDENT OF YOUR ANGER

This guide is not meant to be a comprehensive study on anger. Instead, it is a practical guide to help you develop greater awareness of how you respond to your anger. This guide will help you to develop new skills for making the emotion of anger serve you better.

Read on and log into your health portal or Youtube in order to access the videos and watch how Todd, Jenifer, Kevin, and Abby learn how to replace destructive anger with constructive expressions of anger. Then cut out the interactive wallet card on page 13, and carry it with you as you follow the six week activities.



We can bottle up our emotions like Spock. Alternatively, we can express our emotions, like our anger, in healthy, constructive ways. It's our choice.

<http://youtu.be/mg418yHw-GA>

Destructive vs. Constructive Expressions of Anger

Because there are fewer examples of constructive expressions of anger demonstrated in interpersonal relationships, it is likely that many people are not familiar with this type of anger response. The following videos show the two major types of anger responses. As you watch each of these videos with Todd, Jenifer, Kevin, and Abby, pay attention to the differences between destructive and constructive expressions of anger. Notice how:



DESTRUCTIVE ANGER

is impulsive

elicits fear

violates boundaries

is demonstrated through a harsh voice

conveys judgment

pushes people away

creates relationship fractures



CONSTRUCTIVE ANGER

is about responding in a controlled and firm manner

conveys gentleness and emotional safety

creates healthy boundaries

responses are gentle but firm

shows empathy

draws people closer

strengthens relationships by creating clarity



Video Examples

of constructive and destructive anger



WHAT CAUSED THE ANGER

EXAMPLES OF DESTRUCTIVE ANGER

EXAMPLES OF CONSTRUCTIVE ANGER

TODD

A person said something to Todd that hurt him



Todd: extroverted anger expressed in a destructive way



Todd: extroverted anger expressed in a constructive way

JENIFER

A person took something valuable away from Jenifer



Jenifer: extroverted anger expressed in a destructive way



Jenifer: extroverted anger expressed in a constructive way

KEVIN

Someone did not follow through on a commitment they made to Kevin



Kevin: introverted anger expressed in a destructive way



Kevin: introverted anger expressed in a constructive anger

ABBY

Abby got angry at herself for over-committing again



Abby: introverted anger expressed in a destructive way



Abby: introverted anger expressed in a constructive way

These videos are found on your dashboard under "Wellness Magazines".

Most of us would prefer our anger to be constructive rather than destructive. For most of us, our destructive responses to anger come from two places.

#1 ROLE MODELS:

We typically express our anger destructively because we learned to express our anger in this manner from others. Adults model the behaviors children later use. Most of our learned emotional responses can be traced to our parents. If our parents screamed or hit, broke and threw things when they were angry, we may do the same. Strangely though, some people behave in the opposite manner because their parents' behavior made them uncomfortable, i.e. they'll act passive-aggressively when they're angered. Either way, we learn to express our anger destructively.



#2 ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES:

The bottled up feelings many of us carry around is another source for destructive anger. For example, children, who are emotionally or physically abused, hide away their feelings of betrayal, fear, and anger.

Alternatively, if a boy was told that “real men” don’t show emotions, he bottles away the hurt and sadness that he feels from every instance of disappointment, frustration, and betrayal. These suppressed hurts fester with resentment; building up pressure like an active volcano until that proverbial “straw” breaks the camel’s back. The resulting anger explodes as a destructive force, completely disproportionate to the actual event.

If we want to act constructively when we’re angry, we need to relearn how to express anger effectively. Instead of bottling it up, we need to learn that it is okay to feel angry but use strategies that address the cause of anger in ways that are helpful to us.

HOW DESTRUCTIVE EXPRESSION OF ANGER IS DEVELOPED IN US

Most
of the
time the

destructive anger

we express **exceeds the**

amount of anger that is warranted.

This is because we’ve **built up a**

reservoir of past anger that **we are not aware** of but it becomes **unleashed** in

our **moment of anger**. For example, did my kids **really deserve the tongue lashing I gave them** for not doing

their homework, or did this **expression of anger** include the release of **past anger** that was **trapped** inside **me**?

WHAT IS THE COST OF D E S T R U C T I V E ANGER?

Destructive expressions of anger can affect a number of areas of our life. Consider outcomes in the following areas:



PHYSICALLY:

Anger warns us that something is wrong. In so doing, it causes physiological changes (the so-called Flight-Fight response) in order to energize us so that we are prepared to take action. Anger uses valuable resources. Remaining in this angry state can exhaust our physical resources and possibly impair our physical health if we fail to address the causes of our anger.



MENTALLY/EMOTIONALLY:

The outcome of losing control and behaving destructively while in a state of anger can fill us with a deep sense of guilt and shame. These feelings of self-loathing can have profound impacts on our self-esteem by negatively changing how we view ourselves, ultimately, resulting in feelings of depression. This process can consume our mental energy and leave us with less ability to focus or engage in life.



RELATIONSHIPS:

Things said or done in moments while destructively expressing our anger can create deep emotional wounds, destroying feelings of safety and trust in relations. Ultimately, it can result in pushing away those who are closest to us, leaving us feeling lonely and isolated.



CAREER-FINANCIALLY:

Today's workplace has become increasingly intolerant of destructive displays of anger on the job. When work relationships are damaged or customer service issues arise as a result of unchecked anger, it can have a direct impact on our pocket book. Those who act destructively in moments of anger are rarely promoted, and may even risk demotion or termination.

It is important to remember that anger is a normal emotion and feeling angry is not problematic in and of itself. Rather, it is what we do with that anger that determines the outcome. Learning to rein in our impulses and manage anger more effectively can have a lasting impact on our physical and emotional health, as well as on our relationships and careers. As you review this mental health guide, it may be wise to take a moment to reflect on the role of anger in your life and consider the outcomes you would desire to create for yourself.

UNLEARNING

DESTRUCTIVE ANGER TO LEARN CONSTRUCTIVE ANGER

In these interviews with Todd, Jennifer, Kevin and Abby, you will learn that it is indeed possible to replace expressions of destructive anger with constructive ones. Although each of these four people are unique and express anger differently, there are common themes that they all became aware of as they learn to express anger in healthier ways. Take the time to watch the following four videos, noticing how each person learns to overcome destructive expressions of anger. After viewing the videos, take a moment to reflect on the following three ways that change can occur:



1

HAVING THE COURAGE TO BECOME AWARE OF YOUR ANGER, OWN IT, AND TAKE INVENTORY OF ITS CONSEQUENCES

Awareness is the first step towards change. However, becoming aware often means facing some uncomfortable feelings. It can take tremendous courage to face the feelings of guilt and shame that may arise when taking an honest look at the ways we may have engaged in destructive anger. Notice how courage was demonstrated in each video clip as people became aware of their anger and exhibited the willingness to own it.



KEVIN



ABBY



JENIFER



TODD



2 MAKING A COMMITMENT TO LEARN THE SKILLS NEEDED TO SHIFT FROM DESTRUCTIVE EXPRESSIONS TO CONSTRUCTIVE EXPRESSIONS OF ANGER

Changing any behavior can be challenging. Those who achieve big changes in life often attribute their success to a supportive person such as a coach, mentor, or therapist. Having someone you respect, who can hold you accountable to walking through the process of change, can greatly enhance your chances of succeeding. Notice how each of the people in the video found the support to learn how to regulate their emotions and respond to challenging situations more effectively. Also, bear in mind that there are many ways to express anger constructively. Note how these four people use the following four skills:

- ★ Become aware of your anger
- ★ Don't react in a knee-jerk fashion when you get angry, but become curious as to what made you angry
- ★ Determine if you need to put off responding until you gain control, so that you can respond constructively
- ★ Embrace the characteristics listed on page 4, under Constructive Anger.



KEVIN



ABBY



JENIFER



TODD

3

UNDERSTANDING THAT CHANGES TO YOUR MENTAL HEALTH IS A PROCESS THAT TAKES TIME

Everyone has the capacity to change behavior. However, it is important to realize that change takes time and effort. When we change a habitual way of responding, we are literally reprogramming our brain by creating new neural pathways. Consistency, repetition, and accountability over time are key components to this change process. Therefore, it is important to recognize change as a process, not a one-time event. Notice how each of the four people in the videos learned at different rates. Yet, as each of them engaged in small changes, they experienced the rewards that come with practicing enhanced behavioral skills.



KEVIN



ABBY



JENIFER



TODD

CAN PEOPLE **CHANGE**?

We live in an era of advanced sciences that is leading to accelerated change all around us. One particular field of science that is advancing at a rapid pace is behavioral health, which refers to the reciprocal relationship between human behavior, individually or socially, and the well-being of the body, mind, and spirit.

In the last decade, we learned the brain is capable of neuroplastic changes – meaning that its organization can alter as a result of new perceptions and environments. This means that people can transform themselves, yet there are many folk whose experiences have led them to believe that we are who we are and that people cannot change.

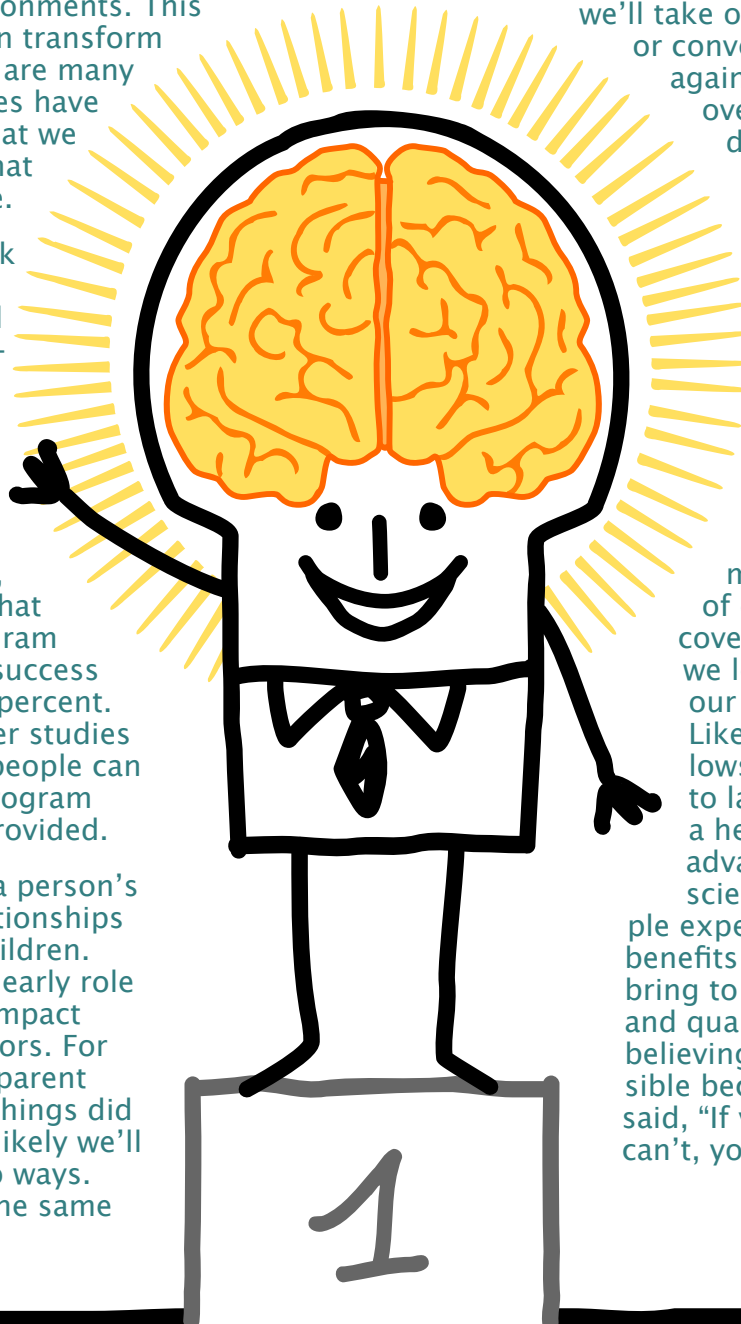
Dr. Mimi Silbert's work proves otherwise. She runs a program called Delancey Street Foundation with ex-cons and individuals who have had extremely difficult pasts such as: release from long prison sentences for gang activity, murder, etc. Studies indicate that graduates of her program have a rehabilitation success rate of more than 70 percent. There are several other studies that show change in people can occur if the correct program and environment is provided.

What initially shapes a person's character are the relationships they experience as children. The responses to our early role models have a huge impact on our current behaviors. For example, if we had a parent who got angry when things did not go their way, it's likely we'll respond in one of two ways. Either we will follow the same

pattern we observed growing up and become angry when things don't go our way or we'll take the opposite tack by avoiding the issues due to our fear of conflict. We can be intimidated by anger and have a difficult time setting healthy boundaries. Another example would be if we had a parent or primary role model who could not express their opinions or emotions easily. Again, we'll most likely respond to that conditioning in one of two ways. Either we'll take on that same behavior or conversely we may react against it by becoming overly opinionated and domineering.

As we grow into adulthood with this conditioning, it becomes our operating system but only until we decide we want to change it and find the right support to do just that.

Perhaps one of the most exciting journeys of exploration and discovery is the one in which we learn how to enhance our relationship skills. Like the progress that allows us to send a rocket to land on Mars or to do a heart transplant, the advances in behavioral science are helping people experience the incredible benefits healthy relationships bring to their mental health and quality of life. The key is believing that change is possible because as Henry Ford said, "If you believe you can or can't, you're right."



ANGER

the art of moving from
FURIOUS TO CURIOUS



Pay attention to any destructive expressions of anger. Remember, these are knee jerk reactions that tend to be harsh, elicit fear in others, violate boundaries, convey judgment, and push people away.

Pay attention to how you constructively express your anger. Remember, these are thoughtful, empathic, and self-reflective responses where you openly express your desires in a gentle, but firm manner.

Any time you experience intense anger, temporarily remove yourself from the situation. This allows you to calm yourself and think more rationally.

Review the guide and the video clips on anger.

Consider what impact anger may have had on you in the following areas: physically, mentally, emotionally, relationships, and career goals.

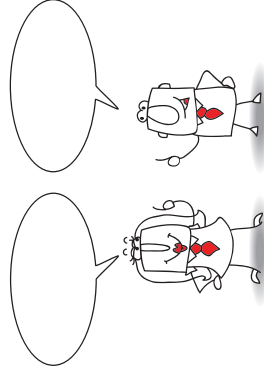
Think about changes you might personally want to make in order to manage anger more constructively. Remember that behavioral change occurs through a process of making consistent incremental adjustments to behavior. This wallet card is designed to be carried with you. Use it as a reminder of the skills needed for responding constructively to anger.

Practice awareness.

Take a step back and pay attention to the feeling arising inside of you. Be curious. Explore your thoughts. Identify your impulses. Notice the desire to react but refrain from reacting. Ask yourself: What are my needs in this situation?



Think of 2-4 people who you trust to give you honest feedback. Ask them to support your goal of expressing your anger constructively. Remember your chances of success are greatly enhanced when you are supported by others, who will hold you accountable to keeping to your goal of change. Such individuals might be a family member, a close friend, or a counsellor.



What is not working for me?
What do I desire? What would I like the outcome to be? Take a few moments to write out your answers to these questions. Now, reflect on how you might respond to the situation in a manner that is more likely to move you towards your desired outcome.

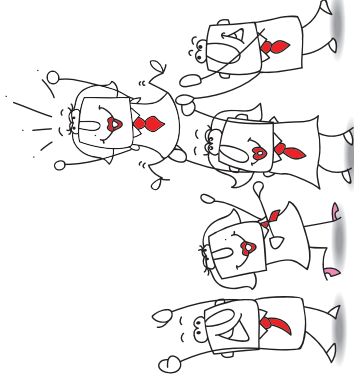


Write out the names of your support team.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____



At the end of each week, review your progress with your support team. Go over successes and challenges. Ask your team to hold you accountable to the changes you desire to make.



2

4



Send each person on your support team this guide on anger and ask them to watch the videos. Set up a time to speak with each support person on a weekly basis to review your successes and challenges in changing how you respond to anger.

Start a daily journal to document your challenges and successes.

7

9

Remember that anger is a normal emotion and feeling angry is not problematic in and of itself. Rather, it is how we respond to that feeling that generates the outcome.



Wallet Card Aid In Learning Constructive Expressions of Anger

Because changing behaviour is not an event, but a process, this wallet card was developed to help you. Please cut this card on the dotted line, then fold, and carry it in your wallet. Each week for six weeks, review the contents on the front side of this wallet card and complete each answer on the back side, to increase your awareness and skills for replacing unhealthy expressions of anger with more healthy expressions of anger. For support, schedule a session with an EAP counselor to discuss ways they can support you in your goals.

	Wk 1	Wk 2	Wk 3	Wk 4	Wk 5	Wk 6
How many times did I constructively express anger this week? (list each event)						
What were the benefits of constructively expressing my anger?						
What did I learn?						
How many times this week did I destructively express anger? (list each event)						
What were the consequences of destructively expressing my anger?						
What did I learn?						
Personal notes:						

Please take the time to complete this short survey. In doing so, your feedback will be valuable to the Wellness Factors' team in producing the next mental health guide. You have two options:

#1 – Complete the survey below using a pen and send it by fax, or scan it and email to:

Email: clientcare@wellness-factors.com or fax (866) 217-4576

#2 Or go to SurveyMonkey and complete the survey online.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/CUGuideFeedback>

1. The mental health guides are published three times each year. How many do you read each year?

☐ All ☐ Two ☐ One ☐ None

2. Do members of your family read the mental health guides?

☐ Yes ☐ No

3. With respect to how the mental health guides are written, do you feel they are written:

☐ In an easy to follow manner.

☐ They are too complicated. It would help if they were written more simply.

4. Do you find the information in the guides to be helpful in maintaining good mental health?

☐ Yes ☐ No

5. Do you find the information offered in the mental health guides to be interesting?

☐ Yes ☐ Somewhat ☐ No

6. How much of the information provided in the mental health guides do you apply to your life?

☐ Most of it

☐ Not all, but a lot

☐ Some

☐ A little

☐ None

7. If you could wave a magic wand to change anything in the guides, what would you change?

8. Have you found the interactive experiences (your support group, videos) offered in this guide to be valuable?

☐ Yes ☐ Somewhat ☐ No

9. Are there any topics that you would like to see covered in the mental health guides?

10. Are there any other suggestions or comments that you would like to offer to the Wellness Factors' team that produces the mental health guides?

The ability to learn how to create healthier expressions of anger is tied to improving your overall mental health. Take time to read or reread these 4 back issues located on your dashboard under "Wellness Magazines".

