

## TIPS FOR UNDERSTANDING ANGER

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Anger is an emotion, a feeling. In itself anger is not a bad thing. How we respond to the feeling of anger is where we can make it work productively for us or not. In a productive mode, it lets us know when someone or something has violated our boundaries or injured us and, that we need to protect ourselves. It is how we express the anger that needs attention.

We have Three Choices when angry:

An **Aggressive** response is when anger is expressed overtly for the purpose of hurting someone else such as verbal putdowns, threats or physical reactions of hitting, kicking or worse. The message is that my anger is not OK so I will blame someone else for this feeling and take it out on him or her.

A **Passive-Aggressive** response is when anger is repressed, internalized or denied such as in snide comments, the cold shoulder, and keeping feelings bottled up until a blow up. The message is that my anger is not OK and I will deny it and do not value my feelings or respect myself.

An **Assertive** response is when anger is expressed directly in non-threatening ways that do not hurt oneself or another person. The message is that my anger is OK and I can use the feeling to help me understand what appropriate action I want to take next. “I” statements are used to share feelings and state what is needed from the other person at an appropriate time and place for the discussion.

Anger is a secondary emotion – not the primary. Anger usually results from feeling insulted, slighted, rejected, mistreated, disappointed, or hurt.

How to make Anger work for you:

1. Acknowledge the angry feelings. Pay attention to your body’s response.
2. Calm down. Take deep breaths. Count to 10. Leave the situation to clear your head if necessary. Step back and determine if this situation deserves more attention or not.
3. Think about the consequences of your potential actions and verbalizations.
4. Look deeper to see what the first emotion was and why. Decide how you want to respond to the trigger of the anger.
5. Focus on the outcome you want to achieve in this situation.
6. Use the assertive approach. Be respectful.
7. Think about your anger, how you handled the situation, what worked, what would you do differently.

\*Note: For more information on any of these tips or to learn more anger management, relaxation exercises, and/or dealing with an angry individual, please contact ASAP.

*Adapted from Employee Assistance Program IQ Health of Virginia*

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