

Post-deployment



Dealing with anger

Most people get angry, particularly after long spells in high risk environments; how you deal with anger can make a big difference to your life. Failure to deal with anger issues can have costly consequences.

Anger can damage or end friendships or relationships, cause financial or disciplinary difficulties and wreak havoc on your health by increasing your chances of developing high blood pressure, heart disease or strokes (and at a lower level causing headaches or stomach problems).

If you have become angry and, on reflection, realised you handled the situation badly, attempt to learn from your mistakes. Ask yourself the five questions below and write down your responses.

- What could I have done to help to decrease my anger (my behaviours and actions)?
- What could I have done to help to decrease my anger (my statements and words)?
- What could I have done to help to decrease my anger (my emotions)?
- What could I have done to help to decrease my anger (my personal thoughts)?
- What could I have done to help to decrease the tension in my body (physical reactions)?

By studying your responses you may come to understand that changing your behaviour in any of these areas may have positively altered the outcome to the situation. Just as these factors can build up to give you problems, they can also work positively to allow you to find solutions.

So, when you are back home in your car and a driver cuts you up at the traffic lights, re-focus, take those four deep breaths and don't take the other driver's actions personally. Remember, his or her bad driving is a reflection on them and not you! Although refocusing can be initially difficult, the more you do it the easier it becomes.

Know your 'Red Flag Moments'. On your return, particular issues or situations may have the ability to quickly upset you. We call these 'Red Flag Moments'. It is a useful strategy to make a list of these moments to enable you to flag them up to take steps to prevent them from occurring. Once identified, you can then plan which anger strategy you will employ to deal with each potential incident. List below are some examples to help you make your own list.

- Driving
- Children crying
- Large crowds
- Long queues
- Feeling ignored and/or disrespected
- Work frustrations
- Experiencing racism or sexism

How to rule your anger?

Which strategies are you going to pull out of your coping skills toolbox to avoid anger ruling you and blighting your life?

- Pay attention to your breathing, slow it down and take those essential four to five deep breaths
- Notice any tension in your body and try to relax
- Take 'time out' if you feel you are becoming angry. Often it may be helpful to withdraw from the situation prior to saying anything destructive. Tell the other person 'I need to leave now, but will be back in a few minutes'. During the time away, use strategies to calm down and don't try to justify your anger
- Be assertive, but not aggressive about what you want. Express yourself directly and firmly whilst always respecting the other person
- Provide reassuring statements to yourself to assist you in remaining calm and controlling your anger
- Remind yourself the issues at hand are not life threatening
- Buy yourself time when responding (deep breaths again). Delay your response until you have taken control of your anger
- Write down the thoughts and feelings you have encountered in an anger situation. Don't just journal the events that went badly, but also recall the times when you handled the situation well



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