

Understanding and Managing Strong Emotions

The most important thing to do is recognise your emotion so you can identify your TRIGGERS.

This is most effectively achieved by diarising your anger. List *what happened, what was your reaction, how did you FEEL, what did you do to calm yourself, why do you think you got angry, what could you have done differently in your response.*

Below are some tips that may help you manage your most emotions:

Be Self-Aware. It is important that you learn to identify what situations trigger you to become emotional. Take a moment. Listen to your body. Become attuned to your natural reactions. Are you noticing a pattern? Do you have specific triggers? Can you identify where the emotion begins in your body? Ask yourself, is the anger a way to deal with feelings such as embarrassment, hurt, or shame?

Slow Down. Notice when you start to get emotional: do you get a knot in your stomach, a headache, tense shoulders? Slowing down and implementing ways to relax like deep breathing and peaceful imagery can help slow down some of the physical symptoms you experience. It's helpful to practice slowing down when you are not feeling upset. Meditating is one way to learn to slow down and relax your mind. It is helpful to learn to slow down and talk yourself down before and during the heat of the moment.

Change Your Way of Thinking. When you start getting worked up about something, take a moment to check in with your way of thinking. Ask yourself, "Is getting upset going to fix anything?" Or, "Is this worth ruining my day over?" Bring in a more rational and objective way of looking at the situation. If someone cuts you off in traffic, instead of thinking things like, "They meant to cut me off, they saw me" replace that thinking with, "They probably are in a rush and didn't see me." Our way of thinking about a situation can intensify or reduce our anger.

Dig Deeper. Sometimes our emotions are created by something in our past or a situation that is going wrong in our lives currently. If you notice yourself getting angry about the small stuff, dig a little deeper. Ask yourself "What is so wrong in my life that I feel so angry, and what do I need to do to change the situation?" "Is there something that happened in my past that is triggering how I currently feel?" By digging deeper into your feelings, you can use them as a sign that you need to work on something that is bothering you and it can be used as motivation for positive change. However, it is important to recognize situations you can't control or change. In those situations, you may need to work on changing your perspective of the situation.

Take a Moment. If your emotions seems to be building, remove yourself from the situation for a few minutes and do something else – take a walk, listen to some relaxing music, or meditate. Your chances of resolving the situation in a productive manner greatly increase when you can approach it with a clear and rational mind.

Make Changes. While you can't control most of the things that happen in life, you can take steps to avoid unnecessary stress. Look at your daily schedule and identify activities, times of day, people, places, or situations that are a source of strong negative emotions. Then make some changes. Find an alternate route to work; shut the door to your child's messy room; set up a time when you're not too tired and hungry to talk about important matters with your spouse; and most of all, make sure you have some time to yourself on a daily basis.