

TO HELP YOUR LOVED ONE, TRY THE FOLLOWING IDEAS

- ▶ Help the patient understand that they have the power to control their anger. Teach them that anger control is a skill which will get better with practice.



- ▶ Discourage the patient from saying the first thing that comes to mind. Teach them to think about other people's reactions before they speak or act.

- ▶ Encourage the patient to be positive and sensitive to others' feelings. Re-mind them to explain themselves calmly. Doing so will make it easier for others to understand and help them.

- ▶ Help your loved one remember that controlling anger will improve relationships with family and friends.

- ▶ Encourage your loved one to take a "time out" and try to relax when they recognize that anger is building.



- ▶ Helpful strategies include breathing deeply and slowly or counting to ten before speaking or acting.

- ▶ Realize that ignoring problems with anger can make things worse. Be willing to give your loved one feedback.

- ▶ Help your loved one develop new ways to release anger and manage stress in the long-term. Examples include exercising, writing, and talking to someone they trust.



- ▶ Identify trouble situations, people, and places that bring out anger. Make a plan to successfully deal with trouble situations and practice the plan ahead of time.

- ▶ Talk to your doctor or a counselor for help.

- ▶ Give praise when the patient controls their anger and expresses their feelings in positive ways.



- ▶ Be a good role model. Teach your loved one good anger management skills by using them yourself.

National Resource Center for Traumatic Brain Injury

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Neurological Illness and

Anger

Helping Patients Control Their Emotions

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GUIDE # 53

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Many people with neurological illness or injury have trouble controlling their emotions. Anger control problems are common. People show anger in many ways, from irritability, hostility, and being easily annoyed to cursing, yelling, threatening others, and becoming physically aggressive.





Helping your loved one can be hard for several reasons. First, you may find the person unpleasant to be around. Second, you might be more concerned about protecting yourself or other family members. Third, you may be concerned that pointing out the problem could make things worse.


Still, you care about your loved one and want to help. Family members and friends are often in the best position to help the patient control anger effectively. Family and friends can help patients self-control and reinforce changes for the better.


UNDERSTANDING THE CAUSES OF ANGER MAKES IT EASIER TO HELP


 Neurological illness or injury causes chemical changes in the brain, making it harder to handle stress.


 Many patients are upset by the loss of their abilities and skills.

 Patients often become frustrated at being dependent on others and being restricted from driving, working, or going out.

 Because they are ill or injured, patients may feel that their ideas, feelings, and opinions don't matter to others.

 Illness, medical tests, and treatments are often physically painful.

 Patients often become frustrated with family members, treatment providers, and insurance companies.

 Having many problems and few solutions, patients can feel hopeless and out of control. Some try to gain control using anger.

WHAT ARE SOME EARLY SIGNS OF ANGER?

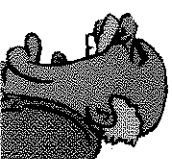
Try to recognize the early signs of anger before emotions get out of control. Common signs include:

⇒ Physical symptoms — red face; tense muscles; a clenched jaw or fists



⇒ Overreacting to little things

⇒ Becoming impatient or irritable, snapping at others



⇒ Being negative and blaming others

⇒ Taking things personally



⇒ Cursing, criticizing, or questioning the motives of others

