

Coping Skills

Anger

Be Aware of Triggers

Anger triggers are the things that set you off. Knowing your triggers, and being cautious around them, will reduce the likelihood of your anger getting out of control.

How to use triggers to your advantage:

- ✔ Create a list of your triggers and review them daily. Reviewing your triggers will keep them fresh in your mind, increasing the likelihood you notice them before they become a problem.
- ✔ Oftentimes, the best way to deal with a trigger is to avoid it. This might mean making changes to your lifestyle, relationships, or daily routine.
- ✔ Because it isn't always possible to avoid triggers, have a plan when you must face them. For example, avoid touchy conversations when you are tired, hungry, or upset.

Practice Deep Breathing

Deep breathing is a simple technique that's excellent for managing emotions. Not only is deep breathing effective, it's also discreet and easy to use at any time or place.

Sit comfortably and place one hand on your abdomen. Breathe in through your nose, deeply enough that the hand on your abdomen rises. Hold the air in your lungs, and then exhale slowly through your mouth, with your lips puckered as if you are blowing through a straw. The secret is to go slow: Time the inhalation (4s), pause (4s), and exhalation (6s). Practice for 3 to 5 minutes.



Keep an Anger Log

Following an episode of anger, take a few moments to record your experience. This practice will help you identify patterns, warning signs, and triggers, while also helping you organize thoughts and work through problems.

- ✔ What was happening *before* the anger episode? Describe how you were feeling, and what was on your mind. Were you hungry, tired, or stressed?
- ✔ Describe the facts of what happened. What events triggered your anger? How did you react, and did your reaction change as the event continued to unfold?
- ✔ What were your thoughts and feelings *during* the anger episode? Looking back, do you see anything differently than when you were in the heat of the moment?

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Use Diversions

The goal of diversions is to buy yourself time. If you can distract yourself for just 30 minutes, you'll have a better chance of dealing with your anger in a healthy way. Remember, you can always return to the source of your anger later—you're just setting the problem aside for now.

go for a walk	read a book	play a sport	listen to music
watch a movie	practice a hobby	go for a run	clean or organize
do yard work	draw or paint	do a craft	cook or bake
play a game	go for a bicycle ride	write or journal	take a long bath
play an instrument	call a friend	lift weights	go swimming
go hiking in nature	take photographs	play with a pet	rearrange a room

Take a Time-out

Time-outs are a powerful tool for relationships where anger-fueled disagreements are causing problems. When someone calls a time-out, both individuals agree to walk away from the problem, and return once you have both had an opportunity to cool down.

How to use time-outs effectively:

- ✓ With your partner, plan exactly how time-outs will work. Everyone should understand the rationale behind time-outs (an opportunity to cool down—not to avoid a problem).
- ✓ What will you both do during time-outs? Plan activities that are in different rooms or different places. The list of diversions from above is a good place to begin.
- ✓ Plan to return to the problem in 30 minutes to an hour. Important problems shouldn't be ignored forever, but nothing good will come from an explosive argument.

Know Your Warning Signs

Anger warning signs are the clues your body gives you that your anger is starting to grow. When you learn to spot your warning signs, you can begin to address your anger while it's still weak.

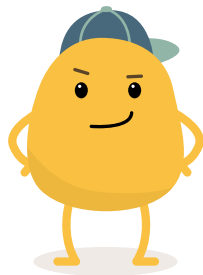
sweating	can't get past problem	feel hot / turn red	clenched fists
headaches	becoming argumentative	raised voice	using verbal insults
pacing	aggressive body language	feel sick to stomach	go quiet / "shut down"

HOW ANGER AFFECTS YOUR BRAIN AND BODY: PART 3

HOW STRESS HORMONES CAN IMPACT YOUR BODY

To find out where these stress hormones come from, [check out Part 1](#). And for more on what they are up to in your brain, [check out Part 2](#).

Anger causes the release of stress hormones like cortisol, adrenaline, and noradrenaline.



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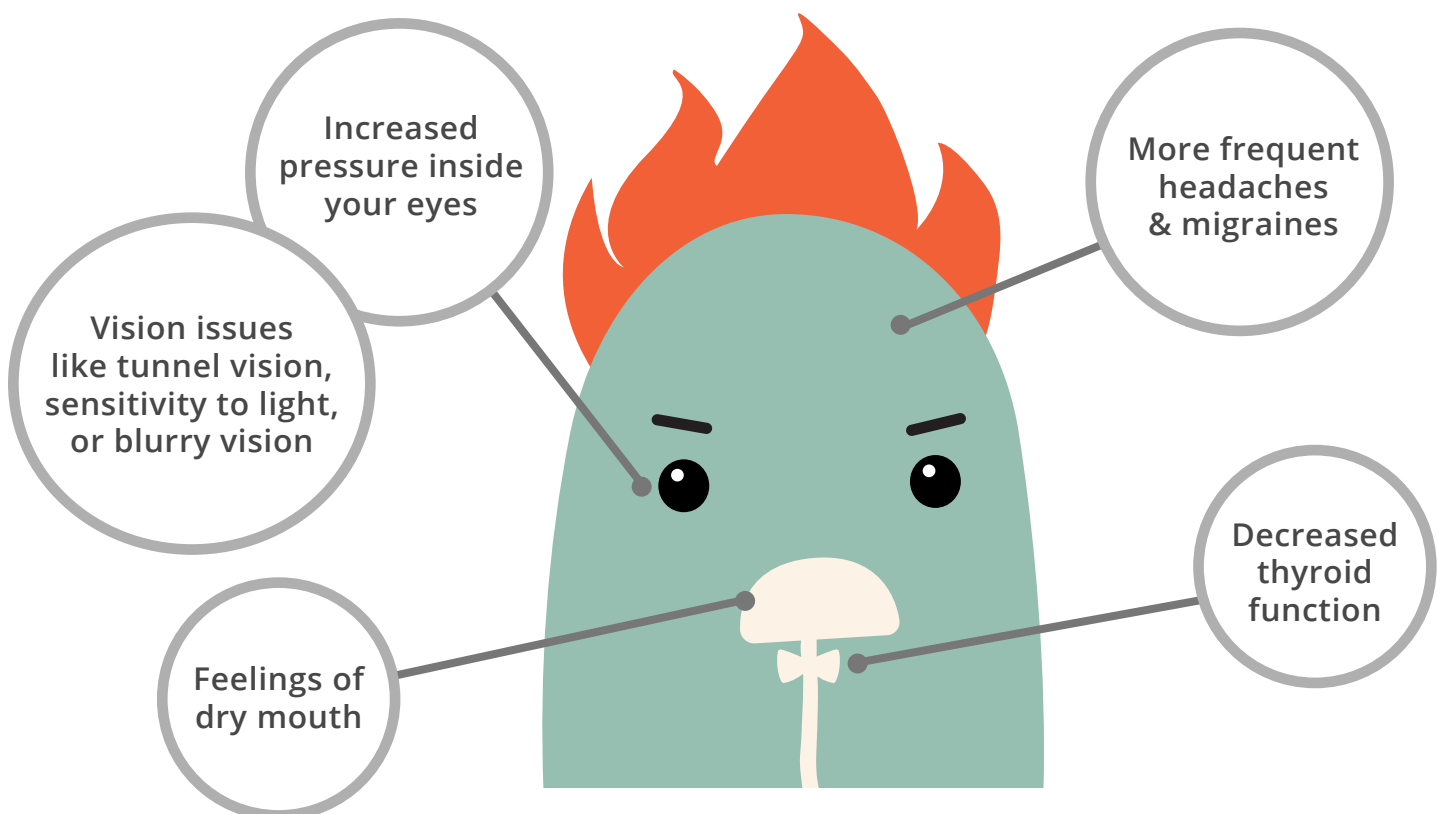


ADRENALINE

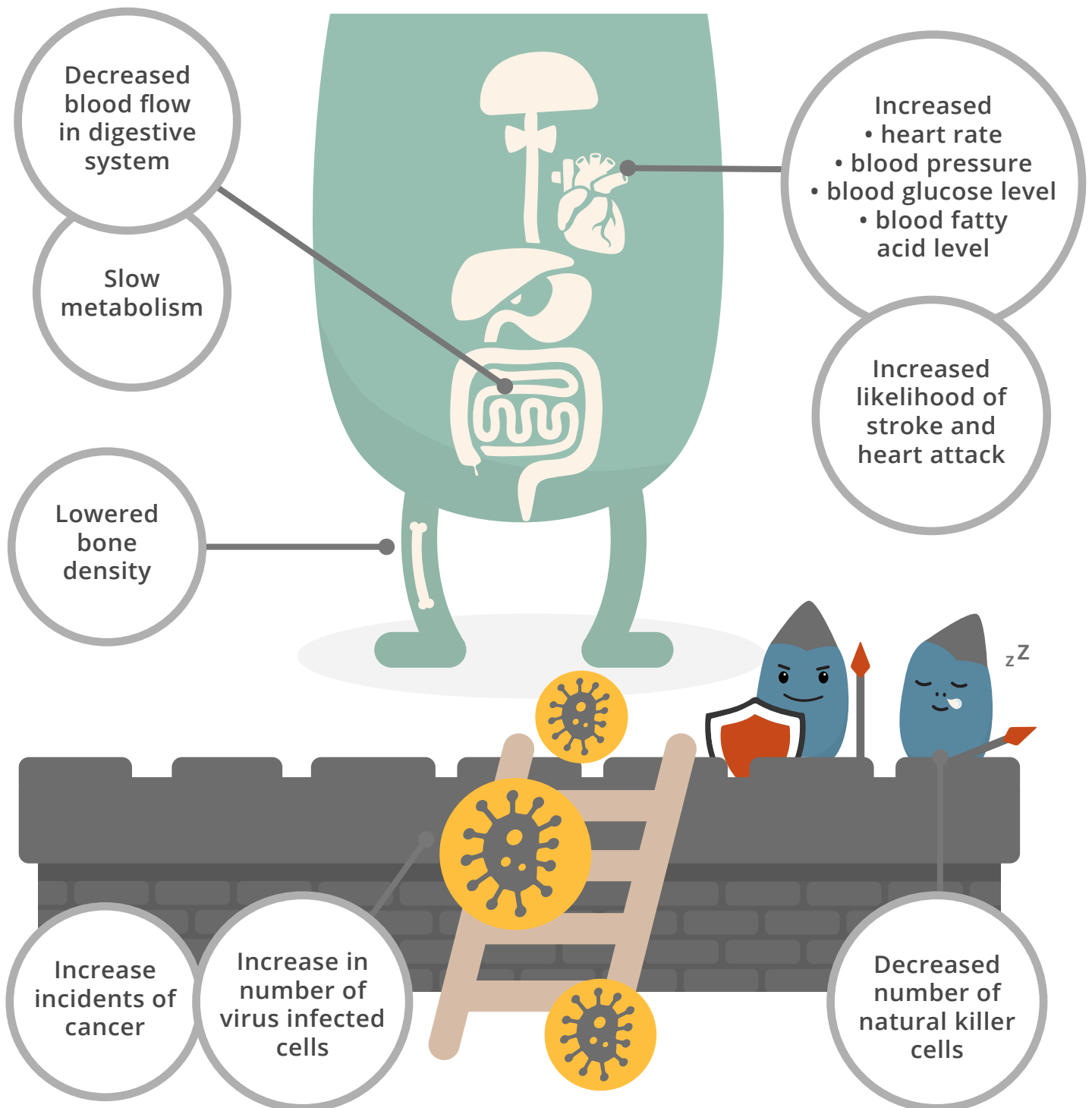


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These hormones give your body bursts of energy so you can cope with negative situations accordingly. However, too much of these hormones or repeated exposure to these hormones can begin to negatively impact important parts of your body.



HOW ANGER AFFECTS YOUR BRAIN AND BODY: PART 3



Even after the feeling of anger passes, its impact lingers in your body much longer. And the more often you get angry, the more these hormones can get to work in your body. That's why it is important to recognize when you're angry and take steps to calm this powerful emotion.

DEALING WITH ANGER AND FRUSTRATION



In challenging times, you may find that you have little patience with other people or get upset over minor things. Anger and frustration are complicated emotions that often stem from other feelings, like disappointment, fear, and stress. Taking some extra steps to decrease your overall tension can prevent your feelings (and the reactions that they cause) from spiraling out of control.

TIPS FOR COPING



Pause before reacting. When you feel yourself getting mad, take a moment to notice what you're thinking, then take a few deep breaths or count to ten in your head. By giving yourself even just a few seconds before reacting, you can put some emotional distance between you and whatever is upsetting you – and you might even realize that you're actually tense because of something else.



Change your surroundings. Anger can make you feel trapped. Whether you're mad at someone in the same room as you or just angry at the world, sometimes physically relocating yourself can help you start to calm down. Go to another room or step outside for a few minutes of fresh air to help disrupt the track that your mind is on.



Get it all out. Keeping your feelings bottled up never works, so allow yourself time to be angry and complain. As long as you don't focus on it for too long, venting can be a healthy outlet for your anger. You can open up to a trusted friend or write it all down in a journal. Sometimes it feels better to pretend to talk directly to the person (or situation) that you're angry at – pick an empty chair, pretend they're sitting in it, and say what you need to get off your chest.



Release built up energy. Anger is a high-energy emotion, and we store that energy and tension physically in our bodies. Exercise is a great way to get rid of extra energy and can improve your mood. Some people find grounding exercises (like meditation or deep breathing) helpful to calm intense feelings, while others prefer more high impact activities like running or weightlifting. Think about what you usually do to decompress, like taking a hot shower or blasting your favorite music and use the tools that you know work for you.



Get organized. When things around you feel chaotic, it's often a lot easier to get frustrated and snap at people. Dedicate a few minutes each day to tidying, planning, or reorganizing. Implementing a routine can also help you feel more on top of things by adding structure and certainty to your daily life.



Eliminate stressors if possible. Sometimes there's no way to completely get rid of a big problem, but there's often more than just one issue contributing to your frustration. Things like an overwhelming workload or unhealthy relationship can make you feel on edge. Pay attention to how and why you're feeling stressed and see if you can make small changes to improve a challenging situation to make it less burdensome.



Manage your expectations. Negative feelings often stem from people or situations not meeting your standards or assumptions. It's frustrating to feel let down but recognize that you can't fully predict anyone else's behavior or how situations will play out. Shift your mental framework so that you aren't setting yourself up for disappointment.



Don't be afraid to ask for help. If you're working to cope with your anger but feel like you can't get it under control, it's time to get some extra support. Anger can fester and become explosive if not resolved. A number of mental health conditions can manifest as anger, so this may actually be a sign of depression or anxiety – treating an underlying condition can help heal your anger as well.

FAST FACTS



Of people who took an anxiety screen at mhascreening.org in 2020, 71% felt easily annoyed or irritable at least half of the time or nearly every day.¹



Of people who took a bipolar screen at mhascreening.org in 2020, 82% reported being so irritable that they shouted at people or started fights or arguments.²



One poll found that 91% of respondents said that they feel people are more likely to express their anger on social media than they are face-to-face.³

TAKING A MENTAL HEALTH SCREEN IS ONE WAY TO WORK ON YOUR MENTAL HEALTH. VISIT [MHASCREENING.ORG](https://mhascreening.org) TO CHECK YOUR SYMPTOMS.



It's free, confidential, and anonymous. Once you have your results, MHA will give you information and resources to help you start to feel better.

Sources

¹Proprietary data. MHAScreening.org. 2020.

²Ibid.

³IBM Watson Health-NPR Health Poll. November 1-14, 2018. <https://www.ibm.com/downloads/cas/2YQ8NLD5>