

Anger Plan



How to get control of anger in your relationship

Nashville Marriage Studio
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Introduction

Anger is like a termite in your relationship's foundation. It can eat away at even the most beautiful and sound structure.

Create your Anger Plan today to protect each other and your relationship from real damage.

What is anger?

Anger is defined as "a strong feeling of annoyance, displeasure, or hostility". Sometimes anger sounds so harsh so we say we aren't angry we're:

acrimonious, **begrumped**, bitter, boiling, burning, cantankerous, convulsed with rage, cross, diversivolent, emporté, fierce,fiery, flushed with anger, flushed with rage,foaming, **foaming at the mouth**, fractious,fuming, furibund, furious, glowering, horn,indignant, infuriate, iracund, irascent, irate,ireful, mad with rage, madbrained, offended, onone's high ropes, rabid, rageful, **raging**,relentless, savage, set against, sore, spleenful,splenetic, stomachous, sulky, surly, thrunched,umbrageous, **up in arms**, violent, virulent, warm,waxy, wild, worked up, wrath, wrathful,wrought, **zowerswopped**

Why do we need a plan?

Because anger can destroy your marriage. I'm not being dramatic. If you unleash it willy-nilly it will destroy trust and intimacy. If you keep it bottled up it will breed resentment. A plan helps keep this natural and powerful emotion in check.

Your Anger Style

First step to changing anything, and I mean *anything*, in your marriage is to look in the mirror. Figure out what's under your control (*your behavior*), NOT under your control (*your partner's behavior and, well, Life in general*), and what is necessary for long-lasting change.

Pouter

I become quiet and withdrawn when I become angry. I don't want to make anyone uncomfortable, but I want everyone to know that something is wrong. I just don't want to actually say it out loud.

Critic

When I become angry I begin to list all of the ways the other person has been wrong. I say it's because I want to be proactive and fix the issue, but it's really coming from a fear of not being in control. It also helps me to focus on the external world rather than my internal anger.

Floor Sweeper

I hate conflict and I would swear on a stack of Bibles that I've never been angry. My motto is just go along to get along and sweep anything and everything under the rug.

Fighter

No one is going to push me around. I make sure that I deal with any and all offenses with confrontation or intimidation. It's important that everyone is very clear that I won't be bullied.

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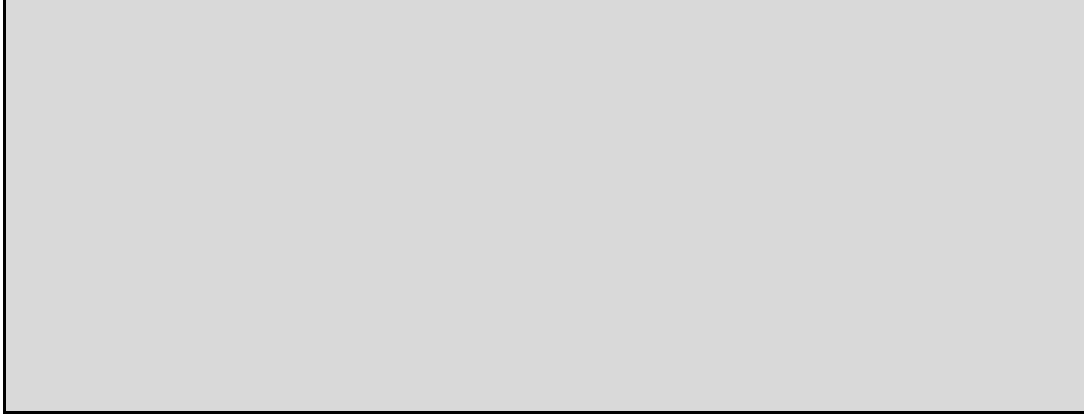
Which Anger Style most closely describes you?

What is unfair about your Anger Style?

Remember: The only thing you can change about your situation is your behavior. Start by identifying the areas where you are being less than kind or fair to your partner.

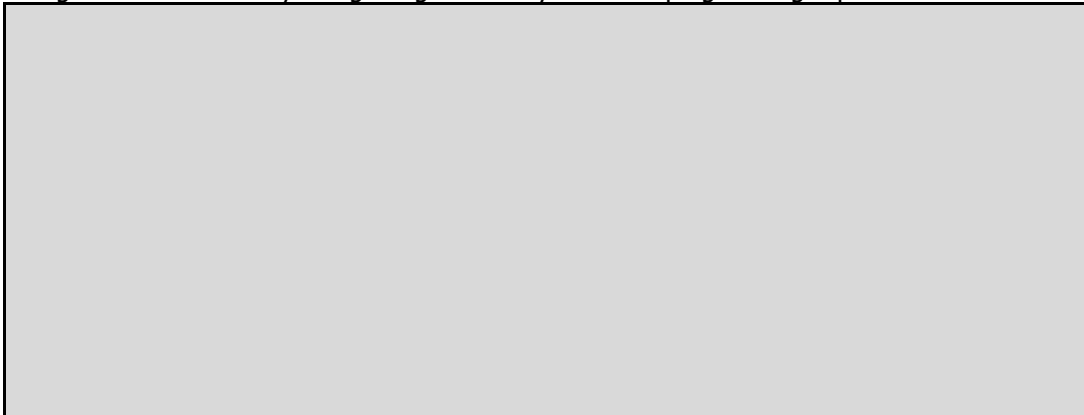
What keeps your unfair behavior alive?

Beliefs keep behaviors alive. There's a reason you express your anger in this way. What do you believe about anger? Is it something to avoid? Something to fear? Something to express no matter what?



How does your body tell you you're angry?

Being aware of our body's anger signals is key in developing an anger plan.



How do you return to UN-angry?

Getting to UN-angry is also key. How do you relax? How much time do you typically need to get back to neutral? Describe the process of getting UN-angry.



*Have your partner go through and analyze their Anger Style as well.

Your Anger Dance

Every couple learns their own dance for dealing with anger and conflict. The first few fights we have with one another set up the steps, or habits, that you will do.



Barbie & Ken

Barbie and Ken started dating 5 years ago. The first 6 months were blissful, like they are for many couples. Then they had their first major fight. Ken forgot to call and let Barbie know that he'd be late picking her up for a date.

Barbie felt abandoned and insecure about Ken's love for her. She understood it was irrational, but that didn't stop the tears from welling up. When Ken got there she tried to pretend nothing was wrong, but he wasn't falling for it. He might be made of plastic, but he knows when a woman is pissed. Ken got mad at how he was being treated so he began to lash out at Barbie. He pointed out the ways she had messed up in the past and he had managed to get over it so she should forgive him, too. Barbie agreed that Ken was right and that she should "get over it". However, she would move on without ever discussing her feelings which simply intensified her insecurity about their relationship.

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Barbie and Ken's first fight set up a pattern for nearly every future fight they ever had:

Barbie's feelings get hurt

(Trigger)



Barbie pretends nothing is wrong



Ken is confused

(Reaction)



Ken criticizes Barbie



Barbie gets over it so that the fight will end

(Resolution)



The Dance Steps

Depending on your anger styles, your dance may look really similar to Barbie and Ken's or it could be completely different. The point is that most fights, regardless of the topic, have the same bones. The trigger, the reaction and the resolution.

Trigger

This is the jumping off point for the majority of arguments. Again, not the topic you are arguing about, but the feelings that push you towards anger. It may be feeling insecure, disrespected, or abandoned. It may also be a stress induced trigger. For instance, after a long day you are more likely to have a short fuse.

Reaction

What happens when the trigger is pulled? How is anger received by the other party? Essentially, what is the anger style on the receiving end?

Resolution

This is the bread and butter of your dance. How do you know a fight is over? Does it just go away, never to be dealt with again? Are the feelings adequately addressed and resolved? Is there a silent agreement to pretend everything is ok? Do you just yell until you're both worn out?

If you look back you'll probably see that most of your fights have a pretty solid pattern to them. So let's get to work analyzing your Anger Dance.

The Trigger

Who is most likely to start a fight/get angry/have hurt feelings?

How does this person express their anger initially?

The Reaction

How does the other person feel once the anger has been expressed?

Describe this person's outward reaction.

What is the earliest point when you know that things have gotten "out of control"?

The Resolution

How do you know when the argument is over?

More on The Resolution

There are plenty of healthy ways to end an argument. However, here are the two key elements to a true resolution:

Everyone Feels Heard

A true resolution means that both of you shared your feelings AND feel like those feelings were heard and acknowledged by your partner.

A Mutual Solution

A solution is inherent to a resolution. Just look at the word! Resolutions typically include a change in behavior, a new understanding about one another or an agreement/compromise is made. A solution, in this case, means you guys agreeing to try something new or acknowledging something new about your relationship.

A resolution isn't a resolution until these two pieces are in place.

Abandonment

As we've already done, the first part of an Anger Plan is recognizing your own behaviors and beliefs when it comes to being angry. This isn't about changing anything as much as it's being aware of what is happening to you internally when you feel slighted.

Next, we looked at how your anger styles interact by looking at the Anger Dance that you do with your partner. We identified the triggers, reactions and resolutions when things get heated.

The final piece of the Anger Plan is dealing with the feeling of abandonment. A common Anger Dance that couples do includes one partner getting upset and the other withdrawing. The withdrawal is done out of a need to find cover or protection, however it often gets interpreted as abandoning the upset partner when they need someone the most.

A true Anger Plan requires the ability for both partners to walk away from an angry conversation because once one of you becomes angry there really is no hope for a productive conversation. The ability to walk away from the conversation without getting even angrier is really important.

Issues of Abandonment

Have either of you ever felt abandoned by someone you trusted?

How does the fear of abandonment play out when one of you tries to stop a conversation?

What would make you feel better about taking a break during a fight?

Creating the Anger Plan

Let's get on with actually creating our Anger Plan!

The Anger Plan will be a summary of everything that you've learned about yourself and your relationship and the process you guys will use when it's time to take a time out during a heated conversation.

Our Anger Plan

Partner 1 Profile

I know I am becoming too angry to talk when:

- Physically I feel -
- Emotionally I feel -

I will let you know I'm too angry by:

- A phrase used to pause the heated conversation -

I will get UN-angry by:

- List activities that relax you -
- Determine amount of time you need to get back to neutral -

Our Anger Plan

Partner 2 Profile

I know I am becoming too angry to talk when:

- Physically I feel -
- Emotionally I feel -

I will let you know I'm too angry by:

- A phrase used to pause the heated conversation -

I will get UN-angry by:

- List activities that relax you -
- Determine amount of time you need to get back to neutral -

Our Anger Plan

The Rules

We agree that below are 3 signs that things are about to get out of control and the convo should pause:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

We will re-enter the conversation by:

- Who will bring the topic back up?
- What time will we bring the topic back up?
- What is a positive action that you can begin the conversation with?
(Example: A hug, compliment one another, both people apologizing)

The conversation is considered resolved when:

- Both sides have been heard without anger.
- Both sides have learned something new or agreed to a solution.
- Angry feelings have left the body.

Summary

- Don't fight when your mad. That's stupid.
- Acknowledge how you feel about anger.
- Own up to how you express anger, no matter how childish it is.
- Give an angry person room to breathe.
- Angry conversations are a surefire way to say/hear something that will haunt you forever.
- Talk about the feelings that made you angry, not just your anger.
- Make your Anger Plan when you're both happy, not in the middle of the next fight.