

Understanding the Goals of Negative Behavior

You can tell what the purpose of the someone's mischief is by the way it makes you **FEEL** when it is happening. Instead of reacting to the mischief, you can ask yourself, "How is this behavior making me feel right now? Which of the basic emotional needs is being sought?"

If you feel annoyed and irritated...

His or her purpose is to get your attention. The most basic and fundamental need of children is the need to belong -- to bond and feel connected to the parent and family. To be esteemed and valued as a human being. This makes attention one of the strongest motives underlying the child's misbehavior.

If you feel powerless and out of control...

His or her purpose is to gain power and control over YOU. Children also have the need to be able to influence and control their environment. They strive to control the outcome of the events going on around them in ways that are consistent with, and in service to, their own wishes and desires. When they feel inadequate to do this, they become rebellious and defiant.

If you feel hurt...

His or her purpose is revenge! Children also strive to protect themselves from their "perception" of an attack or threat to their sense of self, whether real or imaginary. They perceive every reversal, major or minor, as if they were being singled out by others (i.e. parents, teachers) for special torture and punishment. They feel victimized and seek relief from their hurt feelings through acts of revenge.

If you feel discouraged and helpless...

His or her purpose is to withdraw from the task/situation for which he feels inadequate to cope. Children withdraw from overwhelming situations in order to maintain their immature sense of ego and pride, to escape the reality of their own inadequacies.

The solution: Disengage from the mischief

Disengage does not mean to ignore the emotional needs of our children. But now, you know exactly what is going on. You are disengaging from the child's mischief and misbehavior, not from them as a person. You are choosing to behave appropriately in the reality of the situation.

After you have disengaged from the child's mischief, you will feel relief from the tension, pressure and stress of the moment. You will feel in control, liberated, mature and secure within your own self. You will not take the child's behavior "personally" as if it was a true reflection of your own worth as a parent, and as a human being. You will feel appropriately responsible and competent to handle the situation. The more you practice disengaging from the child's mischief, the better you will become at it, the more the child will respect you -- and the more you will respect yourself!

Measure Your Anger

1. How am I feeling right now?

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anxious | <input type="checkbox"/> Worthless | <input type="checkbox"/> Hostile | <input type="checkbox"/> Depressed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mean/evil | <input type="checkbox"/> Revengeful | <input type="checkbox"/> Grumpy | <input type="checkbox"/> Bitter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rebellious | <input type="checkbox"/> Paranoid | <input type="checkbox"/> Victimized | <input type="checkbox"/> Numb |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sarcastic | <input type="checkbox"/> Resentful | <input type="checkbox"/> Frustrated | <input type="checkbox"/> Destructive |

These are some of the names that we give to our feelings of anger! There is no cure for any of them. The first step in resolving our anger problem is to **identify** it as anger! The purpose of this step is to make our anger more specific. No one can manage anger that is vague and covered up with euphemisms.

2. What happened to make you angry?

If we can focus on the specific incident which triggered our anger, our anger becomes more understandable and more easier to manage.

3. Who am I angry at?

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> My own self | <input type="checkbox"/> My spouse | <input type="checkbox"/> My partner | <input type="checkbox"/> My boss |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The kids | <input type="checkbox"/> God | <input type="checkbox"/> The Human Race | <input type="checkbox"/> My Life |
| <input type="checkbox"/> All men | <input type="checkbox"/> Women | <input type="checkbox"/> Other races | <input type="checkbox"/> Miscellaneous |

Our anger usually will involve five (5) general areas.

(1) Our anger at others, (2) Others anger at us, (3) Our anger at self, (4) Residual anger from the past, or (5) Abstract anger. See our books and tapes on managing and coping with anger for a more detailed discussion of these five objects of anger.

Now that you have established the fact that you are angry and that your anger has an "object" in the real world, you are ready for the fourth step in working through the anger process. You are ready to factor your anger into its main components. If you can **identify** the specific facets of your anger, you will be in a better position to put your anger into a more moderate and more manageable perspective. You can do this by asking yourself a series of focusing questions.

4. How did the situation make me feel besides angry?

(Example #1: I resent being forced to give into them all the time. It makes me feel powerless!)

(Example #2: His criticisms of me makes me feel unappreciated and good for nothing.)

Now that you have pin-pointed your feelings underlying your anger, you are now ready to put your anger in a clearer perspective. The next step is to "peel" your anger down to the next layer.

5. What about this angers me the most?

For example, you have established the fact that in the above situation it made you feel powerless, unappreciated or good for nothing. You are now ready to take a closer look at these feelings underlying your anger. What is it about being made to feel powerless that angers you the most? Some examples of what you might find upon deeper analysis is:

- "there is nothing that I can do about it."
- "I feel so stupid!"
- "I feel guilty for allowing it to happen."
- "I feel inadequate to cope with this situation."

Having peeled your anger down to this level, you are ready now to penetrate your anger at its deepest level. You are ready to focus on the real issue underlying all of the prior layers and levels of your emotional distress.

6. Now, what about this angers me the MOST?

This level of self-analysis usually brings us down to bedrock. Down to the fundamental issue which underlies all the others, and which must be identified and relieved if we are to strengthen our vulnerability to mismanaging our anger -- and making our lives more miserable than it needs to be. The answer found at this level of self-analysis often turns out to be, "I feel so worthless!" It is hard for us to respect someone who is stupid, helpless, inadequate and powerless! And when we have those feelings towards our self, they destroy our respect for our own selves.

We lose our self respect and hold ourselves in contempt. The final step in managing our anger consists of replacing these feeling or worthlessness--even unworthy of our OWN respect -- with its specific antidote. The only antidote for self contempt is self respect.

Forgiveness

One of the most effective means of giving ourselves immediate relief from anger in our personal relationships is to forgive others.

Many of us cannot forgive those who have frustrated or harmed us.

Something below the level of our conscious awareness prevents us from relieving our residual anger by forgiving the other person and we then carry a grudge in our hearts for thirty years! This unresolved anger poisons our relationship with our friends and loved ones. It even spoils our relationship with ourselves! We make our own lives mean and miserable instead of happy and full. Very often the feeling is, "Why should I forgive them? What they did was WRONG!" But, is forgiveness for those who only do us right? Most people have a hard time forgiving others simply because they have a wrong understanding of what forgiveness is! When you forgive someone, it does not mean that you condone or are legitimizing their behavior toward you. To forgive them means that you refuse to carry painful and debilitating grudges around with you for the rest of your life! You are "refusing" to cling to the resentment of them having done you wrong. You are giving yourself some immediate relief from your OWN anger!

To forgive, then, is an act that we do on our OWN behalf.

It has nothing to do with "lifting" the other person's sin! You are not doing it for their sake. You are doing it for yourself. This is a choice you are making on your OWN terms in order to relieve your OWN pent-up emotions.

Anger management tips: 10 ways to tame your temper

[By Mayo Clinic staff](#)

Anger is a normal and even healthy emotion, but learning how to deal with it in a positive way is important. Uncontrolled anger can make both you and other people feel lousy. If your outbursts, rages or frustrations are negatively affecting relationships with family, friends, co-workers or even complete strangers, it's time to learn some anger management skills. Anger management techniques are a proven way to help change the way you express your anger.

10 tips to help get your anger under control

1. **Take a 'timeout.'** Although it may seem cliché, counting to 10 before reacting really can defuse your temper.
2. **Get some space.** Take a break from the person you're angry with until your frustrations subside a bit.
3. **Once you're calm, express your anger.** It's healthy to express your frustration in a nonconfrontational way. Stewing about it can make the situation worse.
4. **Get some exercise.** Physical activity can provide an outlet for your emotions, especially if you're about to erupt. Go for a brisk walk or a run, swim, lift weights or shoot baskets.
5. **Think carefully before you say anything.** Otherwise, you're likely to say something you'll regret. It can be helpful to write down what you want to say so that you can stick to the issues. When you're angry, it's easy to get sidetracked.
6. **Identify solutions to the situation.** Instead of focusing on what made you mad, work with the person who angered you to resolve the issue at hand.
7. **Use 'I' statements when describing the problem.** This will help you to avoid criticizing or placing blame, which can make the other person angry or resentful — and increase tension. For instance, say, "I'm upset you didn't help with the housework this evening," instead of, "You should have helped with the housework."
8. **Don't hold a grudge.** If you can forgive the other person, it will help you both. It's unrealistic to expect everyone to behave exactly as you want.
9. **Use humor to release tensions.** Lightening up can help diffuse tension. Don't use sarcasm, though — it's can hurt feelings and make things worse.
10. **Practice relaxation skills.** Learning skills to relax and de-stress can also help control your temper when it may flare up. Practice deep-breathing exercises, visualize a relaxing scene, or repeat a calming word or phrase to yourself, such as "Take it easy." Other proven ways to ease anger include listening to music, writing in a journal and doing yoga.