

# Behavioral Tools to Help You Manage Your Anger

## Key Facts

Timeout is the basic anger management tool and is recommended for everyone.

Deep breathing is one of the quickest ways to calm down your body and reduce your anger.

An effective way to decrease your anger is to learn anger management skills. Getting angry involves responses in your body (behavioral) and thoughts in your mind (cognitive).

Different situations require different tools. To reduce your anger you need tools that target your body's responses or behavior. Behavioral tools are activities or exercises you use to prevent yourself from getting angry. They can also help reduce your anger when it occurs.

Here are some behavioral tools that you can use to help you better manage your anger.

### Timeout

The timeout is the most basic anger management tool. It is highly recommended for everyone. Like calling a timeout in a sporting event, the timeout takes you away from a situation and allows you to regroup.

There are two types of timeouts: informal and formal.

- ❖ **Informal Timeout.** This means that you simply leave a situation or stop a discussion that is provoking your anger. For example, if you are getting angry in a restaurant because the servers are too busy to take your order, you can simply leave the restaurant.
- ❖ **Formal Timeout.** This is like an informal timeout but involves an agreement or a prearranged plan with another person. For example, when you are having an argument with your partner, you call a timeout with an agreement that you will stop the conversation now. But you both promise to continue it at an agreed upon time.

You can take a timeout in almost any situation. While you are taking a timeout, it is often helpful to use another tool, like deep breathing, to reduce your anger. The challenge of timeouts is remembering to use them, especially in the heat of the moment.

You don't even need to tell everyone when you are taking a timeout. The key is to put the brakes on the escalation of your anger.

### Deep Breathing

Deep breathing is one of the quickest ways to calm down your body. Within a short period of time, you can relax your nervous system and reduce the stress response caused by anger or anxiety. The key is to breathe in deeply and slowly so that your heart rate slows down and your body relaxes.

### Free Online Course

The VA offers a free online Anger and Irritability Management Skills course for Veterans and service members. Go to [www.veterantraining.va.gov/aims](http://www.veterantraining.va.gov/aims) to get started today.

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## Key Facts

Deep breathing is a versatile tool. You can do it almost anytime and anywhere.

Deep breathing can be used in almost any situation. You can do it anytime, anywhere, and for any length of time. And other people won't even notice that you are doing it. Try practicing deep breathing for different lengths of time. Notice how even a few seconds can make a difference.

### Deep Breathing Exercise

- ❖ Locate your diaphragm by placing one hand on your stomach just below your breastbone. Take a slow, deep breath in through your nose. Feel your diaphragm move under your hand as your belly expands.
- ❖ Exhale slowly while pulling your stomach muscles in toward your spine.
- ❖ Relax. Inhale slowly through your nose. Exhale slowly out through your mouth. Again, inhale slowly and exhale. Continue these deep breaths.
- ❖ If you feel this more in your chest, you are probably taking shallow breaths. On your next inhale, focus on expanding your belly and inhaling air deep into your lungs.

To learn about cognitive tools, read [Change Your Thoughts to Help Manage Your Anger](#).

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