

OPTIMAL HEALTH UNIVERSITY™

Presented by Dr. Wayne Terai

This New Year, Resolve To Control Anger

2010 was a particularly difficult year for many people. Even the most even-tempered individuals have challenges managing ongoing stress. Anger is a completely normal human emotion. But when tempers flare out of control, serious problems — that damage work performance, quality of relationships and overall well-being — may ensue.

A bubbling temper can make you feel as though you're at the mercy of unpredictable and powerful emotions. But keeping anger under control is essential for disease prevention. If you occasionally have difficulty managing anger, don't dismay: Dr. Terai has gathered 15 winning tips to swiftly defuse a hot temper.



Anger and Health

Doctors of chiropractic, such as Dr. Terai, focus on prevention and want patients to understand how a persistent hot temper promotes disease and pain. Research shows that negative emotions associated with a fiery disposition are directly linked to headaches, chronic pain, obesity, cancer, low-back pain and high cholesterol — just to name a few.

Rein in Temper

Many people instinctively express anger aggressively. It's a natural, adaptive "fight or flight" response. This innate response provokes powerful behaviors, which allow us to defend ourselves when attacked. A certain amount of anger, therefore, is necessary for survival.



On the other hand, lashing out at everyone who irritates or annoys us is destructive to us and our relationships. The goal of temper control is to reduce both the emotions and physiological arousal producing outrage.

It's not always possible to avoid individuals or events that trigger anger, but we can control how we react to those instigators.

1. Exercise

A wealth of research shows that exercise is a winning, all-natural approach to tame emotions, such as anger, frustration and stress. At least 30 minutes of exercise per day will do wonders to quench a sizzling temper. Non-strenuous, gentle exercise, such as yoga, Tai Chi and stretching, relax muscles and hasten calm.

2. Breathe Deeply

Breathing exercises are a proven strategy for combating a scorching spirit. When you feel tension beginning to mount, breathe deeply and slowly from the diaphragm. This process of breathing in and out should take 10 seconds or more.

Picture your breath coming up from

the stomach, and feel your abdomen extend. In contrast, breathing from your chest won't relax you.

3. Repeat Calming Words

While practicing breathing exercises or other relaxation techniques, soothingly repeat a calm word or phrase, such as "relax" or "take it easy." This verbal cue will trigger your body and mind to "chill out."

4. Imagine a Serene Setting

Use imagery; visualize a relaxing experience or tranquil setting, from your memory or your imagination. Consciously doing this over time will train your psyche to automatically employ visualization whenever a tense situation hits.

5. Alter Your Thought Process

Altering your thought process, or what psychologists term "reframing" or "cognitive restructuring," is an excellent tool for cooling a tempestuous temper.

When you're angry, thoughts may become exaggerated and dramatic. Try replacing these thoughts with more rational ones. Focus on the specific problem, rather than on "catastrophizing."

**Dr. Wayne Terai, Burtch Chiropractic (250) 860-4518
229-1634 Harvey Avenue, Kelowna, BC V1Y 6G2 www.burtchchiropractic.com**

For instance, replace the thought, “It’s awful, and everything’s ruined,” with, “It’s frustrating, and my feelings are understandable; however, it’s not the end of the world and getting angry won’t solve it.”

6. Banish “Never”

Absolutes, words like “never” or “always,” give anger a power it doesn’t deserve. Statements such as “She’s never motivated” or “I always mess up” aren’t merely inaccurate, but they may also falsely convince you that there’s no way to solve the problem.

Instead, focus on the specific issue at hand, such as “she has a challenge with arriving on-time” or “I could benefit from additional training on this particular task.”

7. Take Peace of Mind Time

Plan 15 minutes of quiet, personal time each day; this may mean waking up 15 minutes earlier or scheduling a 15-minute work break.

Don’t use this precious time to return calls or conduct personal chores. Rather, practice a stress-reduction technique, such as taking a walk, stretching, prayer or meditation.

8. Use Logic to Defeat Anger

Even when anger is justified, it can quickly spiral into irrational thinking.

Use cold, hard logic as a solution. Angry people tend to demand things: fairness, appreciation, agreement, their way, etc. Remind yourself that the world is not out to get you nor does it owe you fairness; you’re just experiencing some of the rough spots. Do this each time your temper begins to rise to get a more balanced perspective.

9. Solve and Resolve Problems

Temper is often provoked by real and inescapable issues. Feeling your temper rise is a natural response to life’s difficulties. Identify issues that are causing your blood to boil, write down five possible solutions for each and set a deadline for following through.

Realize that some problems can’t be solved, only resolved. The belief that every problem has a solution adds to our frustration. The best attitude to bring to such a situation is not to focus on a solution, but rather on how you handle and face the problem.

10. Take a Hike

If you’re too angry to think rationally, politely physically remove yourself from the situation, while assuring the other party that you will address the issue after taking some time to consider it. Take a walk alone to cool down.

After you feel your body relax, return to the original situation and try a different approach.

11. Pick a Pastime

Find a hobby that relaxes you, such as drawing, gardening, listening to music, etc., and do it regularly.

12. Laugh

Silly humor can help defuse rage in a number of ways, such as helping you get a more balanced perspective and unknitting a tense situation.

Taking a break to watch a humorous movie or calling someone who makes you laugh can help quench a sweltering temper.

13. Meditate or Pray

Quiet time to reflect, meditate or pray

can reduce levels of stress and frustration. It may also help you see things from another’s point of view.

14. Time it Right

Track when your temper flares. Is it at night when you’re tired and distracted? Is it during your commute home? Or is it in the morning? Try to avoid tackling issues or having discussions during this time. For example, if your mood sours when you discuss issues at night, schedule a different time when you’re fresher and more likely to listen and respond carefully.

15. Keep Your Calm

Sometimes simply avoiding issues that you can’t control is necessary. If you feel angry every time you walk by your teenager’s messy room, shut the door. If you feel annoyed by gossipy coworkers, skip venturing to the lunchroom during peak hours. Don’t feel that you need to confront what infuriates you every day. The point of temper management is to keep yourself calm, not to tackle what you can influence, but can’t control.

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