

## The Anger Driven Life: Five Signs it Might Be Yours and Steps You Can Take To Change

by: Dr. Tony Fiore

There's no doubt about it: we live in an angry society. Signs that anger abounds are all over the place. There is desk rage, road rage, domestic violence, spousal abuse, child abuse, sports rage and most recently spam rage. Anger is a worldwide phenomenon and referrals to anger management programs have exploded since 9/11. Anger in its purest form makes us strong, gives us energy to fight the supposed enemy. Whereas the opposite is true when one feels helpless or fearful; that is when we displace our anger on to other people and situations. We might smash a computer or a kid or a wife or whatever happens to be nearby. There are five distinct signs that an individual is living under the influence of anger. The first is frequency. There is a misconception that people take anger management classes to rid themselves of anger. That is not the goal at all. Anger is a natural response; it's how we deal with it that makes it a problem. We need to distinguish the times between when it's our right to be angry and when anger isn't a wise idea. If we have righteous indignation and use anger to change society in some way, in those cases it's appropriate. But 95% of the time anger is probably an inappropriate response. The second sign of an angry life is when the anger lasts too long. With some individuals, all they have to do is imagine or remind themselves of a situation and they become angry all over again. If the anger lasts over a period of time, it would be wise to seek professional help and deal with the situation. Intensity is a third sign of anger. Anger is a matter of degree and patterns, generally falling into three basic patterns. The first is the 'exploder,' where a person goes off like a volcano over a very little provocation. The 'stewer' constantly builds resentment towards someone or something and doesn't show it for a long period of time. They finally express their anger usually over some little incident. A person who is 'passive/aggressive' will be angry but they won't show it directly. They will use back door methods to alert the perpetrator of their anger. It's a problem when any of those tactics are too intense. Obviously, anytime anger leads to aggression it's a sign that something is wrong. That's the fourth sign. Spousal abuse is a major issue in our society. After the OJ Simpson case, people are super sensitive to any display of aggression in a marital relationship. Finally, if it is interfering at work and causing a problem with supervisors or with employees or managers, something is wrong and that's another good sign that anger may be driving your life. Anger management is neither counseling nor psychotherapy. It's an intervention that teaches skills in managing anger, stress, improving communications and developing the capacity to be more empathetic. When it comes to dealing with anger, the first step is awareness; awareness of what tends to trigger intense feelings in you. When you can anticipate what is likely to occur in those situations, you can step back and take stock of the situation. Take a mental time out in which you allow yourself some time to reflect and think of the best course of action, one that will not be harmful to you or the other party. Another important way to handle anger is self talk. This is extremely important and learning to tell yourself positive things can help you get a different perspective on the situation. Tell yourself you have a lot more to live for than the other person and find a way to detach from the other person. Other things you can say are "I don't need to prove myself in this situation, I can stay calm." Or "As long as I keep cool I'm in control of myself." "I need to take time to relax and slow things down." "The only thing I can control is myself and how I express my feelings." So many people get angry because they're trying to get another person to change; their partner, their parents or boss. The fact is that it's impossible to make other people change. They will only change if they want to. When you change your approach and you communicate differently it pulls different behavior from the other person and it completely changes the style of interaction. Taking responsibility for yourself and your own feelings is critical at home. Especially in relationships, partners will start escalating each other and before long you have a major conflict. Both people think they're right and justified in how they're feeling and behaving. There's no end of triggers or reasons to make you angry. At some point you have to take responsibility in order to start changing the pattern. Anger is a normal human emotion. If one does not experience anger then it is not possible to experience joy, love or any other emotion. The problem is not to rid oneself of anger, but to manage anger in such a way that leads to a positive outcome for yourself and others.

### About the Author

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