

## Anger in the Workplace

### Anger Defined

The feeling of wanting to retaliate that one has toward some person, or thing that hurts, opposes, offends, or annoys.

Anger is a healthy and normal emotion. Most of us experience and/or encounter angry feelings of varying intensity every day, many times a day. We might even think of anger as our emotion of “survival.” Yet anger is the least talked about and the least understood of human emotions.

### Contact Your Federation

Every day, the staff in Professional Relations Services respond to calls from members who are distressed over a variety of workplace issues. These individuals describe situations where they feel threatened, fearful, harassed, or hurt by the behaviour of students, parents, colleagues, or administrators. As our conversations unfold, a theme that constantly emerges is that of anger. These individuals do not always recognize or acknowledge that they are angry. Instead, they believe that they have been wronged and target someone or something as the cause of their distress. They feel slighted or mistreated. We rarely, if ever, get calls from a member who recognizes that their problem may be caused by their own anger issues. Instead, we get calls from members seeking support in dealing with difficulties that may have arisen as a result of a sudden angry outburst.

### The Desire to Get Even

When a member seeks Federation support, they are often seeking remedies of a legal nature. Certainly, when situations are serious and one's rights have been violated there are formal remedies that should be put into place such as filing a grievance, or a formal complaint through the board's harassment policy. There are also policies and processes for dealing with violence in the workplace.

However, there are many situations that can be successfully resolved through a willingness to address the problem one-on-one with another individual.

### Why Understand Our Anger

We cannot control the behaviour of others. We can however, control our response to the behaviour of others.

### Our Anger Style

People generally fall into one of four styles when expressing anger. To manage anger effectively it is important to understand one's own typical response to anger.

### 1. Assertive

Most of the time, this is the best way to express angry feeling. Assertiveness allows you to stand up for your rights without hurting others or yourself. You express yourself directly and honestly but listen in return.

### 2. Aggressive

Aggression is harmful to self and others. Aggressiveness is putting yourself first and often hurtful to others. You are demanding, verbally abusive, intimidating, explosive, and create a win/lose situation. Unfortunately, aggressiveness is common and is often used to manipulate others.

### 3. Passive

The passive person goes inside with their anger and holds it inside. You put others first at your own expense and never deal with your own or someone else's anger. Sometimes passivity is helpful. Prolonged it can cause serious health problems.

### 4. Passive-Aggressive

You hold anger until you blow up and often take an "I'll get you later" attitude. Prevents you from resolving your issues and improving relationships.

## When You Feel Angry

- Take a deep breath and try to identify exactly what is the cause of your angry feelings.
- Take time to think about your response.
- Avoid texting or emailing when upset.
- Speak up assertively not aggressively.
- Be willing to listen to the other person.
- Be specific and realistic about expectations.
- Use "I" language – I think, I feel.
- In a highly charged situation refrain from reacting verbally.
- Go for a walk/run to blow off steam.
- Don't blame, preach, ridicule, or label other's behaviour.

## Professional Costs of Anger Mismanaged

Regardless of how others around you deal with their anger, learn to avoid reaching an explosive state where your behaviour becomes aggressive. If you allow this to happen, you may face any of the following:

- Parent complaints.
- Allegations of assault or abuse leading to the Children's Aid Society, police, College of Teachers/College of Early Childhood Educators investigations.
- Discipline.
- Criminal charges.
- Civil suit.
- Loss of teaching certificate.
- Health issues.
- Social rejection from peers.

Experts in the field of understanding and managing anger all conclude that we can learn to view negative situations as opportunities to do something productive and constructive for ourselves, our loved ones, and even those who present themselves as “the enemy.” Such efforts take patience, insight, and hard work.

For more information, contact Professional Relations Staff at 416-962-3836 or 1-888-838-3836 at the provincial office.

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