WHAT IS ANGER?

We’ve all felt it – from that fleeting annoyance to intense rage. Anger is a normal, usually healthy, human emotion.

At times, however, it can get out of control and cause problems in our personal relationships, disrupt our study or work, and affect the overall quality of our lives.

Some people are more prone to anger than others. Research shows they have a low tolerance for frustration and struggle to take things in their stride. They believe they should not be subjected to unfairness, inconvenience, or annoyance.

Maybe angry people are born that way, or maybe they have not learned to handle anger or to express their feelings in other ways.

Any of these sound familiar?

If you have a problem with anger, you probably already know it but these are some of the signs that indicate you may have difficulty controlling your anger:

- Feeling angry or irritable at the slightest thing
- Taking your annoyance out on others (e.g. shouting, hitting out)
- Feeling tense or wound up most of the time
- Daydreaming about revenge
- Heart racing, muscles tensing
- Hitting or throwing things, slamming doors, or damaging property
- Friends or family have commented on your anger
- Thinking everyone is being unfair to you or always letting you down
- Everything seems like a big problem

AGGRESSION: Anger can trigger aggression but it is not appropriate to physically or verbally lash out at every person or in every situation that irritates us. Common sense, morality, and the law prevent us!

SUPPRESSION: Unexpressed anger creates other problems – passive aggressive behaviour (getting back at people indirectly, without telling them why); constantly criticising others; putting others down; being cynical or hostile. Not everyone expresses anger in loud, spectacular ways. Some withdraw, sulk, get grumpy, or become physically ill.

EXPRESSION: Expressing your anger in an assertive – but not aggressive – manner is the healthiest way. To do this, you have to learn how to make clear what your needs are, and how to have them met, without hurting others.

Being assertive doesn’t mean being pushy or demanding – it means being respectful of yourself and of others.

ANGER MANAGEMENT

You cannot avoid or change all the people or situations that enrage you but you can learn to control your reactions. In other words, you can learn to express your anger in more helpful ways.

First things first. Get to understand your anger and gain control of it.

Know your triggers. These may be internal (e.g. feeling embarrassed, remembering rejection) or external (e.g. rude people, traffic).

Check for unhelpful beliefs that keep your anger going (e.g. ‘anger stops others from taking advantage of me’). Anger may have protected you in the past but it may be causing problems for you now and hurting others you care about.

Know your ABCs – your Angry thoughts, Behaviours and their typical Consequences. Chances are they are not helping you get what you want. So explore some alternatives!
At UWI, the Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS) offers free and confidential counselling to students. Whether you see the counselor for one or two sessions, or on a more regular basis, depends on what you find most helpful.

Having problems with anger? Get in touch and find out more about anger management. Generally feeling stressed out? Irritable or tearful and not sure why?

Psychological therapy provides an opportunity to think through some of the reasons why you might feel the way you do. It offers ways of managing symptoms, or relationship problems, through changes in your behaviour and the way you think about things.

So, whether you are feeling overwhelmed with everything that’s going on for you now, or whether you’ve faced similar feelings in the past, don’t wait for the problem to go away … come in and speak with a student counsellor.

**SELF-HELP STUFF**

Check out the self-assessment tools on our website. These screen for a variety of problems such as depression, alcohol abuse, eating disorders, and generalised anxiety. See:

http://sta.uwi.edu/caps/

**HOW DO I SEE A STUDENT COUNSELLOR?**

We work on an appointment basis so get in touch to make a time to see one of the student counsellors. While students usually get an appointment within a day or two, a waiting list is in operation during peak times and there may be a little wait. Obviously, a student in an emergency will be seen the same day.

**HOW TO CONTACT CAPS?**

Call CAPS on 662 2002 ext 2491. Email: counsellor@sta.uwi.edu

Or pop in and see us. We are located in the Health Service Unit (HSU), between Trinity Hall and the Learning Resources Centre (LRC).

**OPENSING HOURS**

CAPS is available throughout the year, from 8:30am to 7pm during term-time. We close at 4:30pm during vacation.

This leaflet prepared by the Counselling & Psychological Services, UWI, St Augustine.
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Controlling ANGER...

...before it controls YOU.

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