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How to deal with anger in the workplace

Have you ever gotten so worked up at work that you've experienced a fit of scorching hot rage? I'm sure we've all experienced this at some point. We're only human, after all. However, unchecked anger can have dire consequences when you can't express your anger in a safe, productive manner. [FREE DOWNLOAD: Create A Movement Mindset] The next time you see start seeing red, take a beat. And try these eight ways to quell your rage. 1. Recognize the warning signs. To effectively manage your anger, you first must recognize the warning signs with a clear head. When you do, you'll be able to avoid your worst initial impulses. Or, you may even be able to defuse tense situations involving family, friends or co-workers. While not an extensive list, the most prevalent warning signs to be aware of include: Your heart starts pounding Rapid and shallow breathing occurs It feels like your face is flushed You suddenly feel hot or cold Teeth grinding Clenching of the jaw and fists Fidgeting or pacing Pain in the neck or head Tension in the arms, back, neck and shoulders Stomach discomfort Avoiding a costly fit of rage starts with recognizing the fact that your anger is rising. 2. Count to 10, and focus on your breathing. Counting to 10 might seem like a cliché, but it is effective. Why? Doing so interrupts the immediate reaction and allows you to reflect before responding. You'll feel more relaxed and in control if you take a few slow, deep breaths. Using this technique, you can break the cycle of anger and avoid lashing out when you feel like a volcano that's about to erupt. 3. Adopt a mindset that people are doing the best they can. A little bit of empathy goes a long way toward preventing an avoidable fit of rage. "We're all trying our best to handle what the world is throwing at us, with the skills we're able to access at that moment. None of us wants to be losing it," psychologist Stuart Ablon told HBR. "Think to yourself, 'This person I'm interacting with isn't giving me what I want, but this person is doing the best they can right now.' If you can exude that, you will help regulate them," he adds. "It's incredibly contagious — the same way a parent who stays calm can soothe a crying baby, or a kindergarten teacher with supreme calmness can regulate a whole class." 4. Keep a journal or log of your feelings of anger. Anger can be much easier to manage if you know what's making you angry. And if you write it all down. There are times when people feel irritable just because they're stressed, sleep-deprived or for another personal reason. More often than not, the anger is due to an identifiable cause or an amalgamation of stressors. In any case, keeping an "anger journal" will help you understand what's behind your anger and provide a cathartic, healthy release. This doesn't have to be complex. Just describe your feelings, what caused your anger, and what steps you took to deal with it. Then, when calm, think about the thoughts you had at the time, and jot these experiences down. You can then reflect on them to see if there are any anger patterns that require more attention. 5. Move your body. Engaging in physical activity is one of the best ways to put bad energy to good use. The next time you feel anger rising, go for a walk or hit the gym. Exercising regularly can help you decompress as well, which helps prevent rage or frustration from spiking in the first place. 6. Stick with "I" statements. "To avoid criticizing or placing blame — which might only increase tension — use 'I' statements to describe the problem," advises the Mayo Clinic. Describe the problem precisely and with respect. As an example, say, "I'm upset that you left the table without offering to help with the dishes" in place of "You never do any housework." 7. Use humor. A lighthearted comment or thought often defuses rage. Humor helps you maintain perspective, and it can snap you out of a bad mindset. You can get creative with this tactic. "When you get angry and call someone a name or refer to them in some imaginative phrase, stop and picture what that word would literally look like," notes the American Psychological Association. "If you're at work and you think of a co-worker as a 'dirtbag' or a 'single-cell life form,' for example, picture a large bag full of dirt (or an amoeba) sitting at your colleague's desk, talking on the phone, going to meetings," they add. When a name comes to your mind about another person, do this. "If you can, draw a picture of what the actual thing might look like," the APA suggests. "This will take a lot of the edge off your fury, and humor can always be relied on to help unknot a tense situation." 8. Know when to stop. If you find yourself in a heated conversation, don't say or do anything that you might regret later. Even though every one of us has uttered hurtful or inappropriate words in the heat of the moment, remember that just one outburst can permanently sever a relationship. Or cause grave harm to your career and reputation. Make no mistake about it. If you're careless about actions or words, there can be far-reaching effects. That's why it's essential to know when to stop and just walk away or delete the email. You can always circle back to difficult conversations when everyone is more levelheaded. And, in the scheme of things, not all issues are worth getting worked up about. You'll never regret taking the high road. John Rampton is the founder Calendar and Due. Topics: Career Advice, The Workplace, Wellness Anger is a natural emotion you experience when something doesn't go as planned or someone contradicts what you think is "right." People of all ages and personalities experience anger, but how we respond to it varies greatly from person to person. We provide hands-on ways to deal with your anger so you can have positive relationships and strategies to handle conflict in a healthy way. The underlying emotions connected with anger Your own triggers for anger Effective ways to deal with and express anger Ways to set healthy boundaries in relationships How to manage stress How to effectively communicate and resolve conflict Why self-esteem/self-worth affect anger Communicating, resolving conflict, setting boundaries, and asserting yourself Sharing your most important concerns with others Identifying personal traits to address specific issues, such as positive self-esteem, healthy boundaries, stress management, and emotional triggers Solving day-to-day problems and challenges Anger Management for Men Anger Management for Women Anger Management for Teens © GettyImagesCatLaneRudeness at work can have a high cost. Hannah sat at her desk, shaking with anger and feeling totally humiliated. She had been subjected to a very public "dressing down" by her manager at a respected publishing house. He had vented his rage after learning that a best-selling author's new book would likely miss its launch deadline. Hannah, a production editor, had tried her best to keep the project on schedule, but it had been beset by events beyond her control. First, the author had delivered his manuscript late, despite numerous reminders. When it did arrive, it needed a time-consuming rewrite, and then the designer went on sick leave, leaving the planned timeline in tatters. Hannah's boss had walked up to her desk in the open plan office, and launched into a furious tirade. His frustration may have been understandable, but his behavior crossed a line. He shouted at Hannah in front of her team members, his language was wholly inappropriate, and at one point he even suggested that he regretted not giving the project to one of her colleagues. This is just one extreme example of rudeness in the workplace. In this article, we look at what to do if you encounter rudeness on your team or from your boss. What Is Rudeness? Rudeness can take many forms. It is generally defined as a display of disrespect, a breaking of social norms or expectations, a breach of etiquette, or ignoring "accepted" behavior. It can also mean someone behaving inconsiderately, aggressively or deliberately offensively. The word "accepted" is important, because rudeness can mean different things to different people, or within different organizations or environments. For example, shouting and swearing might be considered normal in a busy restaurant kitchen, but it would be regarded as wholly inappropriate and unacceptable in most offices. Similarly, there can be cultural differences to consider. For example, in Japan, something as seemingly innocent as laughing with your mouth open is a no-no. So, it's important to be aware of possible cultural faux pas, especially if you are managing or working abroad or managing a culturally diverse team. Rudeness can be a way to display power within a team or organizational relationship, to try to get your own way on something, or simply to provoke a reaction. It can also be a response to stress, pressure or frustration. Five Ways to Deal With Rudeness in Your Team Being on the receiving end of rude behavior can make you feel angry, upset and aggrieved. If it's not nipped in the bud, it can become "normalized" and embedded into your workplace culture. It can also escalate from low-level incidents into aggressive, bullying behavior. According to a study in the Academy of Management Journal, rudeness can damage team performance, reduce helpfulness and collaboration, and negatively impact workplace relationships. Here, we look at five strategies for ridding your team or workplace of rudeness. Be a good role model. How you treat your people can impact the way that they treat others. If they see that their managers or leaders get away with rude behavior, they may copy it. You can prevent rudeness from spreading by setting a good example to them. Our article, How to Be a Good Role Model, highlights the positive traits that you should demonstrate to your team, such as empathy, integrity, professionalism, and self-control. Don't ignore it. If you ignore rude behavior, you send out a signal that, in effect, you condone it. If you witness it, or if it's brought to your attention, you need to deal with it. We look at how to do that, below. Deal directly with the culprit. When you need to address rudeness, talk to the offender somewhere private. Stay calm and objective as you outline the facts as you know them, explain the negative impact of his or her behavior and how it made other people feel, and make it clear how you want him to modify his behavior. Our article, Bad Behavior at Work, explores this in more detail. Listen. The offender may think that she had good reason to be annoyed with somebody, and her rudeness was just a reaction to that. So, while making it clear that her behavior was unacceptable, give her an opportunity to explain what triggered it. Using Active Listening and emotional intelligence can help you to understand her situation, and you can then work together to find a solution. Follow up on any offender. By all means, take the offender's point of view into account, but you have to make it absolutely clear that you don't want a repeat of his words or actions. If, as part of your solution, you set him targets or standards of behavior, make sure that he achieves them. If he doesn't mend his ways, then you should consider firmer action. Discuss the situation with your HR department, and look at using formal warnings or even, as a last resort, letting him go. How to Deal With a Rude Manager If it's your boss who is being rude, there is a different power dynamic to negotiate. You may have to accept that you're unlikely to change how she behaves, so concentrate on mitigating the effect that her rudeness has on you. Here are four things you can do to deal with a rude boss: Ask why. Perhaps the boss has had a bad day, but it's possible that he is really cross with you. If so, you need to find out why urgently. It may be best to ask him, if you aren't clear why. His behavior may be because he is under pressure, or because he is insecure about his ability or fearful of yours. You need to handle this carefully, as there is a power imbalance to consider. You don't want to damage your relationship with her, or put your job security at risk. You can learn ways to approach your manager in our article, How to Tell Your Bosses They're Wrong. Be positive. The temptation when someone is being rude is to respond in kind, but that is not advisable with your boss. Try to rise above it. Even if you think her behavior was unwarranted, let your performance speak for you. Show her how valuable you are to her and to the team. Learn and adapt – to a point. You may be able to take yourself "out of the firing line" of a rude boss by getting to know how he behaves, and what his triggers might be. You can respond to him more effectively if you are able to anticipate his moods, and if you understand how he thinks and communicates. While you can adapt your own behavior to reduce the chances of triggering his rudeness, be careful not to accept any controlling, bullying or manipulative behavior. Seek extra help. Rudeness, as we have seen, can be a form of power play and even intimidation. Being more assertive or self-confident might make you less likely to be a target for such behavior but, if it continues, you should ask for help. Consider raising your concerns with your HR department. Give them evidence to back up your claims, such as a written log of instances when you were subjected to rude or unacceptable behavior. They have a responsibility to create a safe environment for everyone to work in, and will be keen to reduce staff turnover, so they might offer a range of solutions from mediation to disciplinary action, as appropriate. This approach will likely have consequences for your relationship with your manager, but it will send a clear signal that you refuse to be treated in this way. If there is still no improvement in your situation, or if your relationship with your boss breaks down completely, you may have to consider the final option of looking for opportunities elsewhere, either within your organization or externally. Rude behavior can be a way of displaying power, trying to get your own way, or provoking a reaction. It can also be a response to stress, pressure, frustration, or some other form of unhappiness. It can seriously impact team morale and productivity, and even lead to aggressive and bullying behavior. To tackle rudeness in the workplace, be a good role model for your team members; don't ignore it; deal directly with the culprit; listen to both sides; and follow up on any offender. If your boss is the one who's rude, find out the reason for his behavior, stay positive, work around it, and seek help from HR if there is no improvement in his behavior.

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