

Recognizing Early Warning Signs of Anger

In addition to the anticipation of situations in which you are likely to be angry, it can be helpful to recognize the signs that you are becoming angry or that your anger is getting out of control. For many people, early warning signs of anger that might get out of control include shakiness, muscle tension, clenched jaw, chest pressure, yelling, clenched fists, and saying things that are not true. Some anger is OK — but when you recognize that you are beginning to move into a destructive zone of anger, take a moment to remind yourself of your options. You can choose to be angry, or to use **timeouts** or **assertion** as described below to calm down.

Timeouts

Timeouts can be an effective way to control your anger. Taking a timeout involves removing yourself from the situation you are in when the early warning signs indicate that your anger might get out of control. Taking a timeout helps you reclaim control over yourself and over the situation. You can remind yourself what is important to you and what you are trying to accomplish.

The effective use of timeouts involves recognizing the earliest signs that your anger is interfering with how you want to handle the situation or is becoming destructive. You can use timeouts as athletes do: to regroup, strategize, relax, or simply rest. Your timeout may be as short as 5 minutes or as long as 24 hours. The timeout is not used to avoid a situation, but rather to enable you to approach the situation from a new angle and with a fresh start. At times, merely getting out of the situation will help you to view it differently. During the timeout, you may also find it helpful to practice the relaxation exercises such as [Balanced Deep Breathing](#) or [Progressive Muscle Relaxation](#) or use a Relaxation App such as [Kardia - Deep Breathing Relaxation](#) or using [Imagery](#). You may find that you get the most out of a timeout when you use it to [test some of your angry thoughts](#) using a [Thought Record](#). Some people try to re-enter the situation with a new strategy in mind, to minimize the possibility of an angry blowup. As described earlier, you can use imagery to practice what you plan to say and do before you go back into the situation.