



PTSD and Anger

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Overview

Anger can be a normal response to a traumatic event. Anger gives you energy to act quickly and help yourself or others. Your body goes into a "survival" mode. After the event, when you no longer need to act, the anger usually goes away.

But if you have PTSD, your anger may get out of control. You may lose your temper and may feel like harming others or yourself.

When you have PTSD, you can get stuck in a "ready to act" mode. When something bothers you, you may not think about the situation before acting. You may go into survival mode, and your anger may flare up.

If you are stuck in this mode:

- You may always be on alert. You may be quick to get angry. And you may look for situations where you have to be alert or where you could be hurt.
- You might feel that anger is the best way to solve problems. You don't look for other ways, such as talking things over.
- You may feel threatened and fearful about things that may not be dangerous.

How can you manage anger when you have PTSD?

The first step to managing anger is to be more aware of it. Note the thoughts, feelings, and emotions that you have when you get angry. Practice noticing these signs of anger when you are calm. If you are more aware of the signs of anger, you can take steps to manage it. Here are a few tips:

- Think before you act. Take time to stop and cool down when you feel yourself getting angry. Count to 10 while you take slow, steady breaths. Practice some other form of mental relaxation.
- Learn the feelings that lead to angry outbursts. Anger and hostility may be a symptom of unhappy feelings or depression about your job, your relationship, or other aspects of your personal life.
- Avoid situations that lead to angry outbursts. If standing in line bothers you, do errands at less busy times.
- Express anger in a healthy way. You might:
 - Go for a short walk or jog.
 - Draw, paint, or listen to music to release the anger.
 - Write in a daily journal.

- Use "I" statements, not "you" statements, to discuss your anger. Say "I don't feel valued when my needs are not being met" instead of "You make me mad when you are so inconsiderate."
- Take care of yourself.
 - Exercise regularly.
 - Eat a variety of healthy foods. Don't skip meals.
 - Try to get 8 hours of sleep each night.
 - Limit your use of alcohol, and don't use drugs.
 - Practice yoga, meditation, or tai chi to relax.
- Explore other resources that may be available through your job or your community.
 - Contact your human resources department at work. You might be able to get services through an employee assistance program.
 - Contact your local hospital, mental health facility, or health department. Ask what types of programs or support groups are available in your area.
- Do not keep guns in your home. If you must have guns in your home, unload them and lock them up. Lock ammunition in a separate place. Keep guns away from children.

Related Information

- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Credits

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