

- **Transition** to a resolution

Let the person know you're committed to helping them find a mutually acceptable resolution. Ask them what they would like to see happen. Acknowledge their request while also setting limits and suggesting alternatives as needed. Engage them in action related to resolution of their concern. This might involve a simple transaction such as completing a refund or immediately meeting with another person who can help further resolve the concern. The more they can participate in this process, the more they'll relax and cooperate.

#### KEEP IN MIND

Anger is normal. It's how we handle it that matters. When someone lashes out, remember their behavior is about them, not you. And if someone appears dangerous to themselves or others, follow safety protocols including dialing 911.

**Do not persist in engaging the person.** In this case, your safety and the safety of those around you is your first priority.



Defusing Anger  
Health & Wellness

# Defusing Anger

When responding to someone who's angry, stay calm and try to form a connection if you can safely do so.

For decades, there's been a surge in anger-driven behavior. With the stress of the last few years, people are increasingly hitting their emotional limits. When someone shows anger, they're often dealing with a lot more than what's happening in the moment. It's a sign their emotions are too big for them, that they're in distress, and that they've exhausted all socially acceptable ways to deal with their pain.

#### LEARN THE SIGNS OF ANGER

Defusing someone's anger begins with first recognizing the signs. Watch for:

- pacing, agitation
- shallow, rapid breathing
- flushed face or neck/sweating
- raised voice, pressured speech
- yelling/swearing
- disrespecting personal space
- pointing fingers/clenched fists
- getting physical (shoving, slamming/breaking things)

#### LEARN TO ACT

When responding to someone who's showing signs of anger:

- **Acknowledge** your feelings as well as the other person's  
When someone directs their anger at you, it's normal to feel scared, defensive, and even get angry yourself. Notice those feelings, and take a breath. This will help you reset your own emotions and be more supportive. Let them know you understand they are angry and that you want to help. Maintain a safe distance as you assess the potential for danger. Do not hesitate to ask for help or call 911 for emergency assistance if you feel you or others are at risk of harm.
- **Communicate** empathy and understanding  
Express sincere interest in understanding why the person is upset, and identify with their situation as much as possible. Show empathy and understanding with statements like, "It sounds like the hardest part of this for you is..." or "I can see you're upset. I imagine I would be upset too if the same thing happened to me." Look for ways to say, "I'm sorry" where and when appropriate.  
Speak in a soft, calm voice. You might incline your head so the other person doesn't feel threatened. Try to remain in a relaxed position (hands down and palms open), and stand slightly to the side of the person, as a face-to-face stance can feel aggressive.