

All the RAGE

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It's a mad, mad, maddening world, and while righteous anger can sometimes be a force for good (looking at you, #MeToo), other kinds of fury are debilitating and downright destructive. Here's how to decode what you're experiencing—and deal with it productively.



How often do you feel angry?

A FEW TIMES A WEEK

ALL THE *&^% TIME!

ONCE EVERY 28 DAYS

Ever skip meals?

How's your sleep?

Do you remember how or why this started?

ALL THE TIME—I'M BUSY!

NO WAY. I LIVE FOR MEALS!

FINE

TERRIBLE

YES

NO—AND THAT BOTHERS ME, TOO!

YOU'RE HANGRY.

Waiting too long to eat causes blood sugar levels to drop, which prompts the release of fight-or-flight hormones that may make you overly sensitive. Snack on an apple, cashews, or popcorn, all of which can help bring your blood sugar levels back to normal.

Is the anger extreme enough to cause physical sensations (like a racing heart)?

NO

YES

YOU'RE TIRED.

Studies link sleep deprivation with irritability, anger, and aggression. Get serious about sleep hygiene, and after a rough night, try to avoid people and tasks likely to push your buttons.

Does your anger give you a rush of energy?

NO, IT TAKES A LOT OUT OF ME

YES, I CAN'T SIT STILL

YOU'VE GOT PMS.

As your period approaches, progesterone plummets. And since the hormone acts on the brain's mood receptors, its absence can make you ticked off or tearful. Stay on guard by using an app to track your cycle, and schedule some yoga before your period is due. (Up to 5 percent of women of childbearing age have a more severe form of PMS called premenstrual dysphoric disorder. If your anger lasts longer than two days and is accompanied by acute PMS, distressing sadness, or feelings of helplessness, consult a doctor; meds can help.)

How long do the feelings last?

NOT TOO LONG

DAYS ON END

HEY, LOOK OVER THERE!

True anger has a cognitive component—"I can't stand it when my sister criticizes my parenting"—and a physical response like an increase in blood pressure or heart rate. If your body doesn't seem as agitated as your mind, you may just be annoyed. Try distracting yourself by focusing on something else or even counting to ten.

GET IN THE ZEN ZONE.

A slow-moving cashier or a careless driver can spark your rage, but ask yourself: Will you ever interact with this person again? The answer is likely no—which means you can let it go. Regularly practicing meditation can help you observe your surroundings without reacting to them.

Do you ever respond impulsively (e.g., lash out, hit, yell, binge-drink)?

NO

YES

CHANNEL IT!

Enraged by current events? Volunteer for a cause that speaks to you. Furious you were passed over for a promotion? Polish up that résumé. Indignant over an insult? Flex your muscles at the gym. Healthy anger can be a powerful catalyst for change.

YOU NEED TO SEE SOMEONE.

If your feelings are overwhelmingly intense or getting out of control, ask your internist or ob-gyn for a referral to an anger management specialist, or use the American Psychological Association's website (locator.apa.org) to find one near you. Your health, well-being, and relationships all are at risk when your anger switch is stuck in the on position.

YOU CAN LEARN HOW TO DEAL.

The most common trigger of anger is unwanted behavior by people we care about. A therapist can teach you how to course-correct in the moment and speak up in a constructive way ("When you do X, I feel Y"), helping you become a calmer, less reactive parent, partner, coworker, and friend.

SOURCES: **Howard Kassinove, PhD**, professor emeritus of clinical psychology at Hofstra University and author of *Anger Management for Everyone*. **Louann Brizendine, MD**, neuropsychiatrist, founder of the University of California, San Francisco, Women's Mood and Hormone Clinic.