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How Is Anger a Problem for You?

“I don’t have a problem with anger; I’m just stressed out and frustrated.”

“I don’t want to discuss this anymore. You’re the one with the problem, and discussing it only makes it worse.”

“I don’t talk loud, and I don’t have a temper—I’m just raising my voice to make a point.”

“I’m no different from anyone else: when things go wrong or someone offends me, I get mad. So what?”

Have you ever had thoughts like these or made similar statements to another person? Admitting that you have a problem with anger can be very uncomfortable. Being identified as “angry” might not fit with the self-image you’ve been carrying around, and considering the possibility that you might have to do some work to change can be uncomfortable. But some level of awareness that you should look at this issue more carefully brought you to this book. Maybe you began to add up problems you’ve encountered that seem to be associated with anger, or perhaps others in your life have told you that you need help with how you express your ire. Now that you’ve read the first three chapters your concerns may have been confirmed. You might even have seen your own face in one or more of the modes of anger expression depicted in Chapter 3. Or you squirmed a bit as you read but really aren’t sure how accurate or complete your self-perception is—or what to do about it.

This chapter will give you the tools to answer questions about how serious a problem anger is for you, how you need to address it, and what specific behaviors should be the focus of your efforts to change. In my book *Taking Charge of Anger* I developed the Self-Assessment of Anger Questionnaire (SAQ) to help you evaluate the role of anger in your life. The same questionnaire appears here, in two parts (see pages 60–66) and can be downloaded from [www.guilford.com/p/nay3](#). Taking a few minutes to complete the worksheets will give you the information you need to get started on addressing anger problems of all magnitudes and types.

How Big a Part Does Anger Play in Your Life?

Most of us would find it difficult to answer questions about how big a problem anger is for us or exactly how it affects us, because we are not often asked to be systematic in observing ourselves or our most personal relationships. We often get into daily routines, and our behavior becomes kind of automatic because we've acted and reacted in these ways for so long. But it's important at this juncture to know how severely anger is affecting your life so you know what course of action to take.

Check off any of the following descriptions that apply to your experiences over the last 6 months. Try to answer honestly based on your own memories and what others have said to you about your anger.

- You handled an aggravating situation poorly. (score 1)
- You feel/felt embarrassed or guilty about the way you handled your anger. (score 2)
- Another person has told you that your way of expressing anger was a problem. (score 2)
- An important relationship at home, at work, or among friends or family has been strained by your expression of anger. (score 3)
- Someone you care about has urged you to get help for managing your anger. (score 3)
- You have gotten into serious trouble because of the way you expressed your anger. Examples might include a reprimand at work, a legal problem or arrest for "road rage" or assault, being hurt or hurting another, a separation or divorce. (score 4)

Scoring: Now add up the scores of the items you checked off.

- **If you scored 3 or more**, you likely have a problem with anger that should be addressed but may be able to get what you need from self-help such as this workbook.
- **A score of 6 or more** indicates you may have a serious problem with the way you express your anger. Don't put this book down. If finishing the workbook doesn't seem to lessen the impact of anger on your life, you might consult a therapist or counselor.
- **If you checked off the last item**, you should consider seeking the help of a mental health professional who specializes in treating anger issues.

How Do You Express Your Anger?

Next, consider the following 10 challenging situations. As you read each of them, think how you might react if this or a similar situation occurred in your own life now or in the recent past (within the last 30 days). Because you may express your anger in various ways, perhaps depending on how you feel at a given time, be sure to check off as many of the possible reactions as apply to you for each item. For each situation described, check one or

more of the reactions you could see yourself having to this or a similar situation. If none of the specific descriptions applies, check “Other.”

1. Your partner does something you’ve repeatedly said you dislike. Your reactions might include:
 - Withdrawing from your partner, just wanting to be alone and not discuss it. [C]
 - Thinking of something to say that will make your partner squirm or feel uncomfortable. [B]
 - Acting very forceful in getting your point across. It’s important that your partner hear how upset you are whether he/she wants to hear it or not. [E]
 - Feeling very intense and irritable, which could lead you to do things like talk louder, slam a door, or drive faster. [D]
 - Thinking to yourself, “Just wait until he wants something from me.” [A]
 - Other. It’s unlikely I would react in any of these ways.

2. While you are on your way to work in the morning with some friends, another driver suddenly pulls in front of you, forcing you to slam on your brakes. The reactions you might have include:
 - Feeling so intense and angry it’s hard to shake it off as you begin your day at work. [D]
 - Trying to pull next to the other driver to tell him off or make a rude gesture. [E]
 - Trying to pull ahead of the other driver, then slowing down, holding him up as payback. [A]
 - Trying to think of put-downs or cutting remarks that describe his lousy driving skills. [B]
 - Getting so upset you stop talking with others in the car with you, holding in your anger. [C]
 - Other. It’s unlikely I would react in any of these ways.

3. A close friend keeps you waiting at a restaurant for 30 minutes. When she arrives unapologetic, acting as if nothing happened, your reactions might include:
 - Immediately accusing her of acting inconsiderately, raising your voice to let her know just how irritated you are with this rude behavior. [E]
 - Feeling so upset that you eat fast, get impatient with the waiter, and in general feel tense and grumpy during the entire meal. Hard to shake it off. [D]
 - Minimally responding to your friend’s comments. Making her do most of the talking because you just can’t act like everything is fine—it isn’t. [A]

- Telling her you cannot remain any longer and leaving her sitting there. Now maybe she will realize just how rude she was. [C]
 - Making a biting remark like “I’m really glad you value our friendship so much that it’s at the top of your priorities.” [B]
 - Other. It’s unlikely I would react in any of these ways.
4. You are waiting in a long line in a convenience store. The checkout clerk is “gabbing” with a coworker and not paying attention to his job. Your reactions might include:
- Muttering under your breath and to other customers something like “This person is clearly incompetent” and/or “The store should never have hired him.” [D]
 - Getting so upset you end up leaving your items in the store and walking out and/or deciding never to do business there again. [C]
 - When you finally get to the counter, acting like you are praising the clerk with a remark like “Keep up the good work. You have a real future here.” [B]
 - Deciding to tell the clerk just how angry you are and how incompetent and inconsiderate the store is for hiring him with a remark like “If you can’t do this job properly, you should care enough about the customers to quit.” [E]
 - Slowly placing your items on the counter with the computer codes turned away so the clerk has to work harder to scan them. [A]
 - Other. It’s unlikely I would react in any of these ways.
5. You are furious with your spouse/partner for making plans for you both to go out with friends without asking you. As she is telling a story to these friends at the restaurant, you might react by:
- Walking away on some pretext (e.g., going to the restroom) as soon as she begins telling the story. You are not going to sit there and be an audience. [C]
 - Making a wry remark to your friends that kind of puts down the story with humor, like “What an interesting story. Are you plumbing the depths of *Reader’s Digest* again, dear?” [B]
 - Avoiding eye contact with your spouse/partner, not reacting in any way to her story, and quickly changing the topic. [A]
 - Putting down what she says by forcefully questioning her facts or criticizing. You are angry and she needs to know it. [E]
 - Feeling impatient for her to finish the story. After a brief time interrupting her to ask someone else a question. [D]
 - Other. It’s unlikely I would react in any of these ways.
6. You feel hurt and angry because your partner seems to be neglecting you or is not affectionate enough and won’t talk about it. You might react by:

- Deciding that the next time he wants something from you, your response will be “Forget it.” You will show him how it feels. [A]
 - Giving him a dose of his own medicine by withdrawing from conversation and going to bed early. [C]
 - Making a remark with an edge, like “It’s really great that you’re so loving—I can always count on you to be there for me.” [B]
 - Letting your anger out by forcefully telling him that he is cold and acting like a [fill in an uncomplimentary name]. You are not standing for this. [E]
 - Feeling so upset and tense about his letting you down that you find yourself irritated with others (e.g., your children, a friend, your fellow drivers). [D]
 - Other. It’s unlikely I would react in any of these ways.
7. You have just been told that your supervisor is giving another employee a perk or position you think you should have been given and never even discussed it with you. Ways you might handle this include:
- Going to your supervisor and letting her have it. You are not going to take this unfair mistreatment, and she is going to know it. [E]
 - Running thoughts through your mind about just quitting and getting out of there. If they don’t appreciate you, why stick around? [C]
 - Deciding you will be too busy to help your supervisor out by staying late or taking on additional work. [A]
 - The next time you see your supervisor, making a remark like “I really appreciate the fair way you treat your employees. It’s great working for you.” [B]
 - Noticing more muscle tension and inner tightness and more impatience with others and things (e.g., slow elevators, busy signals). [D]
 - Other. It’s unlikely I would react in any of these ways.
8. You are ready to leave for an important occasion, and your partner is already 20 minutes late after you have specifically told him how important this is to you. Your reactions might include:
- Finding yourself increasingly tense, pacing and/or muttering under your breath, “I can’t believe how long this is taking.” It is hard to relax and accept this lateness. [D]
 - When he is finally ready to leave, telling him off by saying something like “I can’t believe anyone could be so rude [or hopeless or just plain irresponsible].” [E]
 - Making a remark like “I can see you really listened to my feelings about getting there on time. You are a wizard of efficiency and organization.” [B]
 - Not speaking as you usher him to the car. You avoid him for the rest of the day. [C]

- Even though the other did something special or well, refusing to compliment him/her for the rest of the day. Why should you? [A]
 - Other. It's unlikely I would react in any of these ways.
9. After you put in a lot of effort on a community project, the committee chairperson acknowledges everyone but you at an awards banquet. You feel angry at the slight, and your reactions might include:
- Refusing to speak or responding minimally to the chairperson later in the evening when she tries to talk with you. [C]
 - When the chairperson acknowledges the omission, not acknowledging her statement and changing the topic. You will not let her off the hook that easily. [A]
 - Finding yourself telling an embarrassing story about the chairperson to other committee members and kind of enjoying seeing her discomfort when others laugh. [B]
 - Telling him/her off for being so inconsiderate of your feelings and noticing that she is kind of intimidated by your intense voice. This feels good given what she put you through. [E]
 - Being so upset that on your way home you find yourself driving faster and being more likely to yell at other drivers' behavior. Feeling tense and noticing that you are easily irritated for the rest of the evening. [D]
 - Other. It's unlikely I would react in any of these ways.
10. Your neighbor fails to return something he borrowed from you even though you've mentioned it numerous times. You see this neighbor using your item in the yard and might handle your irritation by:
- Ignoring him when he tries to start up a friendly conversation. How can you talk to so inconsiderate a person? [C]
 - Deciding to park your minivan in front of the neighbor's house when you know it infuriates him. [A]
 - Telling your neighbor you really appreciate living next door to someone who is so considerate. [B]
 - Deciding to do yard work later and going inside because just looking at your neighbor causes you stress. You find it difficult to quickly "let go" of your tension. [D]
 - Forcefully demanding your item back, telling him to forget about borrowing anything in the future and to stay away from you. Why be around someone with no morals? [E]
 - Other. It's unlikely I would react in any of these ways.

Scoring: How you express your anger is indicated by your score on each of five scales. Each scale represents one of the modes of anger expression described in Chapter 3, a face of anger that is unhelpful and likely to lead to further problems for you or others who interact with you.

To obtain your scores, add up how many A, B, C, D, and E items you checked. Then fill in your totals below.

Scale A: Passive Aggression _____. You tend to withhold from others when you are angry by failing to do what they want, being late, or otherwise holding back. You minimize or deny that you are angry when others express frustration or question your actions.

Scale B: Sarcasm _____. You use sarcasm, biting wit, or “humorous” put-downs as a way of expressing your anger indirectly. Your facial expression and tone of voice may convey disgust or criticism, which you deny. When others find your comments or actions hurtful or complain, you may accuse them of being too sensitive or minimize their feedback.

Scale C: Cold Anger _____. When angry you refuse to talk things out and may withdraw from others, with minimal or no contact for hours or days at a time. You may secretly enjoy punishing others by making them work hard to get you to respond but would not admit it.

Scale D: Hostility _____. You don’t handle stress well, often feeling very intense and acting it out with a loud, forceful voice and disgust and disapproval when others or situations do not meet your expectations. You may sigh, roll your eyes, and in general make nasty comments that others often find stressful and intrusive. You hate to wait and suffer “fools” poorly.

Scale E: Aggression _____. You act in a manner that may intimidate or harm another person, either emotionally or physically, whether you intend to or not. Yelling, name-calling, and put-downs may threaten or intimidate your partner, friend, or coworker. While not directly assessed by this questionnaire, physical aggression includes physically blocking, holding, pushing, hitting, or restraining another person without express permission to touch. This face of anger is the most serious and requires professional help, especially when levels of verbal and/or physical abuse are harming others.

On which scale did you have your highest score? _____. This mode of anger expression should be a focus for your anger management efforts in the chapters ahead.

Are you surprised at scoring highest on this scale?

Yes No

Did you have a relatively high score on multiple scales? If so, which ones? _____

To reflect on this mix of behaviors you reveal to others, think about the last few times you got angry and regretted how things turned out. Which of the faces of anger seemed to cause you the biggest problem? _____

That's the one to target for change first as you set priorities.

Did your scores on the two questionnaires contradict what someone who knows you well has said about your anger? Let's say you're reading this book because your wife/partner has told you that you "lose it" all the time, and that your anger is causing both of you lots of trouble. But you take the first questionnaire above and get a score of 0–3. Or maybe your husband repeatedly accuses you of being passive–aggressive and sometimes coldly angry, yet you did not score yourself high on Scale A or C. What now?

Let's consider the possibility that you agreed to go through this workbook at least somewhat grudgingly. Is it possible that you didn't answer the questions with total candor and honesty? We often like to see ourselves as the people we would like to be rather than as the people we are, at least to some extent. It's human nature. You also may have harbored some desire to prove your spouse wrong about your anger when you had the chance. Again, it's human nature. Or, it might just be that you are unaware of how you come across since you cannot externally see your facial expression, actions, or tone of voice.

In these cases, get another opinion. In addition to the person who urged you to do something about your anger, give the SAQ to another person who is significant in your life and knows you well—spouse, partner, close friend, or colleague (or give it to two or three to get a broad representation of how people see you)—and ask him or her to fill out the questionnaire as if they were you. Both parts of the SAQ can be downloaded and printed from [www.guilford.com](#). Take a close look at what your friends or relatives have said about you. Not only might they give you a different view of how big a role anger plays in your life, but they may also help you see ways you express your anger that you're not wholly conscious of but need to address.

In What Important Ways Is Anger Affecting My Life?

Based on your questionnaire results, you now have a better idea of how you may be expressing anger. Does this perspective leave you with any good reasons to spend the time and energy to change how you feel, think, and act (all the components of anger laid out in the first three chapters)? If so, you're ready to get started on the most difficult thing for all of us—change—but you might still get a better idea of how much to concentrate on this work if you know more about anger's impact on your life. If you're not sure, answer the questions in the following sections to help you decide.

Frequency

How often is anger an issue for you? Virtually every kind of behavior that mental health professionals call “abnormal,” other than the very extreme (e.g., hallucinations, delusions), is experienced by each of us at some time in our lives. For example, you have no doubt experienced sadness or even feelings of depression sometime in the past 12 months if you had a loss of some kind. This is normal for us all. A critical consideration is not that sadness occurs, but how often and for how long this emotional state lasts. When depression begins occupying increasing hours and days of your life, it is time to address it with a plan for change. The same is true for anger. It is important to keep track of how often you experience a particular face of anger: what you notice inside your body (e.g., muscles tight, face feeling hot, stomach upset) and what behavior you show to the outside world (e.g., withdrawing from communication, raising your voice, using sarcasm or criticism with your child).

An awareness of frequency of occurrence tells you how often anger is affecting you or others. It also gives you a sense of trends in the way you’re handling situations. For example, noticing that the frequency of your anger increased following a certain event—taking a new job, taking on significantly more debt—may provide additional information about what is triggering and sustaining your ire.

Finally, in keeping track of how often anger impacts your life, you become a personal researcher, in effect doing a study of your own anger: how often it is occurring before you begin to change and how successful you are in using your new anger management methods. For most of us seeing that we are making progress is motivational. It inspires us to do better. Conversely, seeing that what we are doing is not working offers valuable information with which we can revise our anger actions to get back on track. Chapter 5 will offer lots of ideas for self-monitoring.

Thinking back over the past few months, how often did you or someone around you notice that you showed a particular face of anger?

Face of anger: _____

How often (roughly) over the last 3 months? _____

Duration

A companion of frequency is duration: how long your episodes of anger last. I’ve often worked with individuals who hold on to their anger and “stew,” withholding or avoiding communicating with others for days at a time. Others erupt intensely in one of the faces of anger and can’t seem to move on for hours or even days. Regardless of the face of anger you show, if you can’t end an anger episode, and each one begins to intrude on more and more facets of your life for longer and longer periods, this is an additional indication that you may need to make a change.

Think about the last few times you got angry. Could you easily shake it off and move on or did it last for many minutes, an hour, or longer?

Describe how quickly you usually continue to feel and express anger once it is triggered:

Intensity

Even if frequency and duration are low, if the intensity of an anger experience is such that you experience extreme internal emotions or act out in remarkable, shocking, or bizarre ways, then you may definitely want to consider making some changes. While most of my clients come to treatment because a loved one, friend, or adviser encouraged them to get help, I can recall a gentleman who called the office without outside prompting because of the intensity of a particularly unsettling rageful experience.

Edmund, a 43-year-old office manager, was highly critical and judgmental of others and felt that was only fair because he held himself to an incredibly high and perfectionistic set of work standards. He called my office following a weekend experience trying to install some drywall in a home remodeling project. In his typically organized fashion, he had made a list of materials, carefully purchased all of the supplies, and, following the advice of a friend who was quite handy, decided to start installing the drywall, even though he had never done this before. He rejected his wife's advice that he hire a professional installer, convincing himself that he could quickly learn what seemed like "a simple task."

To say that he had unrealistic and high expectations for himself would be an understatement. After hanging a couple of pieces in a trial-and-error fashion, Edmund smashed his finger with the drywall hammer, creating such incredible pain and disbelief that he lost control. Feeling outraged at his plight, he began pulling the already installed drywall off the wall, breaking it up and throwing it across the room, damaging the wall.

His wife appeared and looked at him as if "I had lost my mind," causing him to "come to my senses." Upon realizing the absurdity of the situation and hearing his wife's counsel that this kind of thing was occurring all too often, he chose to seek help. At first he believed that this rage "came over" him without warning, but it soon became clear that versions of his tantrum were occurring whenever his high expectations for himself or others were unmet.

More will be said in Chapter 6 about the importance of expectations in triggering anger. It is worth noting that even one highly intense episode of anger can lead to extreme embarrassment (saying or doing something that is very upsetting, insulting, or shocking, for example) or be injurious to self, others, or property (such as Edmund's outburst). By the way, Edmund's basement is now a beautiful suite for any guests that visit, thanks to the contractor Edmund hired once he came to grips with his unrealistic expectations.

Can you recall a particularly intense episode of your anger? If so, describe the situation and the outcome: _____

Impact on Others

Even if you're relatively unconcerned about or even happy with the way you handle your own anger, you certainly live in a world with important others, some of whom you love or otherwise care about. Or you may have to work with others every day, whether you're fond of them or not. Poorly expressed anger is likely to have an impact that could change these relationships in damaging and unwanted ways. Most people have little patience for inappropriate anger and may vote with their feet, ending their relationship with you as a result. Past comments others have made may already have alerted you to problems your anger is causing. But you can discover a lot more by looking over the results of the SAQ completed by someone you care about, comparing each of your answers with those of others. Additionally, it may help to let your hair down and ask one or two people who are very familiar with you to reflect on their view of your anger. Try posing an open-ended question like "Sometimes I can get pretty upset when things don't work out as I wish. How have you noticed me acting, and what is that like for you?" This question might elicit truthful and valuable information about what others think of your anger.

If you are in an intimate, committed relationship, consider having your partner fill out the Relationship Anger Profile (RAP) from my book *Overcoming Anger in Your Relationship*, which appears here on pages 70–71 and can be downloaded from _____, for insight as to how he or she reacts to your anger episodes. Look over your answers: Which of the core emotions did you report having? Being able to identify this emotional reaction gives you a chance to react differently, instead of immediately responding with one or more of the feelings, thoughts, or actions described below each core emotion. Look at the letter in brackets after each feeling, thought, or action for which you circled Y. Each represents an unhelpful response to the other person's anger. Write in the number of "yes" answers for each letter.

- a—Editing: _____
- b—Redirecting/rescheduling: _____
- c—Justifying: _____
- d—Passive-aggression/withdrawal: _____
- e—Hostility/criticism: _____
- f—Aggressing: _____

RELATIONSHIP ANGER PROFILE (RAP)

Write in the name of the angry person for whom you are describing your feelings and actions: _____.

Think about the last few times this person got angry and how you felt in response.

Which of the four core feelings do you experience when this person acts in an angry way toward you, whether he/she withholds what you want or withdraws in cold anger or acts sarcastic, intense, hostile, or loud/aggressive? Once you've circled Y (yes) for **one or more** emotions—**anxious/tense, irritated/angry, responsible/guilty, or afraid/fearful**—answer the questions that follow the ones for which you circled Y.

I feel ANXIOUS (e.g., apprehensive, worried) when this person gets mad: **Y N**. If YES, then carefully consider and answer yes or no (circle Y or N) to the following questions:

1. When I think this person might get angry, I carefully consider exactly what I am about to say before expressing it. **Y N [a]**
2. I often find myself avoiding saying how I really feel so the other person won't get mad at me. **Y N [a]**
3. There are certain topics I avoid if this person seems upset. **Y N [a]**
4. Sometimes I try to change the topic or keep things from upsetting this individual (e.g., keep our children away, reduce noise, make sure everything is perfect) to avoid this person's anger. **Y N [b]**
5. I have given in and changed my own plans or avoided going places with this person when I was concerned about an escalation of anger. **Y N [b]**
6. I find I will avoid certain people or couples this person dislikes to avoid any possibility of anger becoming an issue. **Y N [b]**

I feel GUILTY (e.g., responsible, sorry, apologetic) when this person gets mad: **Y N**. If YES, then carefully consider and answer yes or no (circle Y or N) to the following questions:

1. At times I find myself trying to make excuses for this person's anger—to somehow justify it to myself or others. **Y N [g]**
2. This person can't help how angry he/she gets—it's just a personality trait that can't be changed, so I must live with it and adjust to it. **Y N [g]**
3. When this person gets mad, it must be my fault also. It takes two to start any argument or conflict. **Y N [g]**
4. Giving in to this person is the easiest way to get the anger to stop or avoid it in the first place. Life is too short to make a big deal out of things, so I just do it his/her way to avoid the hassle of it all. **Y N [h]**
5. I try to make up for conflicts with this person by doing something nice to make him/her forget about it. **Y N [h]**
6. I know this person will get his/her way eventually, so I just don't fight it anymore. It's easier just to give in and get over my feelings. **Y N [h]**

(cont.)

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RELATIONSHIP ANGER PROFILE (cont.)

I feel ANGRY (e.g., irritated, annoyed, enraged) when this person gets mad: **Y N**. If YES, then carefully consider and answer yes or no (circle Y or N) to the following questions:

1. I spend a lot of time defending myself around this person. Y N [c]
2. I cannot let something this person says go if it's wrong or unfair—I feel I have to defend or justify my position. Y N [c]
3. I find that I am very alert to this person's negative comments about me and react to them immediately. Y N [c]
4. When I get mad, I sometimes do just the opposite of what this person wants, just to let him/her know that I matter too. Y N [d]
5. I find myself withholding what he/she wants as a kind of payback. Y N [d]
6. I get so mad that I sometimes stop talking or withdraw physically (e.g., leave the house, go to another room) and refuse to have anything to do with this person for hours or even days at a time. Y N [d]
7. When this person criticizes me, I get so annoyed I often criticize something he/she said or did in return. Y N [e]
8. I get very impatient and act angry myself when I am treated unfairly by this person. Y N [e]
9. Sometimes I raise my voice in response to what this person says. Y N [e]
10. At times I have been known to yell back at this person. Y N [f]
11. When pushed to the wall, I have gotten physical with this person by (one or more) blocking, pushing, holding, using my hands in anger, or throwing. Y N [f]
12. Sometimes I have said things to this person when I'm angry that I would never want repeated to others I care about—it would embarrass me. Y N [f]

I feel AFRAID (e.g., fearful, terrorized) when this person gets mad: **Y N**. If YES, then carefully consider and answer yes or no (circle Y or N) to the following questions:

1. When this person gets angry, I sometimes feel so fearful that I am kind of paralyzed and just go along with it so it will stop. Y N [i]
2. I imagine this person will do something, whether intentional or not, that results in me or someone I love (e.g., a child, other family member) getting hurt emotionally or physically. This causes me to give in. Y N [i]
3. I sometimes feel I cannot act or speak out for fear that the situation will just get worse. Y N [i]
4. Sometimes I just don't know where to turn to cope with this person's anger—it is so overwhelming. Y N [j]
5. I have thought of ending this relationship because of the anger, but still care and want it to work. I feel stuck between the two. Y N [j]
6. I feel so powerless and overwhelmed at times I just shut down. Y N [j]

- g—Rationalizing: _____
- h—Apologizing/atoning: _____
- i—Subjugating/surrendering: _____
- j—Shutting down: _____

Looking at your responses, for which actions did you score at least a 1? Even a score of 1 is important as it represents an action on your part that may significantly affect how you continue to feel.

Looking over the results of the RAP, how do you feel? _____

Discuss the results of both the SAQ and the RAP with your partner to further elaborate on what you are doing and how it is being perceived.

Review the last few anger episodes that involved another person. What did the other person say or do that triggered your anger, and what did you do or say? _____

How did it turn out? Has the relationship been adversely affected? If so, how? _____

Impact on Life Tasks

As you know from Chapter 1, anger can immediately trigger the fight-or-flight response, which elicits changes across all the life systems of your body: your muscles tense up, you become distracted and are focused on the object of your anger, often losing sight of the larger picture. For almost any task that you perform, whether at work, parenting a child, driving a vehicle, or participating in a sport, your efficiency and performance will definitely be affected by your level of anger arousal.

Do certain tasks or activities (e.g., losing at a sport, encountering traffic, coping with quarreling children) tend to trigger your anger?

- Yes No

How do you express it? _____

If so, what is the cost to you or your family? _____

In addition to the impact on your comfort in life activities, you may be less efficient in achieving your objectives at work and elsewhere. Unresolved anger can certainly affect performance as tension levels climb to restrict smooth use of muscles and reduce the mental concentration necessary for optimum performance. Dr. Charles Garfield uses the term *peak performance* to describe the moderate level of physiological arousal at which all of us perform best. As fight-or-flight arousal escalates beyond moderate, your performance will tend to deteriorate and you will become less efficient and more prone to making mistakes.

It is helpful to examine the impact of anger arousal on your work product or outcomes. Do you observe the following in yourself or receive feedback about the following from others? Check off each one that applies to you in your task activities:

- You often feel tense or need to chill out, relax, or take a break.
- You notice that colleagues tend to avoid working with you on projects or committees.
- You find yourself losing your temper when the pace of your work or that of others is not fast enough or the work isn't done to your exact specifications.
- You lack patience and find it agonizingly hard to wait for others to complete their assignments.
- You do not suffer fools well and often describe others using labels (e.g., incompetent, lazy, stupid, ineffective).
- You find yourself extremely exhausted from work's aggravations and can't wait to get away from the office.
- You experience symptoms of fight-or-flight arousal (e.g., tension headache, upset stomach, lower back pain, sleepiness, inattention) that seem to detract from your ability to focus on the work at hand.
- You find yourself so frustrated and aggravated by work challenges that you often dream of quitting and doing something different, even if it's not in your best financial interest.

Impact on Health

You find yourself coping with chronic illness or daily, acute complaints that may involve pain or discomfort, all of which seem to be exacerbated by some level of anger. In the book *Anger Kills*, Dr. Redford Williams shows that anger can adversely impact most organ systems

and health problems. Over time, even a young man or woman can begin to see the effects of unacknowledged and unresolved anger if fatigue, burnout, and stress begin to seem like daily companions.

List any health problems that you are currently experiencing, including chronic issues like high blood pressure, diabetes, or arthritis. For each, describe how anger and stress seem to impact your symptoms (e.g., pain, nausea, limited movement). _____

Do You Want to Change?

Now that you've gathered a lot of information about your anger, you can decide how anger presents a problem for you. Summarize what you learned about the face(s) of anger that you express to others:

Is your passive expression of anger (e.g., passive aggression, cold anger, or hostility) a problem?

Yes No

Give some examples of how it affects you or important others: _____

Do you have a problem with more intense faces of hostility or aggression?

Yes No

Give some examples of how it affects you or important others: _____

How do you verbally express intense anger (e.g., language and tone of voice)? _____

How do your angry words and tone impact others? _____

How do you physically act out your anger? _____

How have your physical actions created problems for you or others? _____

Summarize how your faces of anger are affecting the quality of your life (e.g., health, relationships, and work/career). _____

Are the frequency, duration, and intensity of your anger acceptable to you?

- Yes No

If not, why? _____

Conclusions: I have reviewed the criteria for determining how my anger is a problem worth changing and concluded (check one):

- My anger is a serious problem and I want to change how I express it.

Action: Continue reading and applying the advice in the remaining chapters.

- My anger is a problem, but I am not sure I am ready to alter it.

Action: Read Chapter 5 on motivation and decide if you can apply some of the ideas to fuel a change in your own life. If so, continue reading and applying what you learn in the chapters to follow.

- I am still not certain my anger is a problem that needs to be addressed.

Action: Reread Chapters 1–4 and then make a final decision about whether to continue on in the workbook.

- I do not have a problem with the way I express my anger.

Action: Reconsider why you decided to begin reading this book in the first place and focus on what the problem really is.

If you have decided that anger is a problem and must be addressed, Part II of this book helps you begin transforming your anger with Chapter 6 on what gets you mad: your anger triggers.

But before you begin a journey toward altering anger's role in your life, a word about motivation is in order. Many of us wish to lose weight, invest for retirement, get out of the house more often, or perhaps visit that relative we feel guilty about not visiting—to name just a few possibilities. Somehow we have managed to put it off. Somehow our thinking convinces us that it is okay and we will get to it later. Or we may decide to wait for motivation to arise and then do the things we have intended to do, like finish reading this book. But perhaps motivation never quite arrives and we continue doing the same things we've done up until now with the same bad outcomes. Sadly, this is too often true, as you know. Chapter 5 will offer concrete ideas and strategies to assess and enhance your motivation to accomplish any goal—including learning anger management. It will provide some new ways to get started and sustain your efforts, capitalizing on how your brain works and how to get it fired up. Since you have decided to continue to the next chapters, I wish you an enjoyable and profitable journey. Let's get started!