Anger is an emotion that can range from mild annoyance to intense rage. It’s a feeling that’s accompanied by biological changes in your body. When you get angry, your heart rate and blood pressure rise and stress hormones are released. This can cause you to tremble, become hot and sweaty and feel out of control.

When people have angry feelings, they often behave in angry ways. Angry behaviour includes yelling, throwing things, criticising, ignoring, storming out, withdrawing and/or doing nothing.

Unmanaged anger creates problems – sometimes for you and often for others around you. People with poor anger management are more likely to have problems with personal relationships, work, verbal and physical fights, and damaged property. They can also experience anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, psychosomatic illnesses and problems with alcohol or drugs. It is important to manage anger before it leads to other serious problems.

Tips to help manage anger

• **Control your thinking:**

When you're angry, your thinking can become exaggerated and irrational. Try replacing these kinds of thoughts with more useful, rational ones and you should find that this has an effect on the way you feel. For example, instead of telling yourself “I can't stand it, it's awful and everything's ruined”, tell yourself “It's frustrating, and understandable that I'm upset about it, but it's not the end of the world and getting angry is not going to fix it”.

• **Take time out:**

If you feel your anger getting out of control, take time out from a situation or an argument. Try stepping outside the room, or going for a walk. Before you go, remember to make a time to talk about the situation later when everyone involved has calmed down. During time out, plan how you are going to stay calm when your conversation resumes.

• **Use distraction:**

A familiar strategy for managing anger is to distract your mind from the situation that is making you angry. Try counting to ten, playing soothing music, talking to a good friend, or focusing on a simple task like folding laundry.

• **Use relaxation:**

Relaxation strategies can reduce the feelings of tension and stress in your body. Practise strategies such as taking long deep breaths and focusing on your breathing, or progressively working through your body and relaxing your muscles as you go.

• **Learn assertiveness skills:**

These skills ensure that anger is channelled and expressed in clear and respectful ways. Being assertive means being clear with others about what your needs and wants are, feeling okay about asking for them, but respecting the other person's needs and concerns as well and being prepared to negotiate.

• **Try to acknowledge what is making you angry:**

Acknowledge that a particular issue has made you angry by admitting it to yourself and others. Telling someone that you felt angry when they did or said something is more helpful than just acting out the anger. Make sure you think about whom you express your anger to, and take care that you aren't just dumping your anger on the people closest to you, or on people who are less powerful than you. For example, don't yell at your partner, children or dog when you are really angry with your boss.

Don't let your anger get the better of you. Start to empower yourself by managing your anger!

- Centurion Life Skills Workshop (CLW) (012) 664 1931 or edewet@clw.org.za (For nationwide referrals and/or life skills training)
- FAMSA (Family and Marriage Society) offers nationwide counselling and referrals. Tel: (011) 975 7107 or national@famsa.co.za (www.famsa.co.za)
- Lifeline: 0861 322 322
- Telefriend: (012) 351 9999 (www.telefriend.co.za)
- Contact your local social worker, doctor, minister or schoolteacher for help and/or referrals.