Anger Management

Anger is a source of stress, both for you and the angry person. When we are angry our blood boils; we are fit to be tied; we have reached the end of our rope. Anger is an emotion that occurs regularly in the life of every person. Proper recognition, understanding and channeling of anger can make life more comfortable and productive. In order for anger to be managed constructively, its components must be identified and its major functions must be understood.

Components of Anger:
- Anger occurs when we are not getting something we want or would like. We become angry when we feel frustrated, hurt, or attacked.
- Anger has in it a sense of righteousness and a belief that one's personal rights have been violated.
- Anger affects us physically - muscle tension, facial flushing, clenched jaw.

Function of Anger:
- Anger mobilizes us to act.
- Anger disrupts on-going behavior and may cause someone to act impulsively.
- Anger is a sign that something is amiss and can lead to problem-solving.
- Anger can be empowering and can intimidate others.

Remember, anger is a way for someone to communicate some grievance. If that grievance is not confronted, yours or the individual's anger will probably not dissipate.

Strategies for Working With Angry People:
- Dealing with angry people sometimes makes us angry. Managing a difficult or angry person means managing yourself.
- Do not take the person's anger as a personal attack. Concentrate on what you want to accomplish with this person. Establish goals and stay focused and directed on those goals.
- Often people who are angry or difficult are frightened, insecure, or troubled, and have learned to cope with their feelings by being belligerent, stubborn, or fearful. Empathize with their hurt or frustration rather than responding to their anger.
- Adopt a problem-solving attitude. Collaborate with the person on trying to fix the problem.
- Don't let the person's emotional outburst deflect you. Keep the person talking. Ask specific questions, such as: "What are you going to do next?"
- Set limits and provide structure. Let the person know that it is difficult to listen when she or he is yelling.
- Take your time. A slow, even pace demonstrates a sense of calmness.
- Avoid a power struggle - this will only escalate the individual's anger.
- Avoid Responding to Anger with Anger:
- Address the feeling state of the individual and reflect this feeling back to the person.
Managing Your Own Anger:

- Attend to physical needs.
- Exercise (Take a break! Take a walk!).
- Breathe deeply, slowly, and fully. Shallow breathing is inefficient and results in retention of stale air and muscle tension. Taking several slow, deep, full breaths helps to relax muscles.
- Re-think the situation. Empathize rather than judge.
- Watch out for "shoulds" There is no reason why others should live up to our expectations.
- Talk it out with someone.
- Take a problem-solving approach.
- Find the humor in the situation.

Communicating Your Own Anger:

- Using "I" statements increase the likelihood that your message will be heard and helps to reduce defensiveness in the other person.
- Make statements that are descriptive rather than evaluative. By avoiding evaluative language the other person will not feel judged or attacked and will be more open to what you have to say.
- When communicating your grievance, be specific rather than general. Rather than calling a person pushy or controlling, it is more useful and helpful to your cause to say, "I feel my opinion in not respected when we are together."
- Avoid labeling the other person. For example, try not to say, "You're bad," or "You're so selfish," etc.
- Take into account the needs of both the receiver and giver of the feedback.
- Make direct statements toward behaviors the receiver can do something about. This helps in reducing frustration and facilitates change.
- If possible, feedback is generally most useful when spoken at the earliest opportunity after the given behavior.