



Adopt an anger thermostat...

Upset or angry feelings can be experienced as anything from displeasure to rage. Identifying the true level of emotional arousal means being able to more accurately describe and understand the feeling, avoid destructive reactions and take appropriate action.

How 'hot' is the anger?

Seltzer.L.PhD., describes using an 'anger thermostat' to rate angry feelings from 0-12 as follows: 0-calm 0.5-displeased 1-bothered 1.5-impatient 2-annoyed 2.5-frustrated 3-offended/provoked 3.5-peevisish 4-grouchy 4.5-vexed 5-disgruntled 5.5-provoked 6-resentful 6.5-cross 7-perturbed 7.5-fed up 8-indignant/insulted 8.5-agitated 9-belligerent 9.5-vengeful 10-inflamed 10.5-seething 11-enraged 11.5-fuming and 12-explosive. Stating, "You seem to be feeling impatient or exasperated" is much more likely to validate your own or another's feelings and encourage useful conversation and action than declaring, "You're always angry!" Using this technique can encourage emotional intelligence, build compassion and prevent the unhelpful practise of labelling yourself or others as an 'angry person'.

Call emotions what they really are for better control

The benefits to physical, mental and relationship health that results from validating emotions can't be overemphasised as there are clear links between poor emotional regulation and insomnia, high blood pressure, anxiety, depression and relationship breakdown. **Anger, in any one of its degrees, can be a reflexive response when an individual feels insecure, out of control or incapable of handling a situation.** Consider it from a toddler's perspective; because their emotional and physical skills are incomplete, they throw themselves down in helplessness when confronted with something that frustrates them. If they knew how to manage the situation more effectively, they wouldn't react this way. Adults have the advantage of realising that when they don't know how to manage a situation, they do have the ability to learn the skills needed to deal with it more effectively next time.

So what to do? If you find yourself feeling irritated, annoyed or even enraged, 1. **Identify the degree of upset** and call it what it really is 2. **Acknowledge that the feeling is real, give yourself a buffer** (count to 7, focus on your breathing, etc.) and identify the real issue 3. **Equip yourself** and your family with strategies (good books, blogs, advice from role models/professionals) for a more resilient future.

*Seltzer, Leon F PhD, "The Anger Thermostat: What's the Temperature of Your Upset?", Psychology Today <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/evolution-the-self/201401/the-anger-thermostat-whats-the-temperature-your-upset>

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- ✓ Identify feelings to break them down and make them more manageable
- ✓ Teach your family to use an anger thermostat to measure degrees of anger
- ✓ Respectful reactions result in self-respect and respect from others

"Don't promise when you're happy, don't reply when you're angry and don't decide when you're sad."

Ziad K. Abdelnour

Encouraging women to develop and enjoy dynamic family relationships is Laurie's special focus. With four children, a clinical practice and as the co-founder of Bare Hands, she understands many of the challenges of modern day families and has spent the last 30 years studying and practising strategies and skills that really make a difference.



Laurie Morrison Co-founder Bare Hands, Mother, B.HSc, Strategic Psychotherapist.

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Practical life strategies for women