

Anger Handout for Clinicians

For many clinicians the unprecedented conditions they are facing during the COVID pandemic are requiring a set of skills minute to minute that they had every reason to believe would be rarely necessary but now are routine requirements. One such skill is rapidly defusing an intensely angry feeling in order to serve patients with as much competence and compassion as they deserve. Here are a few suggestions that may be helpful.

Practice recognizing your personal ways of feeling anger. We all send ourselves cues when we are angry. Are your cues signals in your body, like a constriction in your throat? Are your cues remarks to others that are out of character? Are your cues slippage in standards of practice that wouldn't happen unless you were distracted by your anger?

Once you become aware of your anger, ask yourself whether you are in the right space and time to deal with it now. If yes, think about the who, what, when and where that would be most beneficial for the situation.

If not, PAUSE. PAUSE can have several parts.

1. Take 5 slow breaths in and out.
2. If there is nothing you can do now to be effective in changing the situation, think of a person to whom you will tell everything to when the time is right.
3. Imagine a beautiful box into which you place your anger, knowing you will take it out and process it at another time.

If possible, take a few minutes alone away from your situation, even if only for 5 minutes. Since self-regulation breaks are more and more necessary these days, on your own time, make a list of five activities that help you "cool off." These may be watching a funny video, looking at family photos, listening to a piece of music you love, or running up and down stairs three times. Make an easily accessible folder and place the names of your five "cooling off" activities in it so you don't have to think about what to do each time you need an anger break.

Last, and so important, offer yourself compassion.

- You are not alone; everyone is more easily irritated and triggered into anger at work than ever before.
- These times are unprecedented, and strong emotions are a natural response to the increase in workload, the emotional toil, and the long-term wear of the pandemic.
- Your work deserves gratitude and appreciation.
- Everyone makes mistakes. So be it. You have a community that wants to support you.

Learn more about Witness to Witness, access resources in English and Spanish, and sign up for an online webinar: <https://www.migrantclinician.org/witness-to-witness>

Kaethe Weingarten, Ph.D.

The Witness to Witness Program | <https://www.migrantclinician.org/witness-to-witness>