



COOL IT DOWN!

Angry? Let words work for you

Take charge of your anger and make good things happen.

When someone upsets you, do you get angry? Anger is not a “bad” emotion. Feelings like anger are your body’s way of telling you that something is not right for you. Anger gets you into action mode so that you can fight to protect yourself. That is a good thing. But, only when you take charge of your anger and use it in healthy ways.

Different actions are right for different situations...

SPEAK UP RIGHT AWAY

Sometimes, it is smart to say how angry you are immediately. When you are in danger of being harmed, don’t worry about being rude. If someone attacks you or does something else bad to you, a fierce “Stop it!” or “Go away!” might save you. Then, call for help and run to safety.

CHOOSE YOUR WORDS

At other times, you know that no one is trying to harm you. Yet, your anger tells you that something is not the way you want it to be. For instance, you may get angry when someone is rude to you, breaks your stuff or irritates you. In cases like these, think before saying anything. Choose your first words carefully as they set the tone of what follows.

Take, for example, what students Rudy and Gudwan said when their group member had forgotten to turn up for a project meeting.

Rudy: You always miss meetings! You never show up! I’m warning you... @*!#?€!!

Gudwan: I feel angry that you didn’t come today. I’d like us to talk about it. I need you to explain. What happened?

By lashing out, Rudy probably did more harm than good. When you get angry, don’t use foul words, put-downs and threats like Rudy did. Instead, maintain your dignity and be kind.

Avoid “**never**” and “**always**” because they are harsh and seldom true.

Take a few seconds to compose sentences like Gudwan's. Tell the person how you feel and why. Say what you need and how the person can help. Use simple, clear sentences like: **"I feel ___ that you ___."** and **"I need ___."**

Pick words that speak for you in an assertive way. Being assertive means speaking firmly while being respectful to yourself and others. And so, a firm and polite **"I would like ___"** is better than a rude **"I demand ___"** or **"I must have ___"**.

If you tend to speak like Rudy, then you are letting your anger rule you. Turn that around and be the boss of your own feelings and words.

TALK TO SOMEONE ELSE

Sometimes, there is no quick way to fix what has gone wrong. For example, when people get diseases like cancer or a loved one dies, it is natural to feel anger because life seems unfair. Talking may not change anything out there. But, putting your feelings into words can change what is going on inside you. So, share your feelings with friends and adults you trust.

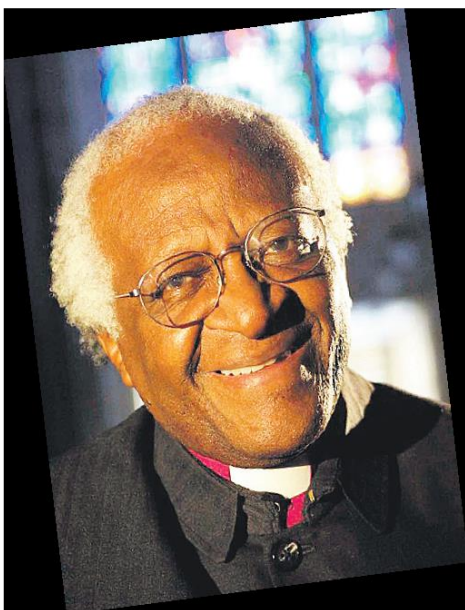
USE SELF TALK

"Self talk" is repeating messages to yourself. Self talk works. For a start, say these lines:

"It's healthy to feel my feelings. Getting angry is human. When I'm angry, my body is telling me something. To respond, I'll choose my words wisely."

Try writing down these self-talk messages on a little card, keep it in your pocket and read it whenever you need to. Once you get the hang of it, form your own soothing sentences.

NOBEL PEACE PRIZE WINNER DESMOND TUTU



In October 2011, South African religious leader Desmond Tutu celebrated his 80th birthday. It was a time for his many admirers to remember his contributions to world peace. He was a leader in his nation's freedom struggle. South Africans were abused by their government and had reason to be angry. However, Archbishop Tutu promoted change without violence. He told his people to cool it down. He knew that if you let anger go out of control, you won't just hurt others – you will hurt yourself in the end. "Let us not use methods in our struggle that we will later be ashamed of," he said. Archbishop Tutu was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984.

Activity

LET'S PLAY...

GET READY: Pair up with a friend or classmate. Make a list of five incidents that would make you angry. Describe each incident briefly.

Example: "Isha does not look where she is going because she is texting. She bumps into me, making me drop my 3-D model of a volcano. The model crashes to the floor. Parts break off. Isha doesn't bother to stop."

GET SET: Act out all five stories. But, give each one two different endings. For the first ending, talk like Rudy. For the second ending, talk like Gudwan.

GO! Pick one of your stories and perform it for your class or a group of friends. Select the one that both of you think is best for showing the power that first words can have. Remember to show them the two different endings.

THINK ABOUT IT. Did pretending to be Rudy and Gudwan help you in any way? If so, how? Whom can you confide in about your feelings? Are you willing to try self talk when you are upset? Share your responses to these questions with a friend.

Cool It Down! is a series about choosing words wisely when you speak. The series is brought to you by What's Up in partnership with the Speak Good English Movement of Singapore.

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