

“It’s the domino effect. I don’t mean to get mad. Little hassles stack up and, before I know it, I lose control. I say things I don’t mean, and then I feel so bad. I love my dad. I don’t want to be mean.”

Making Frustration Work For You

Caregiving can be a stressful and demanding role. Many people caring for a dependent adult become frustrated, resentful, or angry at one time or another. These feelings may be fleeting, or they may last for a while. Either way, these feelings can be disturbing for the caregiver.

Angry feelings are okay. Anger is a healthy, normal emotion triggered by an event. Our response to angry feelings determines whether anger becomes a positive or negative force.

An awareness of our first thoughts of frustration can warn us before frustration turns into anger and anger escalates.

Warning Thoughts and Feelings

- “She wanted to hurt me.”
- “She knows better.”
- “He doesn’t care about me.”
- “I am so tired.”
- “It always takes too long.”
- “No one cares if I do it all.”

My warning thoughts and feelings are:

Using anger constructively requires us to stop and calm ourselves during the first stages of anger.

Calming Techniques

- Looking at the situation another way.
- Remembering the good times.
- Participating in physical exercise.
- Calling a trusted friend who is a good listener.
- Making changes.

My calming techniques are:

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Losing control is sneaky. We may not even recognize anger in the first stages. And, before we know it, our feelings of anger have escalated and we say and do things we later regret.

Making Amends

- Show respect. Discuss the issue without blame or put-downs.
- Forgive yourself and others. Use the experience to learn, but don't hold on to the hurt. Forgiveness is a willful act of letting go.

Look for ways to prevent the anger-triggering event from happening again. What might have caused the anger? Can it be changed? How?

Checkpoints for Anger

I am going to make an effort to:

- _____ Recognize events that trigger my anger
- _____ Recognize thoughts that predict my anger
- _____ Try different calming techniques

For more information, read:

A Survival Guide for Family Caregivers by Jo Horne, CompCare Publications, 1991.

Angry All the Time by Ron Potter-Efron, New Harbinger Publications, Inc., 1994.

Coping with Your Difficult Older Parent by Grace Lebow and Barbara Kane with Irwin Lebow, William Morrow, 1999.

How to Care for Aging Parents-3rd Edition by Virginia Morris, Workman Publishing Company, 2014.

Keys to Survival for Caregivers by Mary K. Kouri, Barron's, 1992.

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Caregiving Relationships: For People Who Care for Adults

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