“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.”

My warning thoughts and feelings are:
__________________________________
__________________________________
__________________________________
__________________________________
__________________________________
__________________________________

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.”

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:
__________________________________
__________________________________
__________________________________
__________________________________
__________________________________
__________________________________
My calming techniques are:

_______________________________________
_______________________________________
_______________________________________
_______________________________________
_______________________________________

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:


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


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

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Caregiving Relationships: For People Who Care for Adults

University of Illinois Extension, College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

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