

Anger

Anger is a normal human emotion, but with ADHD, it can show up faster, louder, and more intensely than we expect. That doesn't make you "too much." It just means your brain reacts quickly, and with the right tools, you can regain control just as quickly.

Regulating strong emotions

Frustration

Frustration is one of the most common emotions in ADHD, particularly if you try to measure yourself by neurotypical standards. Your condition means that you can often find some everyday things more challenging than non-ADHD people do. Small frustrations can build up and can result in an emotional outburst that may not be understood by those around you and you might get labelled as an angry or volatile person. It's important to remember that your difficulty with regulating your emotions does not make you a bad person, it is part of having ADHD and you can develop strategies to help manage your condition.

Try to not let small stresses and frustrations build up until you can no longer contain your feelings. Take regular breaks for self regulation and talk to yourself kindly and compassionately as much as possible.

Try to recognise the early warning signs that you are getting emotionally dysregulated, such as

- Tight chest or clenched jaw
- Talking louder
- Feeling "stuck," overwhelmed, or misunderstood
- Thinking in all-or-nothing terms ("This is a disaster!")

Stress

Life with unmanaged ADHD can be stressful. Daily stresses accumulate; you lose your phone again, and now your boss is complaining about the deadline you missed. You're late for your bus and miss a doctor's appointment. You can find yourself frequently feeling overwhelmed, one more thing can tip you over the edge into an outburst.

Mood swings

Emotions can change quickly when you have ADHD. You may feel irritable, then happy, then sad, in a short space of time. You may also have Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria which means you can have strong reactions to comments and situations when you perceive the other person is judging or rejecting you and this can take a while to calm down from. Becoming aware of how ADHD affects you can help you stay positive to develop strategies to manage life and be kinder to yourself.

Impulsivity

If you feel angry it may come straight out in the moment and it can affect other people. This may have consequences that you don't want or intend so it's a good idea to learn some tools to help you manage your emotions.

Yes, someone might have driven straight in front of you, or someone looked at you in the street in a less than friendly way, but is it REALLY worth expressing your anger to them? It can often make situations a lot worse and you may regret it afterwards, as well as potentially having unwanted consequences such as losing your job, upsetting a partner, or getting involved with the police. It's estimated that around 1 in 4 people in prison have ADHD.

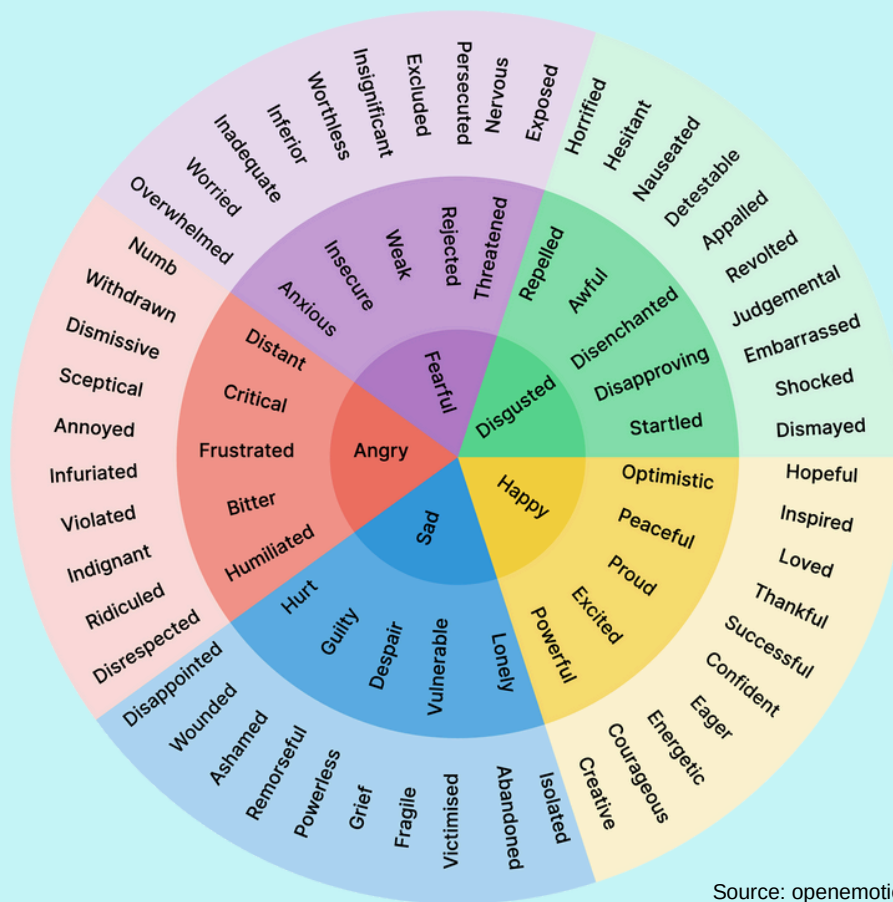
Compassion

Feeling angry and even losing your temper does not make you a terrible person. Although it can make you feel embarrassed or ashamed, try not to dwell on these feelings. Try to remember that this is a common part of having ADHD, and there are tools and techniques you can learn to help you manage your emotions in a way that you can be proud of. Rather, accept that anger is normal. Sometimes anger can be helpful. If it motivates you to take positive action to change a situation for the better, for example. Reach out for support from a trusted friend, family member or your GP if anger is becoming a problem in your relationships with others or getting you into trouble, but there are lots of things you can do to take control of your emotions.



What Can Help?

Identify and Understand Your Emotions - An Emotion Wheel can help you learn about more subtle emotions. This might help you to understand why they have been triggered and can prevent things from escalating so quickly.



Source: openemotionwheel.com

Relaxation - Try some of these fast ideas to interrupt emotional spirals:

- Do a body check, notice where you are feeling this emotion in your body.
- Lower your shoulders, unclench your jaw, hum and rub behind your ears for 30 seconds or shake your body to let the feeling move through you.
- Do two short inhalations through your nose and one long exhale through your mouth.
- Splash your face with cold water or eat a sour sweet.
- Say out loud, "Pause." Your brain listens!
- Press your feet firmly into the floor and inhale for 4 seconds, exhale for 6

All of these things can help the process of regulating your emotions when you feel triggered and help you feel more grounded.

Exercise - a brisk walk, a few stretches or star jumps or doing a few press-ups against a wall can help us feel calmer very quickly. Regular exercise is a great tool in helping long term sustainable emotional regulation. Yoga and resistance training can be very helpful for people with ADHD.

Balanced Lifestyle - Try to eat regular healthy meals and keep your blood sugar steady. It's easy to forget to eat and drink regularly so carrying a healthy snack and a drink with you is a good habit to get into. Try not to drink alcohol excessively or eat too many sugary foods as they can affect mood and regulation.

Keeping a mood diary - It can be very helpful to keep a mood diary to help you understand your triggers and any mood patterns that might recur. There are many mood tracker apps available or you can write your moods down in your journal.

Self Talk - Look at how you talk to yourself, are you kind or judgmental? Be your own best friend. Do you care too much what other people think of you or are you calm and confident? Do you hear voices of people from your past telling you you're wrong, a bad person or not good enough? Try to replace negative self talk with more positive affirmations such as:

- 'I'm a work in progress'
- 'Everyone makes mistakes, I will learn from mine'
- 'I'm learning new tools to be the best version of me that I can be'
- 'My peace is important to me, I value and protect it'.

Calming activities - Establish a range of activities that you like to do to relax, such as listening to nice music, playing a game, doing a puzzle, taking a walk with a friend, swimming, exercising or creative hobbies. Write them down on your phone so you have them to hand whenever you need reminders.

Leaving The Situation - Be assertive in choosing to leave situations that are triggering for you. If you're at work or in an educational setting, talk to a boss or teacher before leaving. Walk away from people that are making you feel angry and use some of your emotional regulation tools.

- Say "I need a minute - I'll come back shortly."
- Walk to another room
- Set a 5-minute timer to breathe or stretch

Professional Help - Speak to your GP about getting help with anger management. It's ok to recognise that you can't do it all alone and it can be helpful to meet other people who have similar difficulties to you, so you don't feel alone.

Reflecting After The Situation - Take some time after a difficult situation to reflect on what happened and how you responded and write it down in your mood diary. Try to think of what triggered you and why and consider other actions you will take next time something similar comes up.

Create a calm foundation

Try to keep your background level of stress down. If you are already tense and irritable when you walk into a difficult situation you are more likely to take things badly, have strong reactions and lose your temper.

Learn to relax throughout your day and practise relaxation techniques before difficult situations. Exercise also helps release energy in a safe, controlled way. Try to make it part of your daily routine. Yoga and the gym are especially good exercises as they can help you to learn to control and channel your emotions whilst strengthening the connection between your mind and body.

ADHD-related anger isn't a character flaw - it's part of a neurodevelopmental condition. You're learning new skills, and that takes practice. Try not to get discouraged.

Celebrate every small win, even when it's just noticing your triggers or walking away for 30 seconds. Taking positive steps towards emotional regulation takes time but it is achievable.