

# Teenage Anger

Teen anger takes many forms. It may be expressed as indignation and resentment, or rage and fury. It is the expression of teenage anger — the behavior — that we see. Some teens may repress their anger and withdraw; others may be more defiant and destroy property. They will continue their behavior, or it may escalate, until they decide to look within themselves to the roots of their anger. But teenage anger is a feeling, an emotion, not a behavior. And anger is usually caused by something going on in a teen's life.

Teen anger can be a frightening emotion, but it is not inherently harmful. Its negative expressions can include physical and verbal violence, prejudice, malicious gossip, antisocial behavior, sarcasm, addictions, withdrawal, and psychosomatic disorders. These negative expressions of teenage anger can devastate lives, destroying relationships, harming others, disrupting work, clouding effective thinking, affecting physical health, and ruining futures.

But there is a positive aspect to such expression, as it can show others that a problem exists. Teenage anger is usually a secondary emotion brought on by fear. It can motivate us to resolve those things that are not working in our lives and help us face our issues and deal with the underlying reasons for the anger, specifically things such as:

- Abuse
- [Depression](#)
- [Anxiety](#)
- Grief
- Alcohol or substance abuse
- [Trauma](#)

Teenagers face a lot of emotional issues during this period of development. They're faced with questions of identity, separation, relationships, and purpose. The relationship between teens and their parents is also changing as teens become more and more independent. Parents often have a difficult time dealing with their teen's newfound independence.

This can bring about frustration and confusion that can lead to anger and a pattern of reactive behavior for both parents and teens. That is, teens are simply negatively reacting to their parent's behaviors, and parents react back in an equally negative manner. This sets up a self-reinforcing pattern of interaction. Unless we work to change our own behavior, we cannot help another change theirs. We need to respond rather than react to each other and to situations. The intention is not to deny the anger, but to control that emotion and find a way to express it in a productive or at least, a less harmful, manner.

Teenagers dealing with anger can ask these questions of themselves to help bring about greater self-awareness:

- Where does this anger come from?
- What situations bring out this feeling of anger?
- Do my thoughts begin with absolutes such as "must," "should," "never?"
- Are my expectations unreasonable?
- What unresolved conflict am I facing?
- Am I reacting to hurt, loss, or fear?

- Am I aware of anger's physical signals (e.g., clenching fists, shortness of breath, sweating)?
- How do I choose to express my anger?
- To whom or what is my anger directed?
- Am I using anger as a way to isolate myself, or as a way to intimidate others?
- Am I communicating effectively?
- Am I focusing on what has been done to me rather than what I can do?
- How am I accountable for what I'm feeling?
- How am I accountable for how my anger shows up?
- Do my emotions control me, or do I control my emotions?

So what can teens and parents do? Listen to your teen and focus on feelings. Try to understand the situation from his or her perspective. Blaming and accusing only builds up more walls and ends all communication. Tell them how you feel, stick to facts, and deal with the present moment. Show that you care and show your love. Work toward a solution where everyone gets something, and therefore feels okay about the resolution. Remember that anger is the feeling and behavior is the choice.