Understand Your Anger Cycle

Standard CBT worksheet | Guide and example

Who this is for

For adults who want to understand what happens before, during and after anger.

What this helps with

Notice early signals; explore the meaning you gave the situation; choose one point to respond differently.

Why this can help

Mapping one event can help you see links between what happened, your interpretation and your response. It can also show practical pressures that need attention.

How to use this worksheet

1. Choose one recent, manageable example. Complete this when you feel settled enough to reflect.

2. Write what happened separately from what you thought it meant. Note your feelings, body signals and urges.

3. Record what you did and its effects. Choose one helpful change, then review it after a similar situation.

Guided example - fictional

Situation: A colleague asked for an update while I was completing a form.

Thought and feeling: "They think I am too slow." Angry and embarrassed.

Body and urge: Tight jaw; urge to answer sharply.

Action and effect: I snapped. We both became defensive and the form stayed unfinished.

Possible change: Save my place and say, "I can update you in five minutes."

Optional next step: Rehearse your chosen response at a calmer time.

Original educational tool informed by NHS anger advice and NICE ADHD guidance.
Sources: nhs.uk (Get help with anger); nice.org.uk/guidance/ng87. Checked 6 Nov 2026.

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Understand Your Anger Cycle

Standard CBT worksheet | Your turn

Use one event or practice attempt. A few words are enough; leave out identifying details.

What happened? Stick to observable details.

What went through your mind? What did it mean to you?

What feelings and body signals did you notice?

What did you feel like doing? What did you actually do?

What happened afterwards, for you and anyone else?

Where could you try a different response or practical change?

Reflect and choose your next step

Which early signal would be useful to notice next time?

What could make the different response easier?

What will you try, and when will you review it?

Choose a format that suits you. ADHD does not mean someone is always angry. These adaptations support access to skills; responsibility for actions still matters. If this feels too much or anger is causing harm, speak with your GP or therapist. If anyone is in immediate danger, call 999.

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What Was Building Up?

ADHD-adapted anger triggers worksheet | Guide and example

Who this is for

For adults who prefer a short record with choices and brief prompts. A diagnosis is not required.

What this helps with

Spot a pressure; notice one early signal; choose one useful adjustment.

Why this can help

A brief record can reduce the amount you need to hold in mind. Looking at the setting as well as your response may reveal a change you can make.

How to use this worksheet

1. Pick one event. Use this once you feel calmer; a few words are enough.
2. On page 2, tick any pressures that fit. These are possibilities, not explanations to assume.
3. Add one early signal and one next step. Review after your next practice attempt.

Guided example - fictional

What happened?: I was interrupted while trying to finish a form.

What added to it?: Noise, losing my place and feeling rushed.

My first signal: Tight jaw.

What I did / effect: Snapped; the conversation became tense.

One change: Turn the television off and mark my place before answering.

Optional next step: Keep your cue or script somewhere easy to find.

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What Was Building Up?

ADHD-adapted anger triggers worksheet | Your turn

Use one event or practice attempt. A few words are enough; leave out identifying details.

What might have added to it? Tick any that fit.

- ☐ Interruptions
- ☐ Noise / distractions
- ☐ Task frustration
- ☐ Time pressure
- ☐ Too many instructions
- ☐ Unexpected change
- ☐ Tiredness / hunger
- ☐ Feeling criticised
- ☐ Something else

What happened? A few words are enough.

My first body signal, feeling or urge:

What I did, and what happened next:

One thing I could change or ask for:

Reflect and choose your next step

The earliest signal I want to catch is...

A reminder or support that might help is...

My next small try, and when I will check back:

Choose a format that suits you. ADHD does not mean someone is always angry. These adaptations support access to skills; responsibility for actions still matters. If this feels too much or anger is causing harm, speak with your GP or therapist. If anyone is in immediate danger, call 999.

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My Pause and Return Plan

Standard anger-management worksheet | Guide and example

Who this is for

For adults planning how to take an agreed break before a conversation escalates.

What this helps with

Recognise when to pause; communicate the break; make a clear plan to check back.

Why this can help

A planned pause can create space to choose your next action. Including a return plan helps keep the original concern from being lost or avoided.

How to use this worksheet

1. Plan this at a calm time. Where appropriate, discuss it with the person involved.

2. Choose warning signs, a brief phrase, somewhere safe to pause and an activity that helps you settle.

3. Agree how and when to check back. If you need longer, communicate a revised plan where safe. Review after use.

Guided example - fictional

My signs: Voice getting louder; repeatedly making the same point.

My phrase: "I want to sort this out. I need a break so I can speak clearly."

During the break: Go to a quiet room and let my breathing settle. Avoid sending angry messages.

Check-back plan: "I will check back at 7.30." If still too wound up, explain and agree another time.

Return focus: Discuss one issue and make one specific request.

Optional next step: Rehearse your chosen response at a calmer time.

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My Pause and Return Plan

Standard anger-management worksheet | Your turn

Use one event or practice attempt. A few words are enough; leave out identifying details.

My early signs that a pause would help:

The phrase I will use to explain the pause:

Where I can pause safely and what I will do:

How and when I will check back:

If more time is needed, my revised-plan phrase:

When we return, the one concern I want to discuss:

Reflect and choose your next step

Did the pause support a safer, clearer response?

What helped or got in the way of checking back?

What will I change before the next conversation?

Use a pause to support safety, not to punish or control. Do not force a conversation if anyone feels unsafe. Threats, violence or intimidation need specialist support. If this feels too much or anger is causing harm, speak with your GP or therapist. If anyone is in immediate danger, call 999.

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Pause, Reset, Check Back

ADHD-adapted pause plan | Guide and example

Who this is for

For adults who find a short phrase, visible cue or reminder easier to use.

What this helps with

Choose a cue; rehearse one phrase; remember to check back.

Why this can help

Putting the plan where you can see it reduces reliance on memory. A chosen reminder can support returning to the issue without forcing an unsafe restart.

How to use this worksheet

1. Make this plan when calm. Choose one cue and one reset activity, then rehearse the phrase.

2. Set a reminder if it helps. A reminder means "check whether we can talk", not "restart whatever happens".

3. After trying it, use the review prompts. Change any cue or reminder that adds pressure.

Guided example - fictional

Cue: A small "PAUSE" card beside my screen.

Phrase: "I need a break. I will check back with you at 7.30."

Reset: Move to a quieter room and stretch gently.

Reminder: One phone alarm labelled "Check back calmly".

If I need longer: "I am still too wound up. Can we check again at 8?"

Optional next step: Keep your cue or script somewhere easy to find.

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Pause, Reset, Check Back

ADHD-adapted pause plan | Your turn

Use one event or practice attempt. A few words are enough; leave out identifying details.

My visible cue, and where I will put it:

My short pause phrase:

One safe place / reset activity:

My check-back time, and chosen reminder:

If I need longer, I can say:

The one issue to return to:

Reflect and choose your next step

Was the cue easy to notice?

Did the reminder help me check back?

One change to try next time:

Use a pause to support safety, not to punish or control. Do not force a conversation if anyone feels unsafe. Threats, violence or intimidation need specialist support. If this feels too much or anger is causing harm, speak with your GP or therapist. If anyone is in immediate danger, call 999.

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Say What Matters

Standard assertive communication worksheet | Guide and example

Who this is for

For adults who want to express a concern clearly and respectfully once calmer.

What this helps with

Describe the event; explain its impact; make a specific request.

Why this can help

Separating the event from an assumption can make your concern clearer. A practical request gives the other person something concrete to respond to.

How to use this worksheet

1. Choose one concern and a suitable time. If the situation is unsafe, prioritise support rather than this conversation.

2. Describe what happened without guessing motives. Name the impact and what would help.

3. Rehearse or write your request. Listen to the response, clarify what is agreed and review what happens.

Guided example - fictional

What happened: The meeting time changed without a message.

Impact / need: I felt frustrated and had to rearrange work. I need earlier notice.

Clear request: "Could you message me as soon as you know the time may change?"

Agreement: They will send a brief message, even before the new time is confirmed.

Repair, if needed: "I raised my voice. I am sorry. I will explain my concern without shouting."

Optional next step: Rehearse your chosen response at a calmer time.

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Say What Matters

Standard assertive communication worksheet | Your turn

Use one event or practice attempt. A few words are enough; leave out identifying details.

What happened? Describe the event, without guessing motives.

How did it affect you? What matters here?

What specific, realistic request would help?

My words: put the concern and request together.

What was agreed? Include who will do what, and when.

If I acted hurtfully, what responsibility or repair is needed?

Reflect and choose your next step

Was my concern clear and my behaviour respectful?

What did I learn from the response?

What follow-up or different approach is needed?

A clear request cannot guarantee a response. You do not have to confront someone who frightens or controls you. Seek support; their behaviour is not your responsibility. If this feels too much or anger is causing harm, speak with your GP or therapist. If anyone is in immediate danger, call 999.

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My Three-Line Conversation Script

ADHD-adapted communication worksheet | Guide and example

Who this is for

For adults who prefer a short script and a written record of the next step.

What this helps with

Keep to one concern; prepare three short lines; record the agreement.

Why this can help

Preparing a brief script can reduce the effort of finding words in the moment. A written next step supports memory and follow-through.

How to use this worksheet

1. Use when settled enough to talk. Choose one concern and write just a sentence for each of the three lines.

2. Read it aloud, use it as a prompt or send a message if that is appropriate and safe.

3. Record the agreement or the next step. Review whether the script helped you express what mattered.

Guided example - fictional

1. What happened: "The meeting time changed without a message."
2. How it affected me: "I felt frustrated and had to rearrange my work."
3. What I am asking for: "Please message me as soon as you know the time may change."

Agreement / reminder: A brief message before changes; check at our next planning meeting.

Repair, if needed: "I shouted. I am sorry. I will explain this without shouting."

Optional next step: Keep your cue or script somewhere easy to find.

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My Three-Line Conversation Script

ADHD-adapted communication worksheet | Your turn

Use one event or practice attempt. A few words are enough; leave out identifying details.

1. What happened...

2. How it affected me...

3. What I am asking for...

Our agreement or next step: who, what and when?

A useful reminder, if I want one:

If I caused hurt, my repair action:

Reflect and choose your next step

Did three lines help me stay with one concern?

What would make this easier to use?

One follow-up or small change:

A clear request cannot guarantee a response. You do not have to confront someone who frightens or controls you. Seek support; their behaviour is not your responsibility. If this feels too much or anger is causing harm, speak with your GP or therapist. If anyone is in immediate danger, call 999.

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