

The man who came to LifeWorks Foundation in Dubai was very angry. He was infuriated about his job. This escalated when his manager criticised his work. Dr Kirin Hilliar, Psychologist at LifeWorks Foundation, Dubai, tells 999, “We identified that he had a sense of worthlessness, as his father would always criticise him, such that he felt like his efforts never seemed enough. When his manager criticised him, he’d feel like a child again, being berated by his father. His anger was even stronger when his manager criticised him in front of others, making him feel humiliated before his colleagues.”

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In 2017, YouGov and jobs portal Bayt.com revealed results of a survey, in which 51 per cent of respondents said that work-related issues were their top stressor

How anger management works



When you look in the mirror, do you see the WhatsApp ‘angry face’ emoji – with the frown and severely downturned mouth? If you do, please breathe in, breathe out 10-100 times and read on.

Don’t let it be extreme

Anger is one of our most powerful and primal emotions. Quite often, it’s good for spurring one into action. But extreme and blind anger – the sort that makes people lash out at anything in front of them, or makes them bottle it up inside and fall sick – is similar to a disease.

The Roman philosopher Lucius Annaeus Seneca termed it a mental illness which he described as the most self-destructive of all vices. Anger, when it becomes rage, has the emotional quotient of a volcano that makes it hard for humans to control. A few years ago, the Mental Health Foundation in the UK, carried out a study, titled the “Boiling Point”, which showed that 28 per cent of adults were worried about how angry they sometimes feel, while 32 per cent had a friend or relative with problems dealing with anger.

Stress is one of the factors fuelling anger and new gadgets and mod cons do little to keep stress levels to a minimum.

Natural response

In the UAE, the steady rise in stress levels of its population is a cause for alarm. In 2017, YouGov and jobs portal



Anger can range from irritation or annoyance to intense rage or fury



DR OTTILIA BROWN

Clinical Psychologist, The LightHouse Arabia, Dubai

Bayt.com revealed results of a survey, in which 51 per cent of respondents said that work-related issues were their top stressor, while 38 per cent attributed stress to their inability to maintain a good work-life balance. The study involved 3,747 respondents in the UAE, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia.

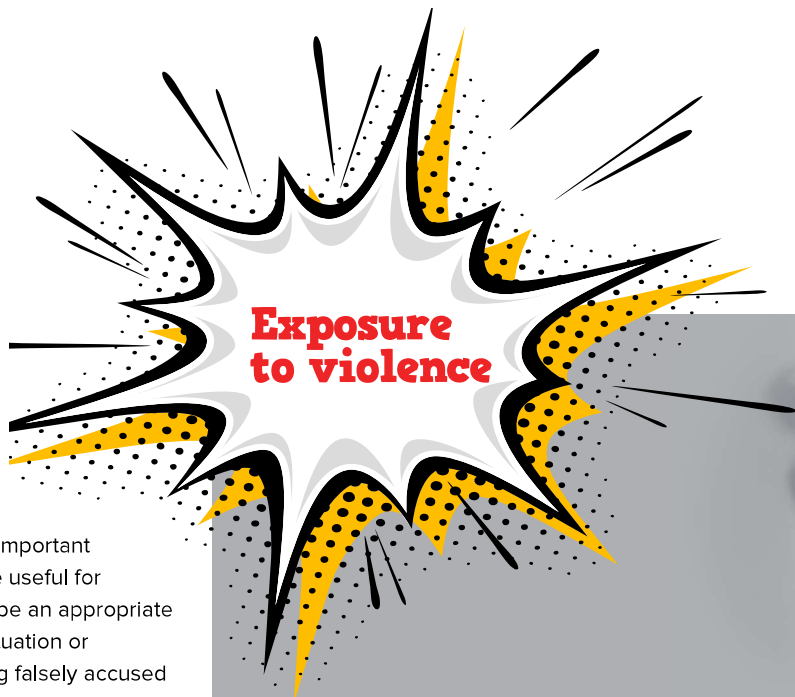
Talking to 999, Dr Ottilia Brown, Clinical Psychologist, The LightHouse Arabia, Dubai, explains the degrees and types of anger: “Anger is a normal emotional state, which can range from irritation or annoyance to intense rage or fury. Anger

Dr Kirin Hilliar, psychologist based in Dubai, tells 999, “I’ve worked with clients with anger management issues across a range of contexts, including in community practice, hospital settings, and in prison. While each person has his own unique circumstances, the methodology follows the same general pattern.

“First, we explore with the client the situations that prompt them to get angry, and how they express their anger. This way, we can identify their triggers, early warning signs that they’re getting angry, and other emotions and thoughts that tend to accompany and feed the anger.

“Second, we examine whether their interpretations of situations – triggers that get them angry – are valid and can help them analyse the situation.

“Third, we look at how they express their anger, and ways they can do this more assertively and appropriately. Because no matter what the situation, violence (whether that be throwing things, hitting someone, yelling, or name-calling) is never acceptable.”



is often a natural response to threats as it can fuel the ability to fight off an attack or help us to assert ourselves when something gets in the way of achieving an important goal. It can, therefore, be useful for survival. Anger can also be an appropriate response to a specific situation or interaction, such as being falsely accused of stealing something. Anger is, therefore, a healthy human emotion.”

The way anger is expressed also causes personal and legal problems. “When anger is expressed aggressively, which can include verbally and physically attacking another individual, anger becomes unhealthy. Anger is also unhealthy when the individual represses it, i.e. they do not express their anger. Repressing anger could result in several problems, such as depression, blowing up about something insignificant, developing a sarcastic sense of humour, getting back at people in a passive-aggressive manner, and criticising others unnecessarily,” she says.

Coping mechanism

Dr Hilliar says, “Anger is often a secondary emotion – people use it to try

Exposure to violence

Dr Ottilia Brown, Clinical Psychologist, tells 999, “On a larger scale, the 20th century was the most violent in human existence. Every time we access any news source, we’re exposed to this level of anger and violence. Furthermore, there’s an increase in exposure to violent media both fictional (e.g. gaming, violent movies) and non-fictional (e.g. videos of violence recorded on mobile phones and uploaded onto the Internet).

“As we move towards an increased emphasis on human rights, people are increasingly marginalised and social inequalities are more pronounced. Inequality breeds anger and unhappiness. Examples of social inequalities include discrimination based on race, ethnicity, religion, or gender, such as when women are paid

less than men for the same work, or when someone is stopped at the airport and searched more vigorously because of his/her religious affiliation.

“There’s also an increase in violence in arenas that were previously punctuated by decorum, such as parliaments in some countries. It’s not uncommon to see media material of politicians expressing anger in an aggressive and sometimes violent manner.

“Individuals’ expectations of what they can get from society and a sense of entitlement, including an expectation of perfection in service delivery, has increased. People are now feeling that they can demand whatever they want and that they have the right to openly express anger if their demands are not met on the spot, e.g. waiting at a doctor’s office, traffic signals,” Brown explains.



People turn to anger because they want to re-assert power and control in situations where they feel powerless



DR KIRIN HILLIAR
Psychologist

to distract themselves or cope with other emotions. For some, anger is born from feeling scared; for others, it stems from feeling unloved, hurt, victimised, jealous, disrespected, lonely, or humiliated.”

“People turn to anger because they want to re-assert power and control in situations where they feel powerless. A wife may get angry with her husband when she believes he has betrayed her trust. An employee may get angry with his boss when he feels an unfair decision has been made and he has no course of action. Thus, the situations that can trigger anger will vary a lot for different people, depending on their personality,

temperament, experience, history, and expectations about themselves, others, and the world,” Hilliar says.

For the man who once sought her help for anger management problems, Dr Hilliar worked on building his sense of self-worth, and re-evaluating his confrontations with his manager. Together, they re-interpreted what his manager said (and how he said it) so that it did not feel so critical. The psychologist says, “We also worked on his emotion management skills, so he could recognise his early warning signs of anger and reduce his anger levels. We worked on his assertiveness skills, so he

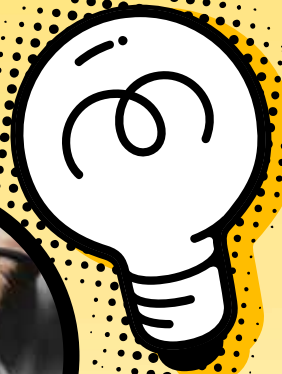
All these angry people

HERE ARE A FEW INSTANCES WHEN ANGER GOT THE BEST OF THEM:



1 In February this year, a man appeared at the criminal court in Ras Al Khaimah for insulting and assaulting an execution judge of the RAK family court.

The defendant, SS, was accused of swearing at the judge, damaging property in his office, using violence, resisting and insulting the security officers, and escaping from the court. The same judge had previously filed a lawsuit against SS, accusing him of insulting him during a family dispute between the accused and his ex-wife. He was then given a jail term, later reduced to a fine. For his latest offence, SS is facing seven charges for assaulting the judge.



2 A technical snag had delayed a flight in Dubai in July 2017 and passengers had to wait for four hours on board. After that, they were asked to disembark and were offered a hotel stay. While exiting Dubai International Airport, one 53-year-old passenger, travelling from London to Sydney via Dubai, was irked when he was asked to get his bags scanned, which is the usual practice in airports. The airport police were called in. The passenger still refused and shouted at an officer that he had been on a long flight. The customs officials asked the police to handcuff the man, which led to him turning violent. The policeman he assaulted suffered injuries to his knee and ankle. In January this year, Dubai's Criminal Court sentenced him to six months in prison to be followed by deportation.



3 A 35-year-old construction worker was sentenced to three months in jail in February this year, followed by deportation, for attacking his boss with a stick. He got angry after his supervisor deducted three days' worth of salary from his pay cheque. According to his boss, the worker had run away from the site without taking permission, which prompted him to file a report against him. The worker told public prosecution that he had tried to ask permission, but was denied it, and went home, anyway. Two days later, after the worker found out his salary had been deducted, he attacked the manager.

4 A hairdresser was left with permanent disability in one eye after an argument with his colleague over a pair of sunglasses turned violent. In February this year, the Dubai Criminal Court was told that the accused, a 38-year-old security guard in a hotel, had punched the victim in the face, causing 25 per cent permanent damage to his left eye and fracturing his nose. "We argued whether [the sunglasses] belonged to another colleague at the hotel or not, then suddenly he punched me in the face and tried to choke me," said the complainant.



6 An argument turned ugly at a beauty salon in Abu Dhabi, resulting to one worker hitting another in the face with a phone charger. The victim suffered deformity on the face as a result of the wound. According to official court documents, the defendant saw her colleague asleep on a chair at the said salon. She woke her up and told her that there were customers to attend to. The victim said that she was tired as she had spent the entire day working. The victim's sister, who worked at the same salon, took her sister's side and matters quickly went south. After being sentenced to three years in jail and handed a fine of Dh10,000 by the Abu Dhabi Criminal Court of First Instance in February this year, the defendant has decided to submit an appeal. She maintains that she was acting in self-defence as the two sisters had wanted to assault her.

5 Just last January, a 29-year-old man was fined Dh500,000 for assaulting two sisters in the workplace. A police corporal told the court that the man had claimed, during questioning, that he had spotted the sisters fighting with a female clubber and had intervened to stop the fight. "He claimed that, when the sisters cursed him, he attacked them back and then asked the security to kick them out," said the corporal. One of the sisters said, "He rushed from the back and hit me... he tried to beat me again when I pushed him away. Then we reported the matter to the police."

