



Five Ways to Stop the Spiral of Anger

1. **TIME OUT!** Time-out is a very effective technique for breaking the sequence of behavior that leads to a blowup. It works best if it is discussed ahead of time and both people agree to use it. Here is how it works:

***Either person in the interaction can initiate a time-out. One person makes the time-out gesture like a referee in a football game: Just make a “T” sign with your hands. The other person is obligated to return the gesture and stop talking. This technique does not involve making any further statement, such as “I am getting upset”. The only thing that might be said is “Time-Out”. The T-sign is a signal that it is best to separate for a while to cool off; an hour works best. It is important to return after cooling off and discuss the topic at hand.

2. **Make a Time-Out Contract.** To emphasize your commitment to changing your anger behavior, you and your partner may even decide to write and sign a contract outlining the details of your time-out agreement. This is especially helpful if anger has become a significant threat to the relationship.

3. **Check it Out.** If anger is a response to personal pain, it makes sense to ask the other person, “What’s hurting?”

4. **Positive Statements.** It may be helpful to memorize a few positive statements to say to yourself when your anger is being triggered. These statements can remind you that you can choose your behavior instead of reacting in a knee-jerk manner. For example:
 - a. “I can take care of my own needs”
 - b. “His needs are just as important as mine”
 - c. “I am able to make good choices”

5. **Be prepared with a Memorized Response.** Here are a few statements and questions that will help deescalate anger:
 - d. What’s bothering me is....
 - e. And what I think I’d like is....
 - f. What would you suggest we do about this?
 - g. If this continues like this, I’ll have to do X to take care of myself.
 - h. What do you need now?
 - i. So what you want is....
 - j. So what is bothering you is...
 - k. It feels like we’re getting angry about this. I want to stop and cool down for a minute.