

Handling Anger

Anger can be a difficult emotion to deal with, often because it feels very personal. Although it may feel counter-intuitive, it is important to **encourage** the verbal expression of anger. It is through ventilation that the anger can be released and the underlying emotions accessed and then responded to.

The following steps can help

1. Firstly it is very important to **acknowledge** the anger. Be careful not to minimise it or change the intensity.
 - ◆ *"You sound very angry."*
2. Ask about the anger; i.e. invite the person to tell you why they are angry, what they are angry about
 - ◆ *"Could you tell me what it is that is making you angry?"*
3. DO NOT try to respond to the reasons, but simply acknowledge them in a non-judgemental and non defensive manner. Empathise with the person's predicament if appropriate.
 - ◆ *"I can see you are really angry about the delay in your treatment; it must be very difficult having to wait all this time"*
- 4: Do not assume that there is only one reason. Encourage the person to give ALL their reasons for being angry.
 - ◆ *"Before I explain what has happened today; can I just check?... Is there anything else about the situation that is making you angry?"*
5. As the person talks about the reasons they are angry, look for 'transition' i.e. a time when anger subsides and other feelings become prominent. These may be feeling like distress, sadness, loss, or guilt.
- 6: Once other emotions are present ... explore these
7. If there is no transition, there may be other issues relating to the anger which the patient has not revealed. The anger might also be the result of unrelated issues.
8. Invite the person to reflect on this...
 - ◆ *"As we are talking you still sound as if you are still quite angry, could there be something else we haven't talked about that is making you angry?"*

...and explore.