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- Pracademic
- PhD in law / conflict management
- 25 years experience as a practitioner (mediator and coach)
- 25 years as an educator (university and private training)
- Founder of the REAL Conflict Coaching System

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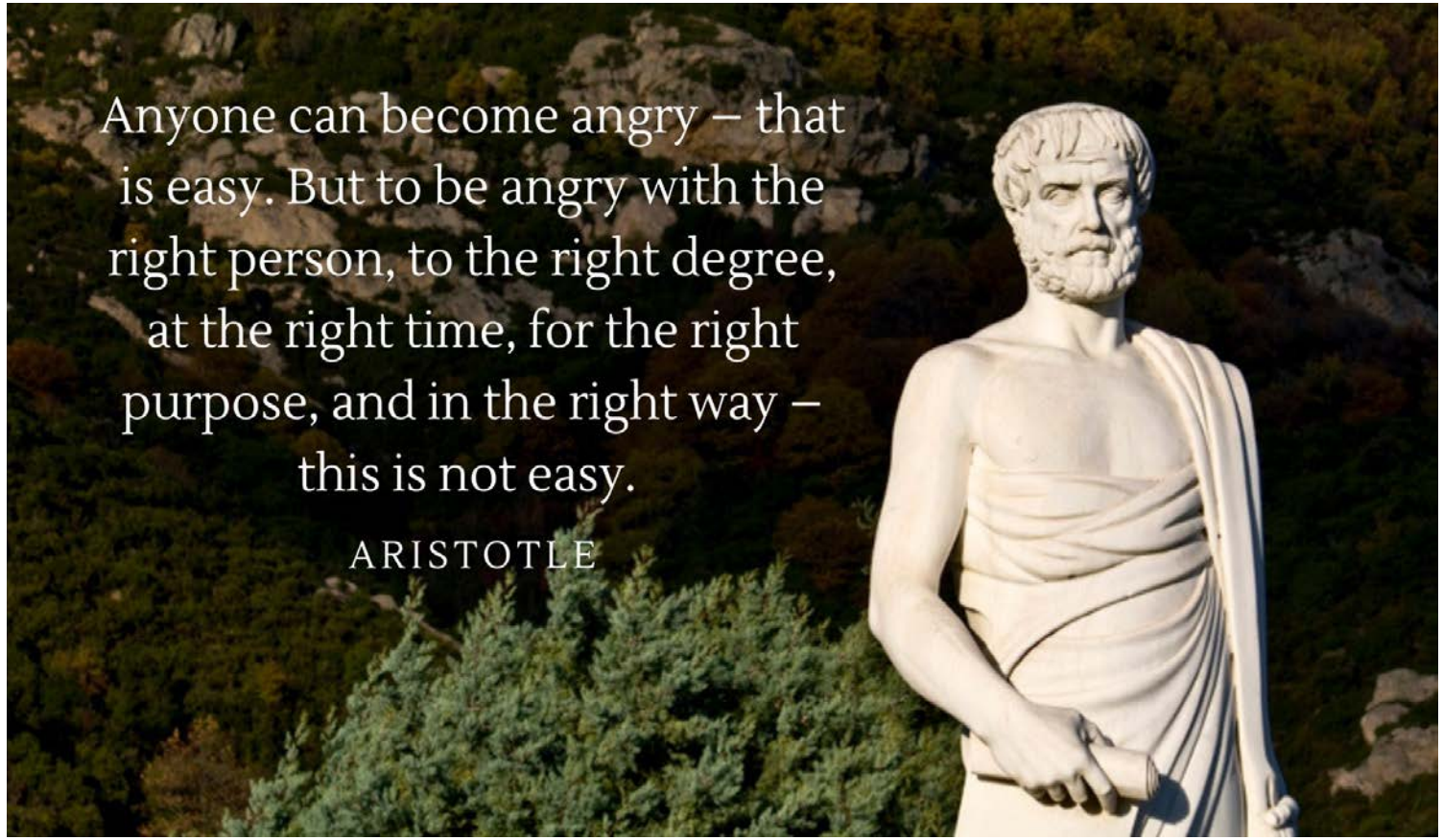

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Anger evolved specifically for its use in conflict!

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Anger can cause conflict.

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Anger can be a response to conflict.

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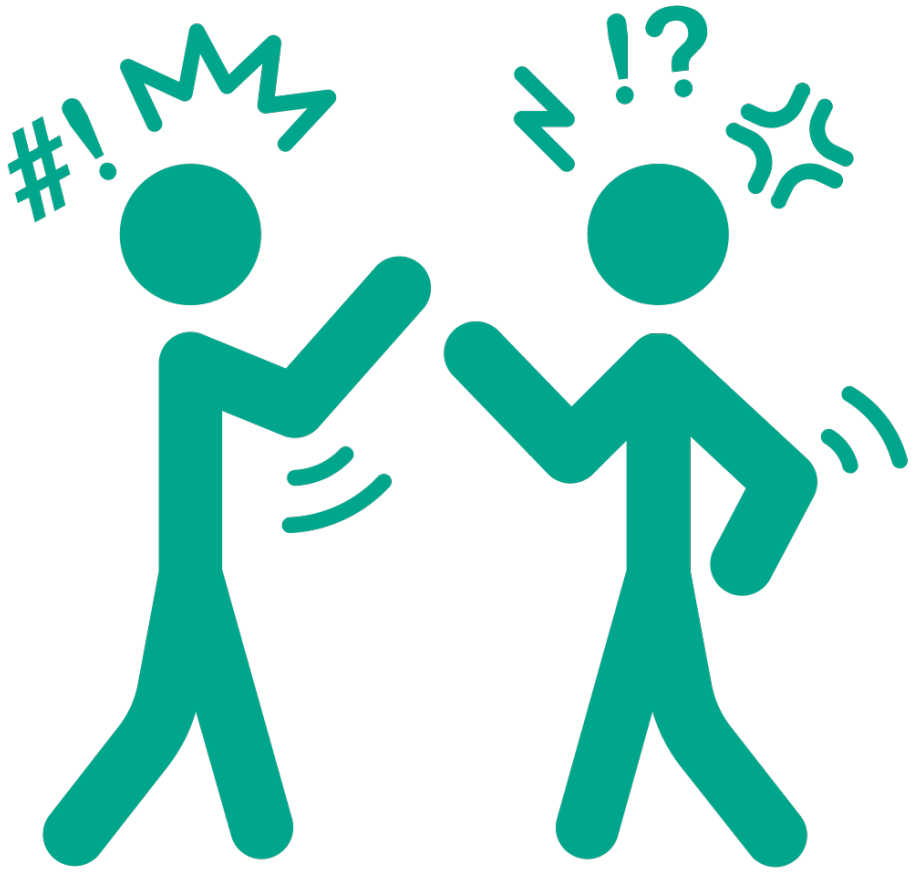

Anger can affect how conflict is managed.

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Anger can affect whether and how conflict is resolved.

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I'm wondering what you think is the most challenging emotion to work with in conflict situations?

You can see how people vote. Learn more

anger	43%
shame / guilt	25%
sadness / grief	7%
fear / anxiety	25%

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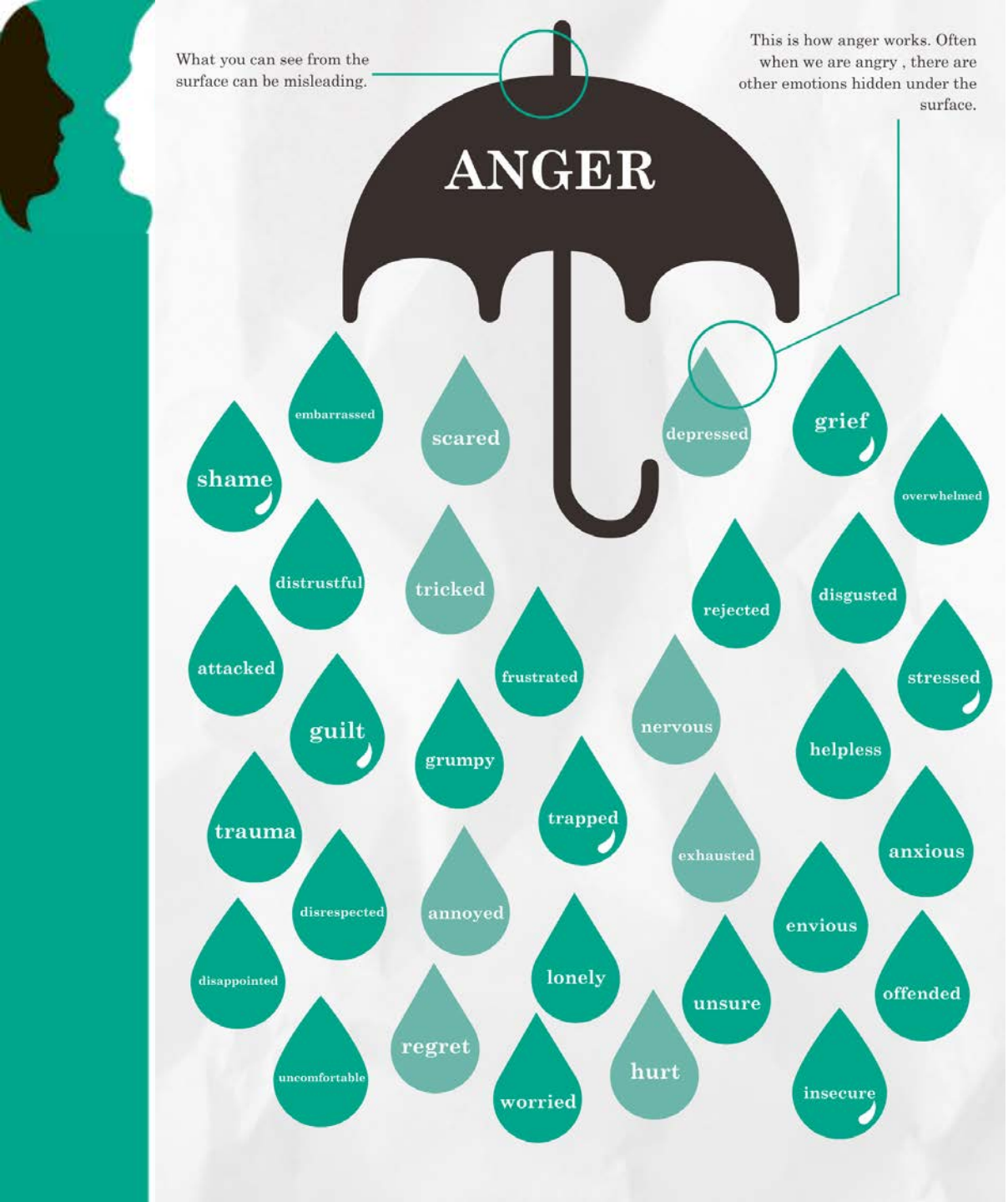
What is anger?



Anger is a category of emotions, consisting of many variations.

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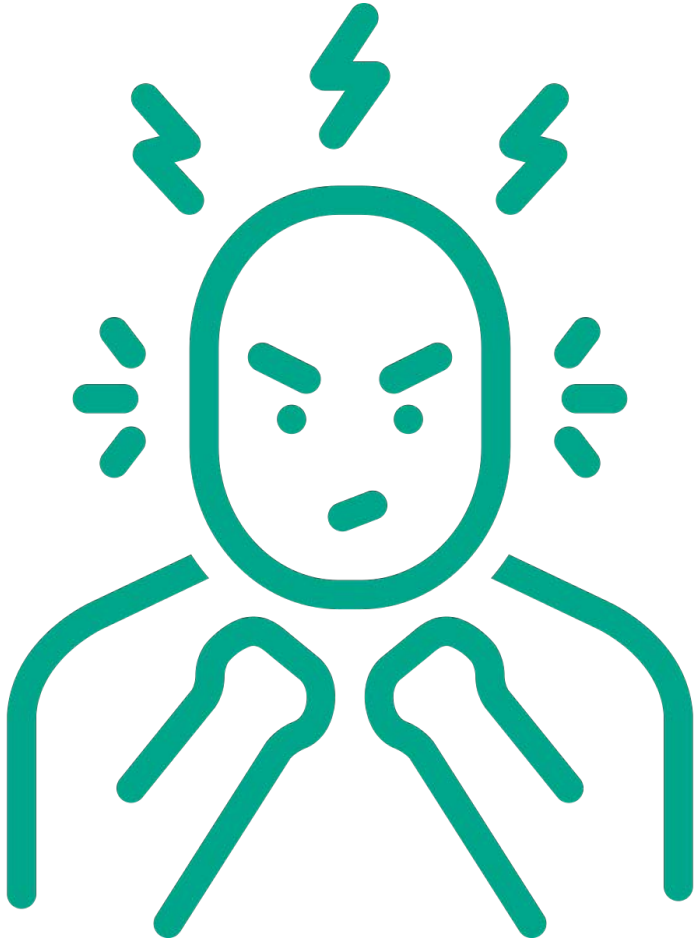

Anger can be a state or a trait (some people are more prone to anger).

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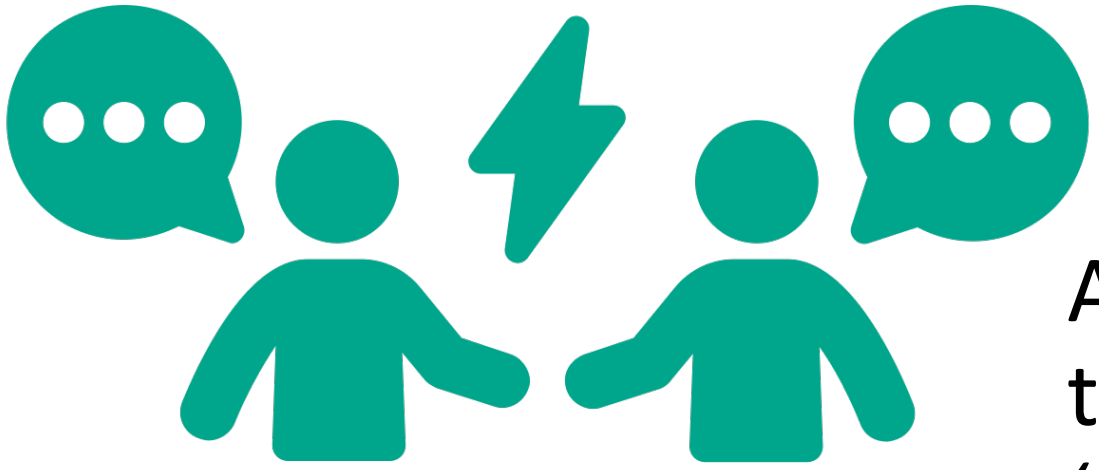

Anger arises due to a story that we tell ourselves, that ‘matches’ past stories of anger in our lives and cultures.

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Components of anger

- Endangering something or someone we value.
- The perception that this is wrongful or inappropriately done – external blame.
- A sense of control or coping potential, power/status.
- A desire for retribution.

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Anger can be “right” or “wrong”

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Anger is often seen as “right” or useful / appropriate in cultures / situations in which individuals strive for self-esteem and independence.

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Anger is often seen as “wrong” and immature in cultures / situations in which adjusting to the wishes and activities of the community is prioritised.

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The impact of anger

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Intrapersonal impacts

- Motivates approach and attack behaviours.
- Motivates task engagement and persistence.
- Focus on rewards not threats.
- Less analytical and more reflexive in decision making.

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Interpersonal impacts

- Can prevent certain behaviour by others.
- Can promote change in behaviour by others.
- Can signal our own boundaries / limits to others.

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Interpersonal impacts change depending on:

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The level of interdependence of the parties (their relative power / alternatives

The level of interdepence of the parties (their relative power / alternatives).

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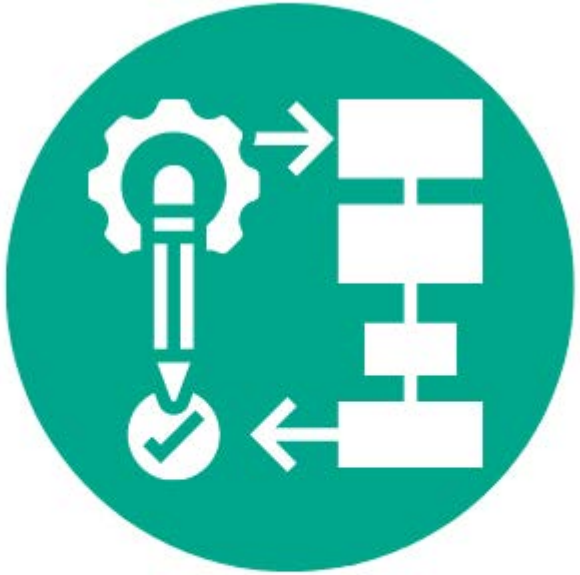

The parties' information processing tendencies

The parties information processing tendencies.

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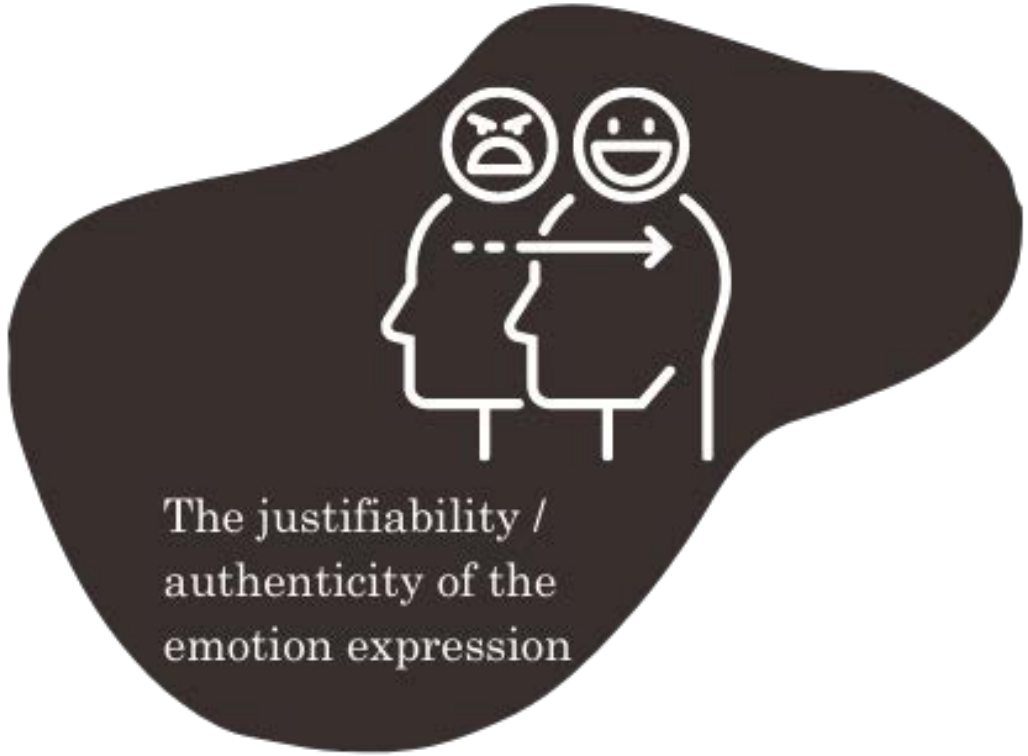

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The intensity of the anger expression.

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Whether directed at the situation or the person.

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The number of people involved.

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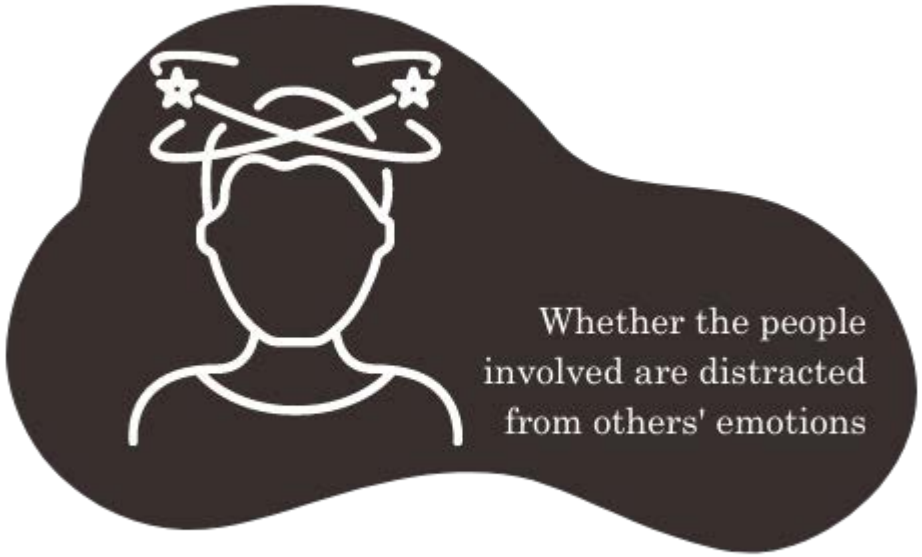

Whether the people involved are distracted from other’s emotions.

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Whether the person’s behaviour is consistent with the anger expression.

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The time pressures involved.

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Cultural expectations of the parties

Cultural expectations of the parties.

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Potential outcomes of anger

- Protection
- Highlight unfairness
- Signal dominance
- Repair / damage social connections
- Win competition
- Enhance self-insight
- Appear powerful
- Enhance performance
- Deterrence
- Defend
- Change another's behaviour
- Achieve a goal
- Elicit an apology

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Strategies to work with anger in conflict

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Support people to describe their emotions with more nuance, emotional granularity.

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Support people to tell the story underlying their anger.

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Support people to identify and explain the “goal” or “value” that is at stake.

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Support people to explain ”What is the anger trying to accomplish?”

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Support people to identify and explain the “wrongness” of the threat / damage to that value.

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How are others responding to the anger (emotions / behaviours)?

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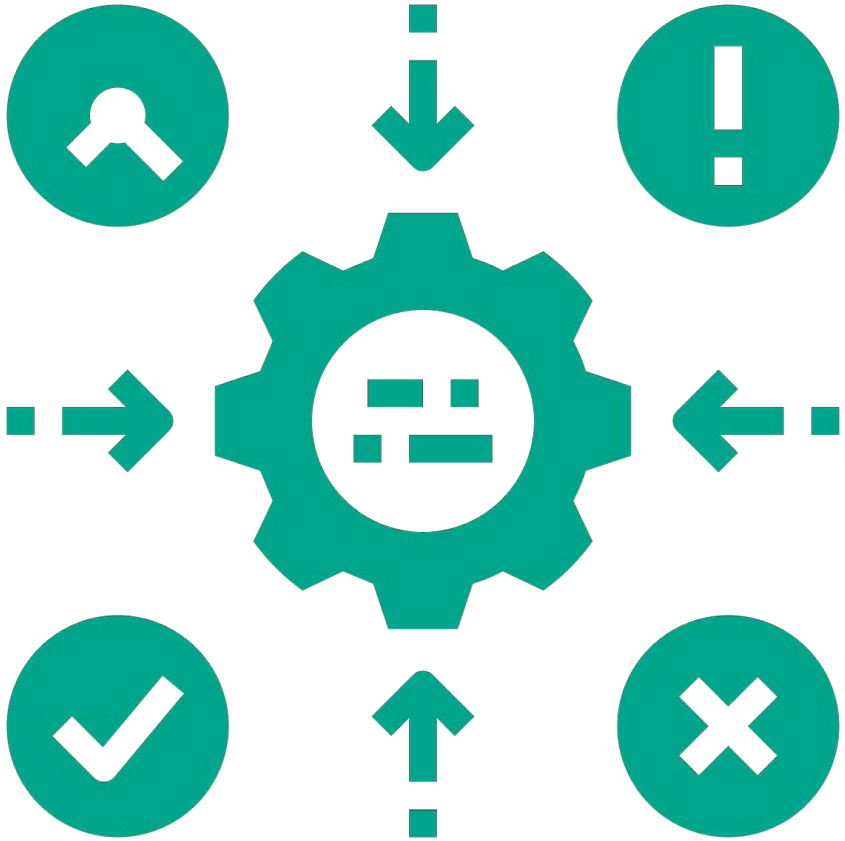

What context factors are impacting on the anger and the responses to the anger?

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How does the anger impact:

- Achieving the goal
- Relationships
- Personal reputation

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Harness the person's sense of control, but refocus towards something more constructive.

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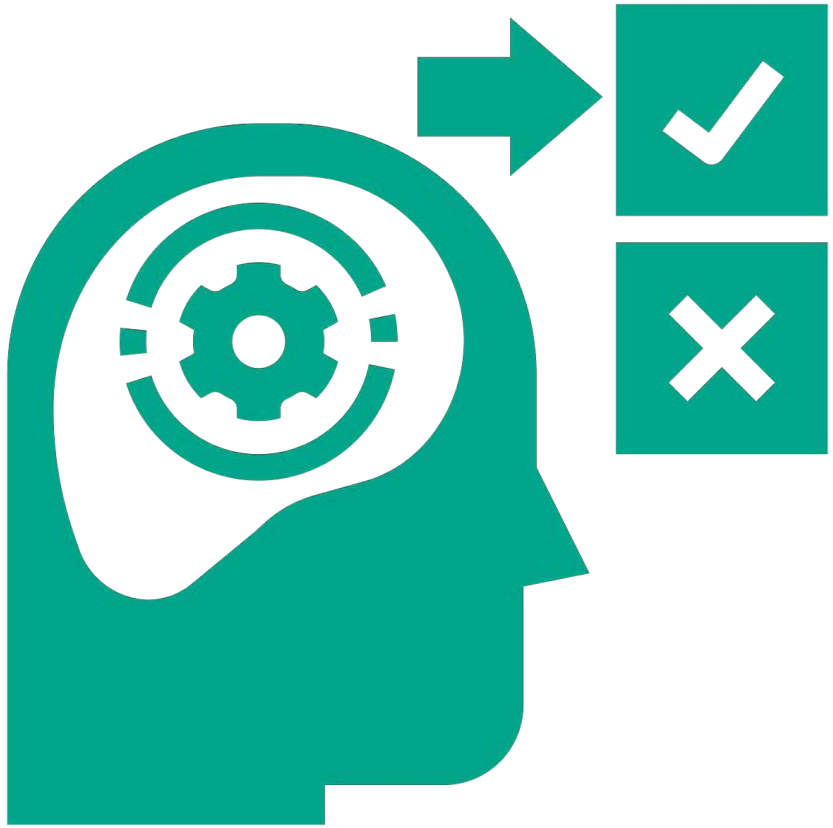

Support the person to gain perspective:

- Long term consequences
- Risks not just rewards

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Support the person to act to repair any harm from anger.

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