

- Have you ever been afraid and pretended that you were angry instead?

EXAMPLE:

A guy does not want to meet his girl's parents because he thinks his criminal record will make them put him down. Instead of telling his girl that he's nervous, he tells her she can't go visit her parents. Is he really angry or is he afraid?

Jack's Story

I hated having to admit that I was sad or lonely or confused or scared. Sometimes feelings are really a bitch. But being pissed off all the time just got me in here. Look at fear. It's like fear is the real "f" word around the joint. You always hear guys say they're not scared of anything. But that's crap. This ain't a nice place to call home. I guess if I have enough guts to admit I'm afraid sometimes, you probably do, too.

— Jack S.,
serving time for dealing drugs and aggravated robbery

How Can I Do a Better Job on My Anger?

Working on handling your anger can be very rewarding, but you've got to have a plan. Two steps for handling your anger appropriately are

1. Ask yourself what about the situation makes you angry.
2. Look at the feelings *under* your anger. What it is that you are really angry about?

These are not easy steps. Asking yourself what makes you angry might seem like it would be simple to do. However, often we are really angry before we think about that question. Help lower your anger by slowing down, trying not to take yourself too seriously, and letting go of old grudges. In part 3, we'll look more deeply at ways to challenge how we deal with anger.

The next exercise is about self-hate and how it relates to our anger problems. Self-hatred is a combination of anger and shame turned inward. The anger makes people attack themselves whenever they do anything wrong or when they fail at something. The shame makes them think they will never get better. Together, anger and shame produce this thought: "I screwed up my life in the past, I'm screwing it up now, and I will certainly screw it up in the future."

**It's difficult to treat others
decently when you are
being mean to yourself.**

