

ask Dr Roshan Jain

Your *mental and emotional health* questions answered

Q I am a 27-year-old woman with a baby boy, staying with my in-laws. I am not happy with this arrangement. I am short tempered and often get angry with my in-laws, but cannot say anything to them. Please advise how to control my anger, because at times I get violent with rage.

Anger is a primary and healthy emotion and in many ways necessary. We have a right to feel unhappy and angry when we are mistreated or when things don't go our way. The feeling isn't a problem but the way we react to the feeling makes the difference. However, it is the uncontrolled explosive anger that can have dire consequences in our relationships and our health. We must therefore learn to contain our emotions, especially anger and find ways to express it in a way that resolves and not worsens a situation.

Perhaps your anger is a cover up for other feelings and one clue that I get here is your inability to accept or compromise with a given situation – being in a joint family and a social hierarchy where old are always considered wise and right. The other issue may include having limited opportunity to express your feelings, which is then likely to convert into anger – which you feel is the only way to communicate.

Effective communication is the key to better relationships and anger management. Listen more and talk less. Speak calmly without losing composure. It is wise to accept others' viewpoints without feeling challenged or threatened.

Learn to cool down by stepping back from the situation, as this will allow

you to respond in a measured manner rather than react abruptly. If that is not possible then go for a walk or leave the situation. Sometimes, you just need to convey that you would like to discuss about it later, when everyone has calmed down.

But most importantly, I suggest, you talk discreetly with your spouse and other important persons in the family to see what may be the cause behind your anger. If we do not know what makes us angry then it will be difficult to control it. We all must learn and grow. All else failing, seek professional help, which I think is a sign of strength not weakness.

Q My partner works in shifts for a software company for many years. Often he seeks medical help for recurring feelings of racing heartbeat, difficulty in breathing, shakes and sweats. These occur for no specific reasons. Health checks including ECG, stress test and echo have not yielded any alarming results. Despite assurances of having a healthy heart, he fears he is suffering from some undetected heart problem. How do I help him? Please advise.

It seems that he may be suffering from an anxiety disorder namely hypochondriacal disorder. This is sometimes referred to as hypochondriasis or **health phobia**. His anxiety may be present in the form of excessive preoccupation or worry about having a serious illness.

He ought to think of the hazards of shift work on his health and wellness. Perhaps this mental distress is a sign of burnout, wherein relentless stress is taking a toll on his mind and body. If he has an anxious/sensitive

personality then minor health issues can turn into major concerns. For some, even random, obscure and inaccurate portrayal of illnesses in print and media can exacerbate a hypochondriac's fear.

Encourage him to consider changing his work timings to a structured daytime work. Motivate him to take up exercise or yoga. Suggest a holiday or a regular break from routine for relaxation.

His habit of seeking repeated reassurances from family and professionals might not change because hypochondriacal fears are irrational in nature. Therefore, further evaluation with a psychiatrist would be a good start. He will benefit from structured psycho-education, advice and counselling about absence of feared medical condition. Antidepressants can be very effective in such a disorder.

Although uncommon, his condition is treatable. Hopefully, upon reading this reply he will be persuaded to consult. Early treatment will prevent further suffering and speed up recovery.

Our doctors will answer all queries on emotional and mental health. Got mind trouble of your own? Drop us a mail at bpositiveQA@apollolife.com Or write to

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