

Anger Monitoring Form

The purpose of this form is to help you become familiar with the situations that tend to provoke your anger and the ways you tend to respond. It also aims to help you generate compassionate alternatives. Pick one time during the week when you experienced anger, rage, or irritation.

Situation/Trigger:

Emotions:

Thoughts:

Behaviors (What did I do?):

What does your compassionate self say?

What would your compassionate self do?

Outcome:

COMPASSIONATE VALIDATION OF ANGER AS A THREAT RESPONSE

This chapter's first exercise aims to help us overcome the self-criticism and shame that can keep us from dealing with anger. Shame and self-criticism about our anger and its consequences can create great pain in us, prompting us to either ignore our anger altogether or to justify our angry behaviors as we attempt to avoid facing the harm and difficulties that they have caused. As a result, instead of seeing the anger itself as the issue, we experience hostility toward ourselves, other people, or the situations that trigger it. This tendency only fuels the habitual process of anger. We'll explore ways of dealing with trigger situations, but the *first* thing we'll attend to is the anger itself. We're intentionally shifting our focus from whatever the situation is (the battle) to the way that anger plays itself out time and time again in our lives (the war). Difficult situations will come and go, but out-of-control anger can create problems in many different areas of our lives. Once you're able to manage the way you respond to feeling threatened, you'll be much better equipped to deal thoughtfully and compassionately with whatever situation has triggered your anger. When things in your life go badly (as they sometimes will, despite your best efforts), you'll be able to stop yourself from making them even worse.

We need to find a way to take responsibility for our anger that doesn't cause us to feel ashamed, "bad," attacked, self-righteous, or contemptuous. In doing this, we'll want to mindfully recognize when we begin to justify, deny, push down, or blame our anger on others, and use those observations as reminders to refocus on compassion instead. Keep in mind that while we *didn't* choose to have threat systems that produce anger, we can recognize the suffering that our anger causes us and other people, and we *can* choose to connect with the compassionate motivation to help ourselves manage anger better. In this exercise, you'll remind yourself again that anger is your brain trying to protect you and that the reaction isn't your fault, and you'll commit yourself to working with anger more effectively.

This exercise can be done at any time. As with all of the exercises, it helps to practice when it's easy, so it may be a good idea to start by dealing with minor irritations.