

RASA
Merseyside

Sexual
Violence
Services

Information
for survivors of
sexual violence

Anger



Data and content supplied
by Rape Crisis Scotland

Anger

Background

- » It is common for survivors of sexual violence to feel angry. This is a natural response to what has happened. It is natural to be angry with the person who abused you
- » Anger can be very helpful and gives people the strength to fight back, run away from and cope with many issues. It can be a source of energy to help you face the healing process and recover from your experience/s of sexual violence
- » Anger is a natural reaction to hurt and pain. People often believe that anger is a bad thing and that they should suppress it. Anger is not good or bad. But it can be frightening if it feels out of your control or if it becomes destructive
- » Many people are scared of anger. This could be fear of other people's anger or fear when they feel it building up inside themselves. You may feel that if you let it out, it will overwhelm you and you will not be able to control it
- » Many survivors find it difficult to express anger, and they block it out. If you have lived with sexual abuse for some time, you may have had to block out many emotions
- » Anger can be 'displaced'. You may find that you turn anger in on yourself, blame yourself for what has happened or feel angry that you were unable to stop it
- » You may find yourself being angry, irritable and short-tempered with those close to you

How does anger affect survivors of sexual violence?

- » If survivors always bottle up feelings of anger or turn it in on themselves, it can have negative physical and emotional effects
- » Physical effects can include digestive problems; high blood pressure; heart and circulation problems; being more sensitive to pain; and lowered immune system
- » Emotional effects may include depression; sleep problems; addiction to substances to blot out or cope with feelings; being unkind to or bullying others; compulsions such as over-eating or overworking or other out-of-control behaviour
- » When people feel and react like this it can damage relationships with other people. This can lead to increased isolation and can affect self-esteem

There are things you can do to express and manage anger in ways which do not harm you or other people around you.

What you can do: self-care tips for survivors

Survivors have found the following helpful for expressing and managing anger:

- » People have different ways of expressing anger, and their patterns form in childhood. It can help to know your own patterns. Do you hold your anger inside you? Or do you find that anger takes control of you when you least expect it? Be

aware of your own pattern as this can help you manage it

- » Work out a plan for when you are overcome with anger, or when it is getting too much
- » Some people find that releasing anger can be helpful. Some suggestions for releasing anger safely so that you do not hurt yourself or anyone else are:
 - > Express the anger by hitting a pillow with a tennis racquet or tearing up a thick catalogue/phone book
 - > Go somewhere where you won't frighten anyone and shout or make a noise
 - > Talk about it. When your thoughts stay in your head, they can overwhelm you. Having the opportunity to say them aloud to someone who believes you and supports you can be a relief. It can make them clearer and help you work out what you want
 - > Write it down. Put down on paper what's going through your head. Don't worry about spelling or grammar. You could buy yourself a diary/notebook with a lock. Write a letter to the person who abused you. You don't have to send it
 - > Draw a picture or paint it. When you can't put emotions into words, drawing colours and lines can help. You don't have to show it to anyone
- » Exercise to let off steam. This can be walking, gardening, swimming, going to the gym, aerobics; whatever you enjoy

- » Learn to recognise when you are feeling angry and say so in words rather than actions
- » Notice the thoughts and feelings you have when you feel angry
- » Learn assertiveness techniques to help you express yourself in ways which respect others
- » Use relaxation techniques such as yoga or listening to music
- » Eat well - not eating well can make you feel irritable
- » Cut down on alcohol as it can affect your ability to cope with and control anger. It can also interfere with your mood, and the quality of your sleep

When you feel yourself getting angry

- » Try to manage your anger by practising the **STOPP** steps below:
 - **S**top – take a step back, do not react immediately or automatically
 - **T**ake a breath – notice your breathing, try to keep it regular
 - **O**bserve – what are you thinking and feeling, are these thoughts helpful, are they accurate?
 - **P**ull back – put in some perspective, try to view the situation as an outsider would, what meaning are you giving the event and is it proportional?
 - **P**ractise what works – what will the consequences of your actions be, what is most helpful for you in this situation?

Source: www.getselfhelp.co.uk

- » Walk away from the situation. If you are angry at someone, go away and calm down
- » Ask yourself why you are angry. Is it because of something now or something from the past? Is your anger justified? Is it in proportion?
- » You may need to talk this over with another person to get a clearer sense of what is going on
- » If your anger is about now and is justified, think about how you will express it. This will vary depending on whether you are angry at a friend or a professional or an institution. But for all situations, practise what you want to say. Say it at a time that is convenient. Be clear about what you say and what you want. And listen to the other person's point of view
- » Be prepared. If you know you are going to be in a situation that can trigger your anger, try to plan for this. Think about the kind of response you would like to make using the above steps. Take something with you that you find calming or reassuring. Think about something you can do afterwards to reward yourself if you think it has gone well

**Remember: you are important.
Your feelings matter. You do not have to
cope on your own.**

Help and information

There are many people who want to help. You can phone/email the RCS Helpline for support and information. We can tell you about services in your area. You do not need to give your name. RCS Helpline (6pm to midnight every day) on 08088 01 03 02 or email anytime on support@rapecrisisscotland.org.uk

If you are feeling overwhelmed and you think this is having a serious effect on your health, speak to your GP or another professional. They may be able to refer you for talking or other therapies which can help you manage better.

The information in this leaflet draws on various sources including those below. **You can find more information online at:**

- » www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk
- » Information after rape and sexual assault:
www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/06/13141931/0
- » www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk
- » www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/Anger.asp
- » www.mind.org.uk
- » www.getselfhelp.co.uk

App: eCBT Trauma

A useful book is: *The Courage to Heal Workbook: For Women and Men Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse* by Laura Davis, 1990. Published by: HarperCollins in paperback.

Local rape crisis centres

Rape Crisis Centres are located in all local authorities in Scotland; for the most up to date contact information and referral criteria please go to: www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk/about-local-rapecrisis-centres/

Aberdeen

Rape Crisis Grampian

Argyll & Bute

Argyll & Bute Rape Crisis Centre

Dumfries & Galloway

Rape Crisis & Sexual Abuse Support Centre

Dundee

Women's Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre

East Ayrshire

The STAR Centre

Edinburgh

Edinburgh Rape Crisis Centre

Fife

Fife Rape & Sexual Assault Centre

Forth Valley

Forth Valley Rape Crisis

Glasgow & Clyde

Glasgow & Clyde Rape Crisis Centre

Lanarkshire

Lanarkshire Rape Crisis Centre

Moray

Moray Rape Crisis

Orkney

Orkney Rape & Sexual Assault Service

Perth

Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre Perth & Kinross

Highland

Rape & Sexual Abuse Service Highland

Scottish Borders

Scottish Borders Rape Crisis Centre

Shetland

Shetland Rape Crisis

Western Isles

Western Isles Rape Crisis Centre



Helpline 0151 666 1392
helpline@rasamerseyside.org

Helpline Times:

Tuesday - 6-8pm

Thursday 6-8pm

Friday 12-2pm

Information & Referral Line Contact Numbers:

Liverpool/Sefton 0151 558 1801

Wirral 0151 650 0155