

# Six Anger Styles

## STUFFERS

**Stuffers** are conflict avoiders, people who deny or bury their anger; their motto is “peace at any price.” They often have lots of tension under the surface. The underlying problem is never addressed and therefore can’t be solved. People who stuff their

anger so much may become depressed, or they may become physically sick, with stomachaches, or headaches, or other physical complaints. Teens who have parents who stuff their anger don’t have the opportunity to learn how to problem-solve.

## WITHDRAWERS

**Withdrawers** use passive-aggressive means to express their anger. The term passive-aggressive means expressing anger in subtle, indirect ways. Some husbands are passive-aggressive: they don’t talk to their wives for days when they are angry. Some teens who are angry about a divorce express their anger by letting their grades go down. Or some teens who are angry at their parents show their anger by not doing their chores or by not doing what they are told. These are subtle, not obvious, ways to show anger.

Sometimes the withdrawers hurt themselves the most by their withdrawing—they suffer the consequences of not having a closer relationship when they don’t communicate; they suffer the consequences of low grades. When parents are passive-aggressive, or withdraw, their children often feel guilty and responsible, and they are always wondering what they’ve done wrong. People who withdraw also miss out on the power of using their anger to work for them. They don’t solve the underlying problem.

## BLAMERS

**Blamers** express their anger by blaming their problems on other people, by name calling, by attacking, or by putting other people down. Teens often blame their problems on their peers, their siblings, their parents, or their teachers. Parents often blame their problems on their children, their spouse, their own parents, or

their work situation. Teenagers in families where one or both parents are blamers may have low self-esteem because they begin to believe what they are told. They may feel guilty and responsible for the family problems. Or they may become blamers, too, and never take responsibility for their own behavior.

## TRIANGLERS

**Trianglers** express their anger in devious and manipulative ways. Instead of expressing their anger directly, they pull someone else in, or they try to get someone else to be angry. For instance, a mother who is angry at her husband may tell her son what the husband has done, so the son will be angry at the husband too.

**Adolescents** often use triangling. For example, Jenny might be angry because her best friend, Stephanie, said something to hurt

her feelings. Rather than dealing with Stephanie directly, Jenny tells another friend, Maggie, something bad about Stephanie so that Maggie is mad at Stephanie too.

**In families** where there are trianglers, a lot of tension may be below the surface. Kids may have the feeling that they or someone else has done something wrong, but they don’t know what.

## EXPLODERS

**Exploders** use violence to express anger. This may range from pushing, shoving, kicking, and slapping to hitting, punching, choking, using a weapon, or even killing. These are all harmful behaviors. Teens who grow up in violent families are often scared that they or someone else is going to get hurt. They often intervene in order to rescue one parent, and sometimes the teens get hurt as well. Sometimes violent parents get angry at teens who try to rescue. If a teenage daughter is very close to a mother who is beaten by the father, the girl might believe that she should be beaten, too, and may not be able to set limits when she starts dating. Children in violent families worry about divorce; they also worry that someone will be hurt fatally and that the violent parent will go to jail.

**Violent parents** are often unpredictable in their violence. Their

children never know what to expect. They are often hypervigilant, constantly scanning the mood of the violent parent, or of the family, to help them predict whether this is a safe time. Sometimes after violent fights with each other, the parents might get mad at the children, ignoring them, sending them to their room, or taking their anger out on them. Sometimes the parent directs the violence to the oldest son or daughter. The parent may beat the son or daughter, sometimes with the other parent watching. Teens in this position often wonder why their mother stands by and allows them to be beaten by their father. Teens in violent families often think their families are “different” and wish they could be like other families that they think are happy. Teens in these families also sometimes feel ashamed of their families, and ashamed of themselves, thinking something is the matter with them.

## PROBLEM SOLVERS

**Problem solvers** can admit that they are angry and then look at why they are angry. They put thinking between their feelings and their behavior. They see if they are angry about a problem they can solve; if so, they use their anger to give them power to change themselves. Problem solvers use their problem-solving skills in anger situations. If problem solvers have a problem they can’t solve, they

express their anger in helpful ways so they can let it go.

**Teens** who grow up in families where the parents are problem solvers will learn how to problem-solve when they are angry. They learn the consequences of their behavior; they don’t feel put down; they feel safe; and they learn to use their anger to work for them.