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Introduction: why talk about anger?

- We all feel emotions, but there are individual and cultural differences in the ways we express our emotions. When we don't come from the same cultural background, it can happen that we don't quite understand each other, how we express emotion and we may not realize it.
- From one culture to another, the words we use to talk about emotions may be also different. It can be difficult to translate a specific word (e.g., 'anger') from English or French into Inuktitut or vice versa. Sometimes there is no direct translation. We then have to add words to clarify and better explain what we want to say.

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Introduction: why talk about anger?

There has been some writing and discussion about anger in Inuit contexts. Anger is an emotion that you are likely to see in children and youth and it's not always easy to deal with these situations.

The purpose of today's meeting is to discuss together the topic of anger in Inuit contexts, to talk about what can make children, youth and parents angry in Nunavik, to try to understand why this is so, and to share ideas on what we can do.



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Anger:
Suna una inuttitut?

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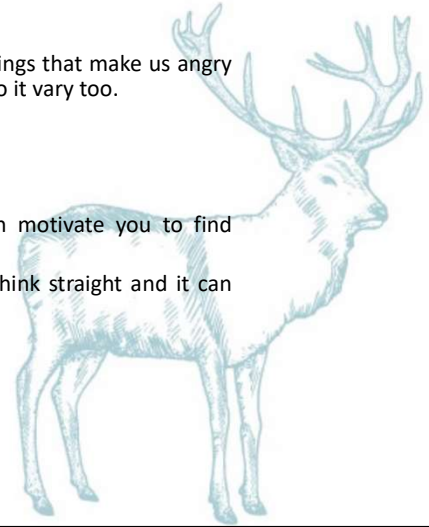
What is anger?

Anger is an emotional state that is **natural and normal**.

- It is a way of expressing something.
- It is something that all of us experience, but in different ways. The things that make us angry are not the same for everyone. The ways we express anger and react to it vary too.

Anger is **not always a problem** but it can become one.

- Anger can be helpful and tell you that something is wrong. It can motivate you to find solutions to a problem.
- But too much anger can be problematic. It can make it difficult to think straight and it can have impacts on your health, your life and your relationships.



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What is anger?



What words, images or ideas come to mind when we talk about anger?



Anger can be felt towards oneself, towards others or in a more diffuse way (e.g., towards the world).



It can vary in intensity, going from mild frustration and annoyance to intense rage. It can also vary in frequency and duration.



Anger may have bodily effects such as accelerating the heart rate, making the face flush, and raising the blood pressure and adrenaline levels.

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Why do we feel anger?

The causes of anger can be both:

Internal (e.g., remembering something enraging, worrying about a problem).

External (e.g., a triggering situation, an unpleasant event).

Anger can come from:

- Feeling **hurt** and **rejected**;
- Feeling **threatened** (physically, in your autonomy, in your authority);
- The feeling that someone has deliberately wronged you, **disrespected** or **insulted** you, damaged your **reputation**;
- The impression that a **norm** or a **rule** is not being respected;
- The feeling that a situation is not right, a sense of **injustice**;
- Experiencing a medical or psychological **condition** (e.g., migraines, intellectual disability, brain injuries, substance abuse, history of trauma).

(APA, 2012; Novaco, 2000;
Pudney et al., 2012)

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What makes children in Nunavik angry?

What makes youth in Nunavik angry?

What makes parents in Nunavik angry?

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What is the role of anger?

There are positive and negative aspects of anger. Anger can have beneficial and harmful effects such as:



To better fight and defend ourselves when we are attacked (however, violence remains unacceptable);

To build confidence, strength and determination;

To maintain an effort and persevere;

To energize and motivate;

To mobilize problem solving.

Adverse effects on health;

Harder to think, be empathetic, and be careful;

Harsh parenting with adverse developmental outcomes;

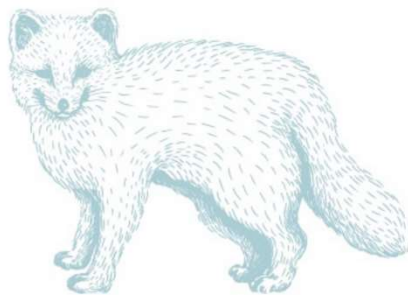
Domestic and family violence;

Interpersonal conflicts, aggressions and social isolation.

(APA, 2012; Novaco, 2000)

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How do we express anger?



- The ways to express anger **vary** greatly between individuals, families, communities and cultures;
- They are influenced **by rules and norms** about expressing anger that are learned in **childhood**.

Inuit ways of expressing anger

*"In traditional Inuit culture, to show frustration or anger is considered a **childish** response. An adult would be expected to either **solve the problem**, or, if the problem seems insolvable, **accept it as such**"*

(Inuit Women's Association of Canada, 1990).

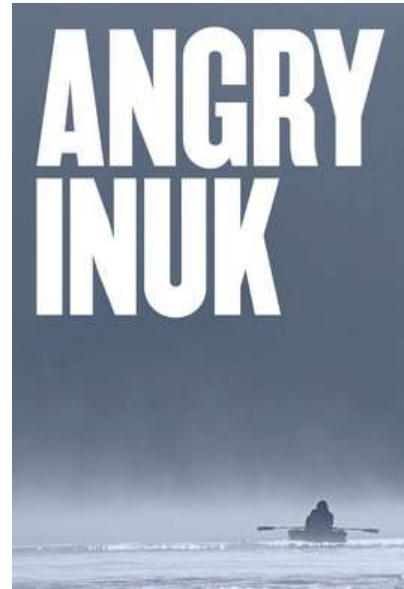
(APA, 2012; Briggs, 2000b; IWAC, 1990; Novaco, 2000)

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Angry Inuk by Alethea Arnaquq-Baril

This documentary film from 2016 is about the **injustice** suffered by Inuit communities over the banning of the seal hunt by the European Union and the fundraising campaigns of NGOs such as Greenpeace and the International Fund for Animal Welfare.

It defends the Inuit seal hunt and shows how the needs of Inuit families who depend on the hunt for their livelihoods are ignored by drawing a false distinction between subsistence-driven Inuit hunters and profit-driven commercial hunters.



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Angry Inuk by Alethea Arnaquq-Baril



Q: "You call your film *The Angry Inuk* but you make the point that you don't get angry in your culture."

A: "**No, we do get angry, we just express it differently.**"

"As a culture, we express it differently and the volume of our anger tends to just be a little quieter and we place importance on the ability to stay calm under pressure. Historically, in small communities, people would use humour and reasonable discussion to negotiate conflict and when someone loses their temper, we see that as a sign of weakness, or perhaps a sign of a guilty conscience. For that reason, when there is something extremely distressing and upsetting to us, we tend to try to stay calm. For me, it's a survival instinct and so, for that reason I think we're often misunderstood. People don't realize how upset we are about certain things." (CBC radio interview)

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Traditional Inuit parenting to control anger

Jean Briggs is an anthropologist who worked with Inuit communities and has focused a lot on emotions and the education of children.

Her books *Never in Anger* and *Inuit Morality Play* are about her work with Inuit families in the Baffin area in the 1960s and 70s. Over the years, she observed how parents taught their children how to deal with emotions such as anger. (We'll describe these parenting strategies later.)

Here are some of her interpretations :

- Anger is seen as weak, childish, and dangerous, as emotions can motivate behaviours. An angry person might kill;
- Fear of aggressive confrontation. Strategy of expressing and concealing hostility at the same time (e.g., traditional song duets, use of ambiguous radio messages);
- Emphasis on respect and non-contradiction of elders;
- Inuktitut classifies emotions differently compared to English.

(Briggs, 1970, 2000a, 2000b)

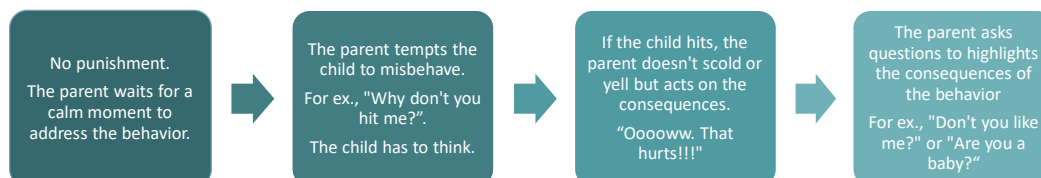
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Michaeleen Doucleff is a reporter who interviewed elders and parents in Nunavut about how parents teach their children to control their anger. Among them was Myna Ishulutak, a film producer and language teacher living in Iqaluit, who was the child in Jean Briggs' book *Inuit morality play*!

They said that traditional Inuit parenting is gentle and tender:

- No shouting or yelling at small children. It's demeaning: as if the adult is having a tantrum;
- No scolding, no timeouts. It teaches the child to be angry, to yell to solve problems, to run away;
- Key strategies to discipline are: **storytelling** (e.g., telling a story about the sea monster or the northern lights) and **'putting on a play'**;

For instance, when a child misbehaves (e.g., hits someone, has a tantrum), then:



- The parent uses a playful tone ('pretend-talking') and asks many questions to keep the child involved. This gives the child a chance to practice proper behaviors when they are open to learning and not emotionally charged.

(Briggs, 2000b; Doucleff & Greenhalg, 2019)

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What are the current ways of expressing and managing anger in Nunavik?

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According to the American Psychological Association (APA), there are 3 different ways to deal with anger

CALMING

Anger can be calmed down: controlling your outward behavior and your internal responses (e.g., deep breathing to calm yourself down and let the feeling diminish).

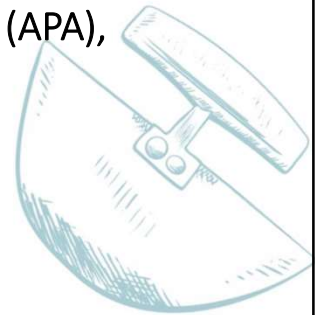
ASSERTING

Anger can be expressed in an assertive manner, not aggressively: Clarifying your needs and how they can be met. Doing this while being respectful of yourself and others.

SUPPRESSING

Anger can be contained and redirected. Unexpressed anger can cause health problems (e.g., hypertension or depression). Pathological expressions of anger (e.g., passive-aggressive behaviors) can lead to relationship difficulties.

What works in Nunavik?



(Adapted from APA, 2012)

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How to intervene?

Anger-related problems (e.g., opposition, irritability, aggressions) are often a reason for families to seek or receive help.

First thing to think about: **Is a trusting relationship established?**

- Work on establishing trust:
 - **Validate** help-seeking and difficulties.
 - Use **benevolent and active listening** to show that you care and to make sure you understand the situation from the other person's perspective (e.g., rephrase, avoid judging and blaming words).
 - Show **respect and cultural humility** (e.g., be aware and accept that there are different ways of looking at things).

The level of **distress** of the person and/or those around him/her can also influence the **motivation to receive help** (or not).

(Howells & Day 2003, Sukhodolsky et al., 2004)

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How to intervene?

- To **understand** the situation and **plan your intervention**: consider the child's age, developmental level, gender, life circumstances and personal preferences.
 - For ex., younger children will express their anger in certain ways (e.g., hitting, pushing) and as they gradually develop language, empathy, and patience, they will tend to also express their anger more verbally (e.g., arguing, shouting, threatening).
 - Girls tend to express anger more verbally and boys more physically.

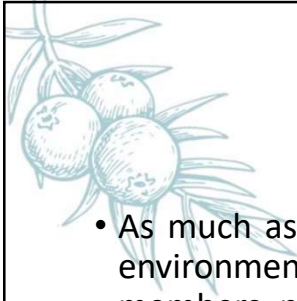
Why do children feel angry?

- Not been noticed or paid attention to;
- Not being able to do things they don't yet have the skills for;
- Having communication difficulties;
- Being hungry;
- Having parents who fight;
- Having a deceased loved one or pet;
- Having to go to foster care, etc.

Anger can be a stage of grief. It can be reassuring for children, youth and parents to be told that this is normal and that it won't last forever.

(Nangle et al., 2002; Steiner & Remsing, 2007; Pudney & Whitehouse, 2012)

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How to intervene?

- As much as possible, it is a good idea to involve the child or youth's environment in your intervention (e.g., parents and extended family members, people at school, friends, etc.).
- It allows some coherence in the intervention.

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How to intervene?

Overall, some techniques have been recognized as **effective** for youth and children with problematic anger levels to help them use **constructive ways** to manage their anger.

- **Affective education:**
 - Practicing ways to calm down (e.g., deep breathing, visualization, distraction);
 - Increasing self-awareness (e.g., identify trigger situations and body cues). With older children or youth: identify their underlying thought process and emotions. E.g., "I'm never good!", or "I know he did that on purpose!".
- **Skills development:**
 - Encouraging prosocial values and behaviors (e.g., participation, cooperation, communication, and seeking help and support);
 - Working at improving social skills: giving instructions, modeling, practicing, giving feedback, and having discussions.
- **Problem solving:**
 - Working on problem-solving skills (e.g., identifying the problem and goal, listing solutions, thinking about the consequences of actions, and matching solutions and consequences);
 - Working on perspective taking.

(Nangle et al., 2002; Pudney et al., 2012; Sukhodolsky et al., 2004)

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How to intervene?

Here are a few intervention ideas:

- **Anger journaling** to write or draw what made them angry → helps to identify triggers, avoid those situations or be prepared to cope in the future.
- **Anger thermometer** → to identify anger levels and respond before they get too high.
- **Play therapy** → to practice constructive behaviors (e.g., images, puppets, toys, role playing).
- **Random acts of kindness** → to build empathy and to improve relationships and self-esteem.
- **Arts and sports** → encourage youth to express their anger, but positively.
- **Empowerment** → support youth to handle their anger constructively (e.g., engage in actions that help change injustices, seek an education to do so).

3 broad steps:

- ✓ Identifying the triggers and cues
- ✓ Reframing the response
- ✓ Practicing

(Fraser et al, 2016; Nangle, 2002; Phaik et al., 2014; Pudney et al., 2011)

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How to intervene?

In your interventions:

- Stay **calm** and define **rules and boundaries** to make children and youth feel safe (e.g., “it’s okay to be angry, but it’s not okay to hurt yourself, to hurt others or animals, or to break things”).
- Use lots of **positive reinforcement** for positive and prosocial behaviors.
- If possible, ignore negative behaviors and **talk** about something else (**distraction**) before resorting to physical intervention (restraint or isolation).
- Help youth **avoid** using ‘**should**’ statements and **blaming** statements in their thoughts. They tend to trigger anger.

Increasing **self-esteem** and **social skills** tend to lower anger.

(Fraser et al, 2016; Nangle, 2002; Phaik et al., 2014; Pudney et al., 2011)

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Take care of yourself

Receiving anger can be hurtful and distressing, *even* if we understand where it comes from.

- It is normal to feel tired, sad or angry when working with people who are angry;
- We need to take care of ourselves.

What do you do to take care of yourself or your co-workers when dealing with anger?



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