

ZERO TO 60

***A TEEN'S GUIDE TO MANAGE
FRUSTRATION, ANGER, AND
EVERYDAY IRRITATIONS***

MICHAEL A. TOMPKINS, PHD

ILLUSTRATED BY CHLOE DOUGLASS

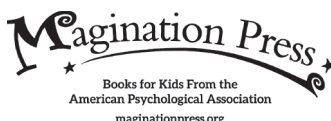
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Frustration, Anger, and
Everyday Irritations

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For Mady and Livie,
who never go from zero to 60 in seconds but cruise along at
the speed limit (mostly).



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>NOTE TO THE READER</i>	<i>v</i>
<i>CHAPTER 1</i> Anger and You	1
<i>CHAPTER 2</i> Record and Reflect	11
<i>CHAPTER 3</i> Cool Your Angry Body	39
<i>CHAPTER 4</i> Cool Your Angry Thoughts	53
<i>CHAPTER 5</i> Stop the Drumbeat of Anger	89
<i>CHAPTER 6</i> Communicate Clearly	113
<i>CHAPTER 7</i> Solve Problems	137
<i>CHAPTER 8</i> Handle Accusations and Put-Downs	147
<i>CHAPTER 9</i> Build Self-Esteem and Self-Confidence	171
<i>CHAPTER 10</i> Nutrition, Exercise, and Sleep	203
<i>CHAPTER 11</i> Help, Hope, and Heads-Up	223
<i>RESOURCES</i>	<i>255</i>
<i>INDEX</i>	<i>261</i>
<i>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</i>	<i>279</i>
<i>ABOUT THE AUTHOR</i>	<i>280</i>



NOTE TO THE READER

High-performance cars can go from zero to 60 in just a few seconds. That's moving; and that's what anger can feel like sometimes. One minute you're cool and calm and the next minute, in a flash, you're boiling. When that happens, people tell you to chill out or to calm down. They ask you, "Why are you so mean?" or "Why do you blow up all the time?" They tell you to cool down, but they don't tell you *how* to do it. Like you can turn off your anger like a light switch. They don't understand how difficult it is for you to calm down and that if you could, you would. The idea that you should know how to control your anger when no one has ever taught you how to do it is kind of ridiculous, right? That doesn't mean you can't learn. The tools in this book will help you.

Own Your Anger

Anger is an interesting emotion. People tend not to like anger. Anger can push people away or even frighten them. This makes it difficult for people to understand others who are angry, in the same way they understand people who are stressed, anxious, or depressed. When people are stressed, anxious, or depressed, others will often sympathize with them and tell them that it isn't their fault that they feel the way they do. When people are angry,

however, the same doesn't apply. People often blame others for feeling and acting angry because they believe they could just calm down if they wanted to. This makes it hard for people to *own the anger* and ask for help. It's not easy to own a problem. It takes courage to stare down the anger and decide to take it on.

But you might see anger as something outside of your control and think you wouldn't be angry if people treated you differently. You might think if your teachers didn't load you with so much homework, or if your friends did things your way, or if people left you alone, then you wouldn't get angry. It's them, not you, and to a degree that's true. Other people do play a role. Sometimes people say something that hurts your feelings or treat you unfairly. Sometimes people do these things intentionally, and sometimes accidentally. What you have the most control over is how you react to these things. Owning your anger means you don't blame your friends, your school, your parents, or yourself. Owning your anger is the first step in taking charge of it.

Admit the Benefits of Anger and Give It Back

Have you ever lost your temper to get out of class, homework, or chores? Have you ever lost your temper so you could get your way? Have you ever lost your temper and put someone down so you could feel better about yourself? Part of owning your anger means admitting that sometimes you use anger to help you get what you want. But understanding the payoffs and realizing that you do this doesn't mean you don't want to overcome your anger. It just means you have two minds when it comes to working on it. One mind tells you that anger makes your life very hard. The other mind is comfortable with the way things are. If you think you benefit from getting angry sometimes, consider, at least for a while, seeing what you can accomplish without getting angry.

Otherwise, you may never know what you can do and what you can be.

Is This Book for You?

Think how different your life would be if you were able to keep your cool. What would change? Would you have more friends? Would more people invite you to hang out and do fun things? Would you feel less stressed at home and school? It's stressful to hold anger in and even more stressful to deal with the consequences when your anger pops out. Do you have a reputation you don't like? Do other people, even some of your close friends, see you as the kid with anger issues? Do teachers and coaches think you're touchy and sometimes lose their cool with you? If you want to change things, you can. You can control your anger, like many things in life, when you set aside some time to learn.

This book is for teens who want to learn tools to cool down, whether they're feeling anger, frustration, or irritation. The tools in this book are similar to those you might learn in cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), a type of psychotherapy that teaches people skills to manage problems such as anxiety, anger, and depression. Research shows that the CBT skills in this book can help you manage your anger and get back to enjoying your life.

How to Use This Book

Most people who struggle with anger believe they can't control it. They feel anger wash over them like a tsunami, suddenly, without warning, and there is nothing they can do to stop it. Perhaps that's what it feels like to you, too. Luckily, you can learn to control your anger with the tools in this book. We'll start with some basic information about the elements that drive anger: body, thoughts, and actions. Next, you'll learn tools to calm your body and mind. Tools you can tuck in your pocket to use the

moment you feel the first signs of anger, like how to slow down the drumbeat of anger: that tendency to think and think and think about the injustice, hurt, and unfairness until you can't think of anything else. And skills to communicate with adults and peers effectively, so you can defuse situations that fuel anger. You'll learn how to solve problems quickly so that you don't feel stressed and frustrated, as well as how to de-escalate situations and respond to put-downs. Last, you'll learn skills to build your self-esteem and self-confidence. Strong self-esteem protects you from the anger that comes when you make a mistake, or disappoint friends, parents, or teachers. As you can see, it takes many tools to keep your cool. The material in this book is in an order so that one skill builds on another, but feel free to skip around.

I know what you're thinking: *More things to learn? Learning takes time. I do enough of that in school.* I've got great news: Learning skills to cool down doesn't take much time at all. Twenty minutes per day is probably all it takes. You can learn on the bus, before bed, or during lunch. Some of the skills in this book are ones that you likely already know and use, like counting to 10 or walking away. Once you learn one skill and see that it helps, you'll likely want to learn another. Learning is like that. You learn one thing and then you learn another; you make one change and then you make another. And then before you realize it—you've got it!