

LifeSolutions Corner – May 2008

“I get angry at some of the things people say to me at work! I’m not sure how to respond. I don’t want to lose my job. Can the LifeSolutions help?”

Yes, we can. Frustrations and anger at work are natural and normal. Managing them constructively is important. Staying professional when you are ready to explode can be a real challenge. *LifeSolutions* can review the skills you are currently using to cope with frustration and anger on the job. And, we can also help you develop new ones to handle particularly difficult work situations or relationships.

Before your anger gets you into trouble, try strategies such as the following:

- **Take a time out.** If you can, get away from the situation that has angered you for a few minutes. Go to a quiet place (the staff room, a stairwell, the restroom). Take a walk outside or around the floor of your building. If you cannot leave your work, step away physically from the person you are feeling upset with—put some distance between you. Focus on breathing deeply and calming yourself down.
- **Reason with yourself.** Ask yourself three questions at the first sign of anger: (1) Is this important enough to get angry about? (2) Am I justified in getting angry? (3) Is getting angry likely to make any real difference? Then decide how to handle the situation. DON’T strike while the iron is hot.
- **Distract yourself.** The more you mull over an anger-provoking incident, the greater the anger becomes and the longer it lasts. Try “thought-stopping.” When you are thinking about the incident, say “STOP”. Then say to yourself, “It isn’t doing me any good to think about this now.” Immediately think of something pleasant or refocus on the task at hand. This works, if you do it consistently.
- **Cool off.** Any technique that relaxes you or diverts your attention can help. Meditate. Take a long walk. Take five slow deep breaths. Exercise vigorously.
- **Practice empathy.** Sometimes you can reframe an anger-provoking situation by trying to see it from the other person’s point of view. There may be a perfectly understandable explanation, but we misinterpret or don’t take the time to find out.
- **Practice forgiveness.** There will be times when your best alternative is to let go of your anger. Forgiveness doesn’t mean approving, trusting, or pretending it never happened. It means choosing to move on, unencumbered by the past. Ask yourself: What do I gain by staying angry? Do I use anger to help me avoid communicating with others? Does my anger give me an excuse not to take responsibility for my role in what’s happening? And finally, ask yourself: What do I gain by giving up my anger

LifeSolutions is available to offer a listening ear, brainstorm with you, explore helpful resources and help you develop a plan of action. Call us at **1-800-647-3327**.

*We also invite you to visit us on the web at www.lifesolutionsforyou.com or send us an email with your questions at ask@lifesolutionsforyou.com. Your question could be answered in a future *LifeSolutions Corner!**

Source: Smith, Michael H. *Coping with Anger in the Workplace*. Retrieved May 6, 2008, from <http://www.michaelhsmithphd.com/anger.html>