

Don't get mad

Don't act out of anger

“Don't get mad; get even,” the old axiom advises. But, there's an even better way—don't do either.

A worker makes a mistake, and you lash out, administering a loud public reprimand. It's only natural. You're righteously mad. All your hard work has been wasted in one stupid, careless moment. You gave the worker thorough instructions, and he fouled things up anyway. He had the tongue-lashing coming.

Besides, if you try to bottle up your anger, you're courting a heart attack or a stroke. Let it all out. Vent that spleen. You'll feel better. Right?

Wrong. Dead wrong.

By acting on anger, you hurt your relationship with your employee—and everyone within earshot—and actually endanger your own health.

The battered worker has learned only one thing—that you're a blowhard. Now he's angry, too, and embarrassed and ashamed.

Everybody within earshot has also learned the same lesson: you can't control your anger. They'll all walk on tiptoe in your presence, working to avoid mistakes and evade blame, rather than working to solve problems and produce results.

And, by venting your anger, you're actually feeding it, becoming more angry for a longer time. You're also compounding the harm to your body and psyche by prolonging the physiological responses (adrenaline surge, rapid heartbeat, elevated blood pressure).

You can't undo the mistake. If you let it provoke you to act in anger, you're probably going to make it worse.

Feeling anger—along with frustration and disappointment—is natural. But, you don't have to let the feeling control your actions.

Here are three steps that can enable you to ride out the adrenaline rush:

Calm yourself: Take a few deep breaths. Relax your shoulders. Talk yourself down. (Counting to ten really does help you diffuse your anger.)

Remove yourself: If you can't handle the situation yet, walk away until you can.

Do the right thing: Instead of doing the “natural thing” by blowing up, try to do the right thing and think before you act.

“Anger, if not restrained, is frequently more harmful than the wrong that provoked it.”

—Seneca