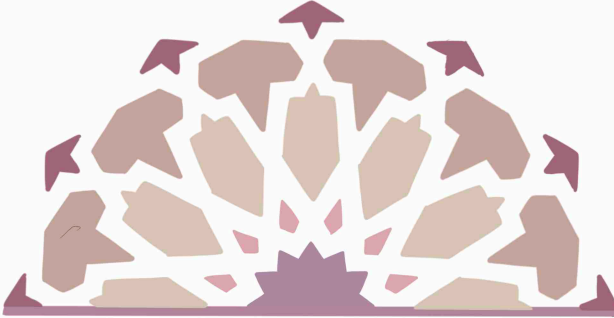


وَإِذَا مَا غَضِبُوا هُمْ يَغْفِرُونَ

"AND WHEN THEY ARE ANGRY, THEY FORGIVE."  
-QUR'AN 42:37-



# ANGER MANAGEMENT & FORGIVENESS



*Mental Health Series*

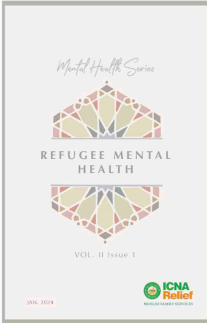
VOL. II Issue 4

SEPT. 2024

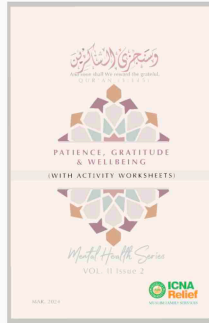
The author of this booklet, Dr. Amber Haque, is the Program Director of Muslim Family Services, ICNA Relief USA. He was previously a psychologist in Michigan and a professor of clinical psychology in Qatar, UAE and Malaysia. Dr. Haque is also a researcher for the Muslim Mental Health Consortium, Department of Psychiatry, Michigan State University and affiliated with Cambridge Muslim College, UK.

<https://cambridgemuslimcollege.academia.edu/AmberHaque>

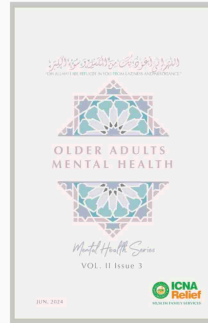
## MENTAL HEALTH SERIES VOL.2



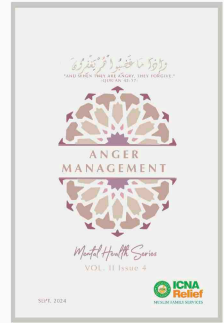
ISSUE 1



ISSUE 2



ISSUE 3



ISSUE 4

<https://icnarelief.org/mfs/resources/>

### *Why this booklet?*

Although anger is a normal emotion, many people are unaware of its negative impact on themselves, at work, and in relationships. This booklet explores the anger cycle, its effects, and methods of managing it, including the benefits of forgiveness. In Islam, the most powerful person is considered to be the one who can control their anger.

### *Disclaimer*

The views expressed are the author's own and not necessarily the opinion of ICNA Relief.

## WHAT IS ANGER?

Anger, aggression, or rage are powerful emotions that can be destructive if they are not controlled or if they persist. These emotions can affect both physical and mental health, relationships, and social functioning. Physical signs of these emotions include high blood pressure, increased heartbeat, a red face, sweating, and physical tremors.

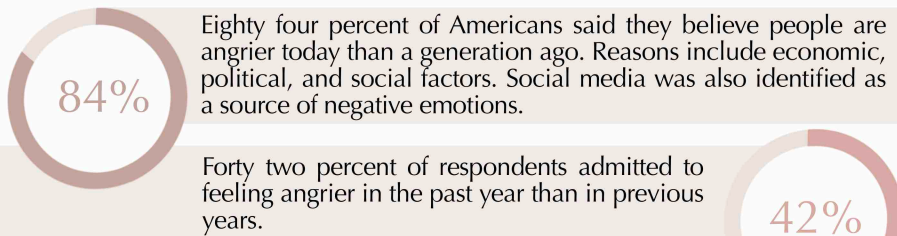


## ANGER SURVEY

In a 2020-21 Gallup Poll of 160,000 people from 116 countries, more individuals reported feeling stressed, sad, angry, and worried than ever before. The trend of happiness has been declining for over a decade, with one in four people experiencing sadness or anger.

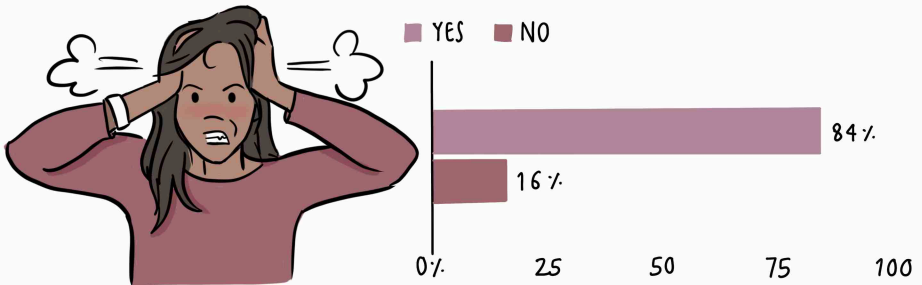
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/jackkelly/2021/07/31/global-emotions-survey-shows-record-high-levels-of-people-feeling-stressed-sad-angry-and-worried/?sh=621238746963>

In a recent poll...



The poll asked if people consider anger a negative emotion. 7 in 10 said yes, while others noted that anger can be motivating and lead to action. The survey had 3,004 respondents in November 2018, with a margin of error of +/- 1.8 percentage points.

## ARE WE ANGRIER THAN A GENERATION AGO?



<https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2019/06/26/735757156/poll-americans-say-were-angrier-than-a-generation-ago>

## HOW DOES ANGER AFFECT OUR HEALTH?



### Heart

Anger releases stress hormones, which can harm heart health by worsening blood pumping and increasing the risk of heart disease and heart attacks. Research involving four thousand participants found that the risk of heart attacks more than doubled within two hours after an anger outburst, with a stronger association for intense anger.



### Brain

When we are angry, our brains are ready for quick reactions, and we are more likely to act on the fight-or-flight response. In that emotional state, we are less likely to make sound judgments and may act out physically or verbally, which we may later regret.



### Mental Health

Prolonged anger is often heightened in emotional disorders like anxiety and depression, leading to more severe symptoms and a reduced response to treatment. It can also impact our concentration, thinking patterns, and social relationships, ultimately affecting our well-being.



### Digestion

Research shows a strong link between the brain and the digestive system. When angry, the body goes into fight-or-flight mode, leading to stress and unpleasant gastrointestinal symptoms. Long-term anger could contribute to conditions like inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), and gastrointestinal reflux disease.



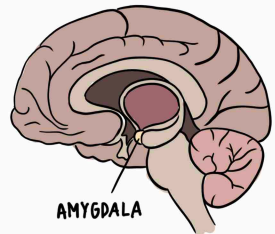
### Sleep

Research indicates a strong link between anger and sleep disruption. Moderate to high levels of anger are significantly associated with an increased risk of sleep disturbances. Additionally, feeling angry can lead to psychological arousal and mental unrest, making it harder to fall asleep.

<https://psychiatry.uchicago.edu/news/how-anger-affects-body>

## THE AMYGDALA

The amygdala, a small almond-shaped structure in the brain, regulates our emotions, especially fear and anger. While its main function is to alert us to potential dangers, it can become overactive, leading to increased stress and anxiety. However, a study conducted at Harvard found that after eight weeks of mindfulness classes, the amygdala showed significantly reduced activity, sending fewer distress signals to the brain.



AMYGDALA



**ICNA**  
**Relief**

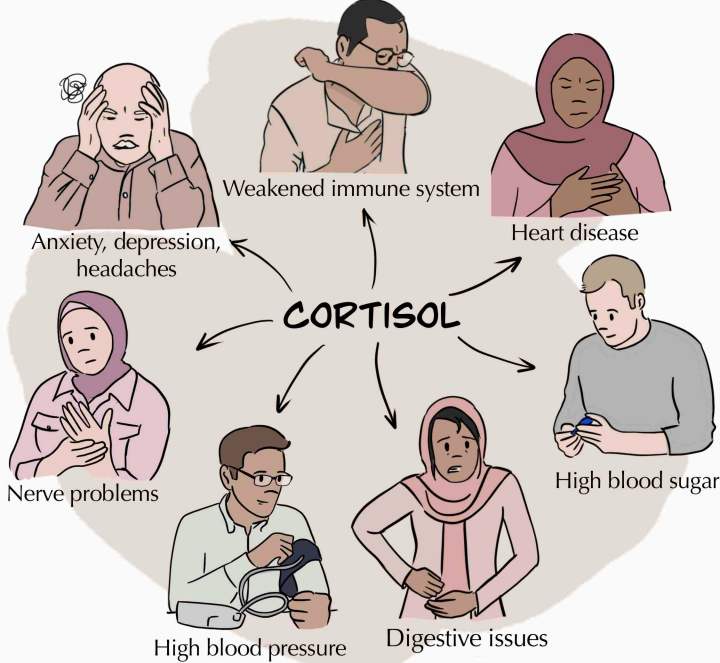
MUSLIM FAMILY SERVICES



## AMYGDALA AND CORTISOL

Cortisol is a stress hormone that helps the body respond to stress by increasing alertness and energy. Chronic stress and anger can lead to excessive cortisol production, causing disruptions in bodily functions, resulting in insomnia, anxiety, depression, and more. While medications are available to reduce high cortisol levels, practicing mindfulness exercises has been shown to reduce cortisol levels by more than 50%.

[https://eocinstitute.org/meditation/meditation-for-anger-how-it-can-help-you-manage-emotions?mind\\_power&gad\\_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQjwsPCyBhD4ARIsAPaaRf3PWSXRFjn\\_5fzgsWakMjpcWc4w10grb4M7D0ND491vc3Gq1nJOv-0aApuVEALw\\_wcB](https://eocinstitute.org/meditation/meditation-for-anger-how-it-can-help-you-manage-emotions?mind_power&gad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQjwsPCyBhD4ARIsAPaaRf3PWSXRFjn_5fzgsWakMjpcWc4w10grb4M7D0ND491vc3Gq1nJOv-0aApuVEALw_wcB)



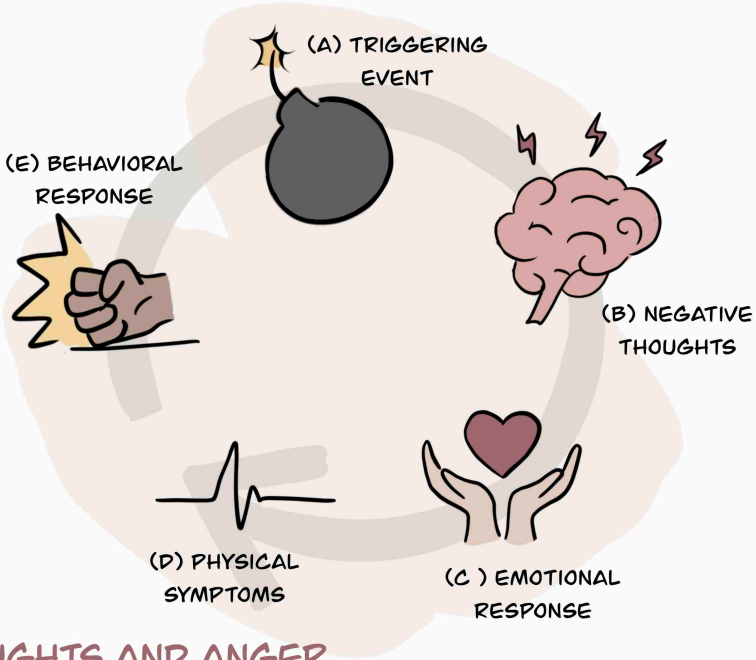
## HOW DOES ANGER AFFECT OUR RELATIONSHIPS?



- It may result in fear, distrust, anxiety, and trauma.
- Distancing and dislike of the angry person.
- Lack of closeness with affected persons.
- It may lead to fights, crime, and legal consequences.
- Repentance and guilt in later life when it's too late to mend.

# THE ANGER CYCLE

Our thoughts, emotions, reactions, behaviors, and situations are interconnected and can trigger anger. Each person responds differently to anger triggers. It's important to understand our own triggers to manage anger.



## THOUGHTS AND ANGER

The way we speak to ourselves influences how we feel and act. When we are angry, we often use words like 'should' or 'must'. For example, we might think “my spouse shouldn’t try to control me” or “my boss must respect me for what I do.” While it’s natural to have these expectations, things do not always go as we want them to, which can make us angry. Instead of focusing on changing other people’s behavior, we can work on our own thoughts and actions, as we do have some control over them.

## WHAT IS MICROAGGRESSION?

Microaggression is subtle and often unintentional, demeaning, or derogatory communication. It could be verbal, nonverbal, or environmental cues that reflect prejudices, stereotypes, and biases. Microaggressions can happen toward one’s race, gender, religion, and more, often manifesting as passive-aggressive behaviors. Examples include sexist or racist comments, jokes, stereotypes, etc., and downplaying other’s concerns.

These microaggressions manifest as micro-invalidations (when a person is discounted, discredited, or not heard), micro-insults (receiving disrespect or implying inferiority in implicit ways), and micro-assaults (intentional prejudice, intimidation, or harm to persons of a marginalized group).



## DEALING WITH MICROAGGRESSION

Microaggressions in any relationship can have severe psychological consequences for one's safety and well-being. It is critical to address them quickly and firmly to create a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment for all individuals. Here are a few ways to deal with microaggressions:

- Being aware of microaggressions is the first step. They can be subtle and go unnoticed, so it's important to nip them in the bud.
- Communicate calmly but clearly with the person committing microaggression, expressing displeasure.
- Set up clear boundaries that microaggressions are not acceptable in the relationship, and you expect mutually respectful behavior.

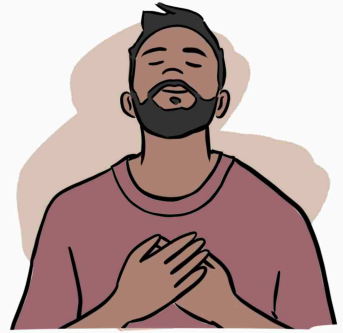


- Separate the person from the behavior, meaning that while you may confront the person with microaggression, you still consider him or her as a respectful human being.
- Since others may be unaware of the impact of their words or actions, educate them gently, explain the impact of microaggressions, and help them prioritize relationships.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-wisdom-of-anger/202404/microaggressions-are-major-problems-in-relationships>

## HEALTHY ANGER

Healthy anger involves reflecting and empowering the rational mind to dominate the emotional mind. Rather than focusing on others, it's about being aware of our feelings and acting responsibly. It can include compassion and forgiveness and enables assertive communication without hurting others.



## THOUGHT MANAGEMENT

Here are some the ways to recognize self-thoughts after experiencing anger. Practicing these can help us manage our anger during an episode.



1. Identify your triggers. Note situations that made you angry.
2. Identify and write down the thoughts you had when you were angry.
3. How did you feel, and did the anger bring other emotions like sadness or frustration?
4. Rate the intensity of your feelings on a scale of 1-10. Ten is the most intense.
5. What did you feel in your body?
6. How did you respond or behave?

## THOUGHT TRANSFORMATION

This involves shifting your mindset from negative to positive. First, you need to recognize the negative thoughts, acknowledge them, and then transform them into more positive ones.

**Trigger:** My spouse constantly asks what I watch on social media.

**Negative thoughts:** My spouse is trying to control my life. He/she doesn't give me the freedom to enjoy what I do in my free time and is trying to control my life.

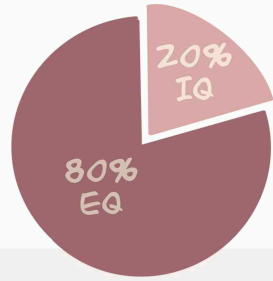
**Positive thoughts:** Maybe I am not giving enough time to my spouse, and he/she wants my attention. Another healthier thought could be that my spouse notices I get upset or depressed after watching the news and wants me to stay away from hurtful information.

After transforming your thoughts from negative to positive, record the intensity of your emotions. Compare the intensity between negative and positive thoughts and choose the one you like to enjoy.



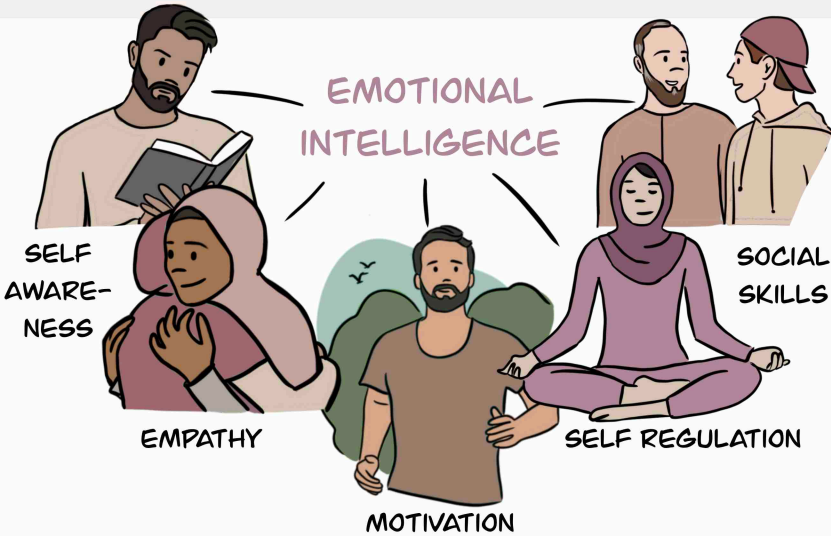
## EQ OVER IQ

Scientific research has shown that emotional intelligence (EQ) can be more important than high IQ, leading to less anger. Self-awareness and mindfulness can enhance emotional intelligence. IQ contributes to 20% of success in life and the remaining depends on EQ.



When angry, use EQ in the following ways:

1. Wait, distract yourself from the situation, and delay interaction until you can communicate more effectively.
2. Become aware of your emotions.
3. Avoid blame, as it could be misplaced.
4. Avoid self-centeredness and consider why the other person could be acting in a certain way.
5. Show compassion and interest in other people's perspectives.
6. Communicate skillfully by exploring ways of compromise.'



## MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

Redirecting one's attention from triggers, mindfulness meditation can calm the part of the brain that controls emotions, reducing the frequency and intensity of anger outbursts. Mindfulness allows us to experience negative emotions like anger and increases compassion towards others, leading to positive changes in one's life.

<https://psychcentral.com/blog/a-mindful-practice-to-fully-feel-your-anger>

[https://teach.mindfulnessexercises.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Alleviate-Feelings-of-Anger-and-Resentment-Guided-Meditation-Script-MindfulnessExercises.com\\_.pdf](https://teach.mindfulnessexercises.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Alleviate-Feelings-of-Anger-and-Resentment-Guided-Meditation-Script-MindfulnessExercises.com_.pdf)



**ICNA**  
**Relief**



## ANGER AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

Mike Fisher, Founder of British association of Anger Management coaching developed an AI-powered tool for managing anger that helps one understand triggers and provides skills based on individualized data. To explore ways of managing anger with mindfulness and AI, see:

<https://www.mydaily.coach/app/baam-beating-anger>

## MANAGE ANGER THE PROPHETIC WAY!

### Keep silent

The Prophet (S) said: "If any of you becomes angry, let him keep silent." Musnad Ahmad, 1/329; Sahih al-Jami', 693, 4027

### Do not move

The Prophet (S) said: "If any of you becomes angry while standing, he/she should sit down, so the anger goes away; if it does not go away, one should lie down." Sunan Abi Dawud 4782

### Advice to a companion

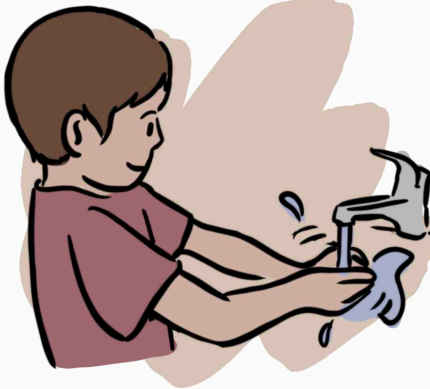
Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that a man said to the Prophet (S), "Advise me." The Prophet said, "Do not become angry." The man repeated his request several times, and each time the Prophet told him, "Do not become angry." Fath al-Bari, 10/456

### Who is a strong person?

The Prophet (S) said: "The strong person is not the one who can overpower others (in wrestling); rather, the one who controls oneself when angry." Bukhari 6114; Muslim 2609

### Paradise will be yours

"Whoever controls his anger at the time when he has the means to act upon it, Allah will fill his heart with contentment on the Day of Resurrection." Al-Tabarani, 12/453; Sahih al-Jami', 7374



### Make ablution

The Prophet is also reported to have said, "Anger is like burning coal that burns in the heart. When anyone gets angry, let him make ablution with water, as anger arises out of fire." In another narration, anger comes from the devil, who is made of fire. Water can extinguish fire, so it can be used to make ablution when angry or to remain silent when angry.

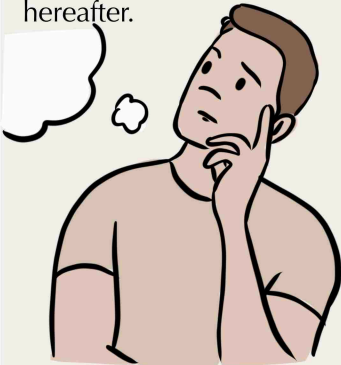
# ISLAMIC SCHOLARS ON ANGER MANAGEMENT



## Abū Hāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazali (1058-1111)

Imam Ghazali, considered the 11th century Mujaddid or renewer of faith, emphasized in his famous book *Ihya Uloom Ad-Deen* that managing anger requires a combination of knowledge and action.

- *Reflect* on the rewards and punishments of controlling anger as mentioned in the Quran and the sayings of the Prophet. Anticipating rewards for controlling anger will deter you from seeking revenge.
- *Consider the punishment* from Allah and realize that His punishment could outweigh any punishment you might inflict on someone.
- *Be mindful* of the consequences of harboring enmity and seeking revenge. Your enemy may seek revenge in this world and the hereafter.



- *Visualize* the face of an angry person, which resembles that of a wild animal. A person who controls their anger appears composed and wise. Which image would you prefer to portray?
- *Recognize* that the devil may tempt you by saying, "You will appear weak if you don't get angry," so don't fall into that trap.
- *Contemplate* the reasons behind your anger and accept that life's circumstances are God's will.

<https://www.ghazali.org/ihya/english/ihya-vol3.htm>



## Abu Zaid Al Balkhi (849-943 AD)

In his famous book *“Masaleh Al-Abdan wal Anfus,”* Al-Balkhi, a renowned scholar during the Islamic Golden Age, emphasized examining the “nafs” in treatments. He categorized psychological disorders into anger, fears and phobias, depression, obsession, and self-talk. Balkhi's advice for addressing anger is as follows:

Anger increases blood circulation, changes skin color, raises body temperature, and causes uncontrollable movements. It is more common and intense in people who are naturally intolerant and hot-tempered. Everyone needs to protect themselves against the adverse effects of anger for a stress-free and happy life.

- He advised that those most in need of training are rulers whose anger can affect many people.
- He asked that the rulers have an external advisor and an internal self-treatment to control anger.
- The wise advisor must counsel the rulers with reminders about the harmful outcomes of anger and virtues of forgiveness in this world and the hereafter.

The internal approach to anger management involves taming one's thoughts and using relaxation techniques. When a person first feels anger coming, they can prevent it, and with repeated practice, they can make anger prevention a habit.

- Recommended practicing positive thinking, patience, and forgiveness.
- Remember that those who forgive are remembered, and their stories are recorded for others to follow.
- Reminded to focus on the wrongful deed and not on the person.
- We consider our shortcomings before judging others, and it is unfair to punish others for something one has done in the past.
- Focus on the good deeds and positive qualities of the person who has done wrong to reduce negative feelings.



Abū Zayd al-Balkhi's  
SUSTENANCE OF THE SOUL  
THE COGNITIVE BEHAVIOR THERAPY OF A NINTH CENTURY PHYSICIAN

MALIK BADRI

## FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness involves letting go of anger, bitterness, and the desire for revenge against someone who has wronged us. Studies show that it has positive impacts on mental and physical health, reducing stress, anxiety, and depression while improving cardiovascular health and immune function. Additionally, forgiveness strengthens relationships, increases empathy and compassion, and contributes to well-being.

### HOW TO FORGIVE?

1. Acknowledge your anger and that it hasn't helped.
2. Feel compassion for the offender by understanding the circumstances they might have been in.
3. Decide to forgive despite any grudge.
4. Let go of expectations, including an apology.
5. Note personal growth from the act of forgiving.
6. Forgive yourself because one could attribute someone else's anger to oneself.



<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/forgiveness>

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/the-power-of-forgiveness>

### WHAT DO THE QURAN AND HADITH SAY ABOUT FORGIVENESS?



“... and let them pardon and overlook. Would you not like that Allah should forgive you? And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.” (Q 24:22)

“... and whenever they are angry, they forgive.” (Q 42:37)

“But if you pardon and overlook and forgive - then indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.” (Q 64:14)

The Prophet (S) said, “Do not harbor a grudge against one another, nor jealousy, nor enmity; and do not show your backs to one another; and become ‘as fellow brothers and slaves of Allah. It is not lawful for a Muslim to avoid speaking with his brother beyond three days.” [Book 17, 57, Riyadh as-Salihin).



MUSLIM FAMILY SERVICES



# ANGER SCALE

Outraged, fuming, livid



Shouting  
Fighting  
Violent  
Breakdown  
Impulsivity  
Fits  
Shutting down  
Throwing things

Angry, heated, riled up



Arguing  
Yelling  
Fist clenching  
Stomping  
Loud voice  
Insulting  
Hateful

Aggravated, tense



Growling  
Raising voice  
Glaring  
Silent treatment  
Negative outlook  
Putting down  
Condescending

Displeased, Cranky



Rolling eyes  
Sighing loud  
Bad attitude  
Looking down  
Snapping back  
Mood swings  
Negative self-talk

Relaxed, Calm



Engaged  
Smiling  
Positive  
Enjoying life  
Ignoring small letdowns  
Happy

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?



Counting  
Taking deep breaths  
Exercise  
Tense and relax muscles  
Take a nap  
Practice grounded techniques



Squeeze a stress ball  
Drink water  
Take a shower  
Meditate  
Pray  
Brisk walk  
Journal



Get some fresh air  
Talk to friends  
Practice hobbies  
Move away from trigger  
Listen to the Qur'an  
Consult with family



Be grateful  
Assist someone else  
Pursue your goals  
Write about your successes  
Be a good listener  
Be a good role model



## TRIGGERS AND COPING

After listing your top three anger triggers, identify coping skills that could help you with each trigger.

<i>Trigger</i>	<i>How you can cope</i>
_____ →	_____
_____ →	_____
_____ →	_____

## THE FORGIVENESS CHART



**Do you have anger towards anyone?**

**Yes** - Try out anger management tips given in this booklet.

**No** - Congratulations! You are the lucky one Allah Promises to forgive. (Q. 24:22, 64:14) Research shows that those who forgive enjoy better health, reduced anxiety, and improved sleep.

**Do you want to stay hostage to anger and miss out on the sweetness of forgiveness?**

**Yes** - Try out anger management tips given in this booklet.

**No** - Congratulations! See answers to NO above!



**Do you hold a grudge and haven't forgiven that person?**

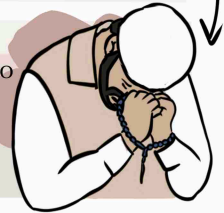
**Yes** - Remember what the Prophet (S) said, "It is not lawful for a Muslim to avoid speaking with his brother/sister beyond three days."

**No** - Congratulations! See answers to NO above!

**Are you angry at yourself for your past negative actions?**

**Yes** - Forgive yourself and avoid the same mistakes. Reach out to others you have hurt and apologize. Research shows that self-forgiveness can boost one's health and improve relationships.

**No** - It is healthy to regret past negative actions and attempt to change oneself.



**Did you find this exercise helpful?**

**Yes** - Share this booklet with others!

**No** - Take a look at our other booklets.

Please share and support the publication and free distribution of the ICNA Relief Mental Health Series.

<https://icnarelieve.org/mfs/resources/>



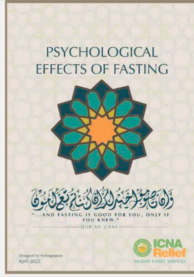
**ICNA**  
**Relief**

MUSLIM FAMILY SERVICES

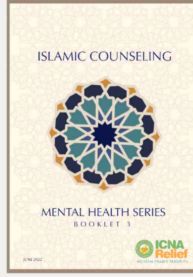
# MENTAL HEALTH SERIES



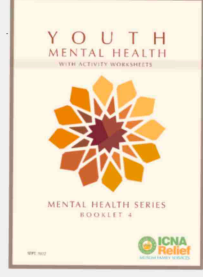
Booklet 1



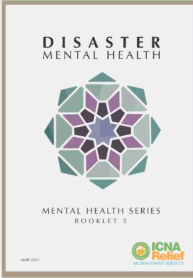
Booklet 2



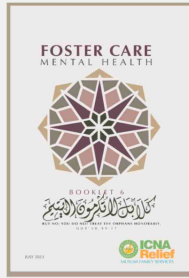
Booklet 3



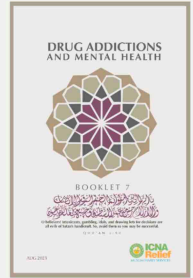
Booklet 4



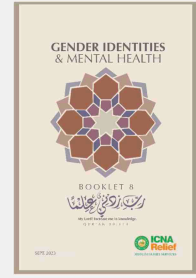
Booklet 5



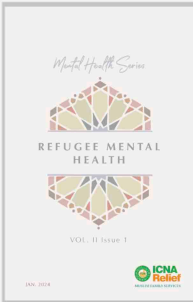
Booklet 6



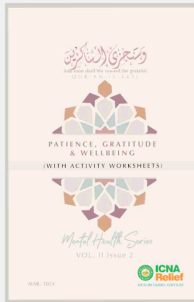
Booklet 7



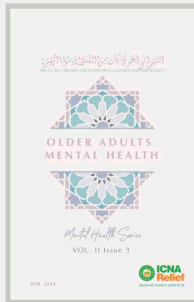
Booklet 8



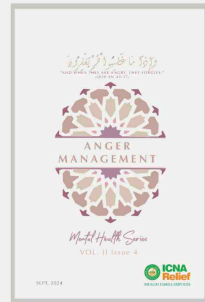
Vol. 2, Issue 1



Vol. 2, Issue 2



Vol. 2, Issue 3



Vol. 2, Issue 4

Please share and support the publication and free distribution of the ICNA Relief Mental Health Series.

<https://icnarelief.org/mfs/resources/>