

SOLUTIONS

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Bless
Your
Heart

A Different Approach to Anger Management

We all have bad things happen in our lives. Why is it that some people seem to be able to let things roll off their backs, while other people wail that it is the end of the world? People with anger management issues tend to make all the bad things the same size: HUGE. They have difficulty assigning the appropriate amount of energy to the event. When everything that happens is big, you will stay in a constant state of frustration and anger.

Here is how anger works:

An event occurs.

You have thoughts about the event.

Your thoughts lead to behaviors.

Your thoughts and behaviors will either increase or decrease your emotions.

Let's look at an example.

Here is the **event**: You are late for work, and the person driving in front of you on the two-lane road is going very slowly.

Typical **thoughts** might include, "What is wrong with this person?!" "Get off the road!" "Why do you even still have a license?!"

Those thoughts will likely lead to **behaviors** that might include tailgating, honking your horn, hand gestures, or even speeding illegally around the driver and risking a ticket or wreck.

Those thoughts and behaviors are most definitely going to increase your **anger** and **frustration**.

Now let's look at the same example a different way:

You are behind the same slow driver, and you are still late for work. BUT...what if you forced your thoughts in a different direction — what I call the "Bless your heart" response. "Bless his heart, he's having car trouble." "Bless her heart, she just left the eye doctor and her eyes are dilated." "Bless their hearts, they are elderly and nervous."

Obviously, we don't know if any of those are true, but just choosing to think in that manner automatically begins to calm a person down. When you are calmer, you can make better behavior choices such as coming up with an alternative route, or taking the opportunity to have a "relaxation moment" as you are forced to slow down.

"Bless your heart" is a phrase we hear often in the South. It is one that conveys empathy and understanding. Now you can begin to fully understand its power to help you out of frustrating circumstances. Bless your heart, you just didn't know any better before!

