

Keeping Cool When Things Get Hot

Author: Naomi Brower



Families often spend more time together doing things in the summer. While this time together is wonderful, it can also mean more opportunities for potential frustration and unmet expectations that can lead to anger. Anger is a part of life, and it can often be a signal of problems that need to be addressed. But if left unchecked, it can lead to damaged relationships, work problems, health concerns and other

negative outcomes. When anger arises, the following four steps can help individuals cool down before doing something they may later regret.

Stop. When signs of anger arise (feeling hot, shaking, tightness in muscles, etc.), stop and take a step back from the situation before saying or doing anything else.

Consider: What are some of the warning signs that you are getting angry?

Pause. Take a break from the situation to calm down. When we are angry we often are so full of emotions that we cannot think clearly. Taking time to step away from the situation (at least 20 minutes) gives our bodies time to calm down so we can think more rationally about the situation. Consider doing something during this time to help calm down such as going for a walk, listening to calming music, taking deep breaths, etc.

Consider: What is something I can do while I'm taking a break that will help me calm down?

1. Anger is often referred to as a secondary emotion, which means there is another feeling (i.e., frustration, hurt, fear, etc.) that comes before it. By taking time to focus on the root issue, it is more likely that the source of negative emotions can get resolved.

Once the root issue is discovered, consider the possible ways to resolve the situation and the potential outcomes that may come from each. Weighing consequences often leads to the best course of action.

Consider: What are the underlying feelings and issues in the situation? What are the possible ways of dealing with this issue and potential outcomes of these approaches?

Act. After deciding on the course of action, act on the situation. This often includes problem solving with others who

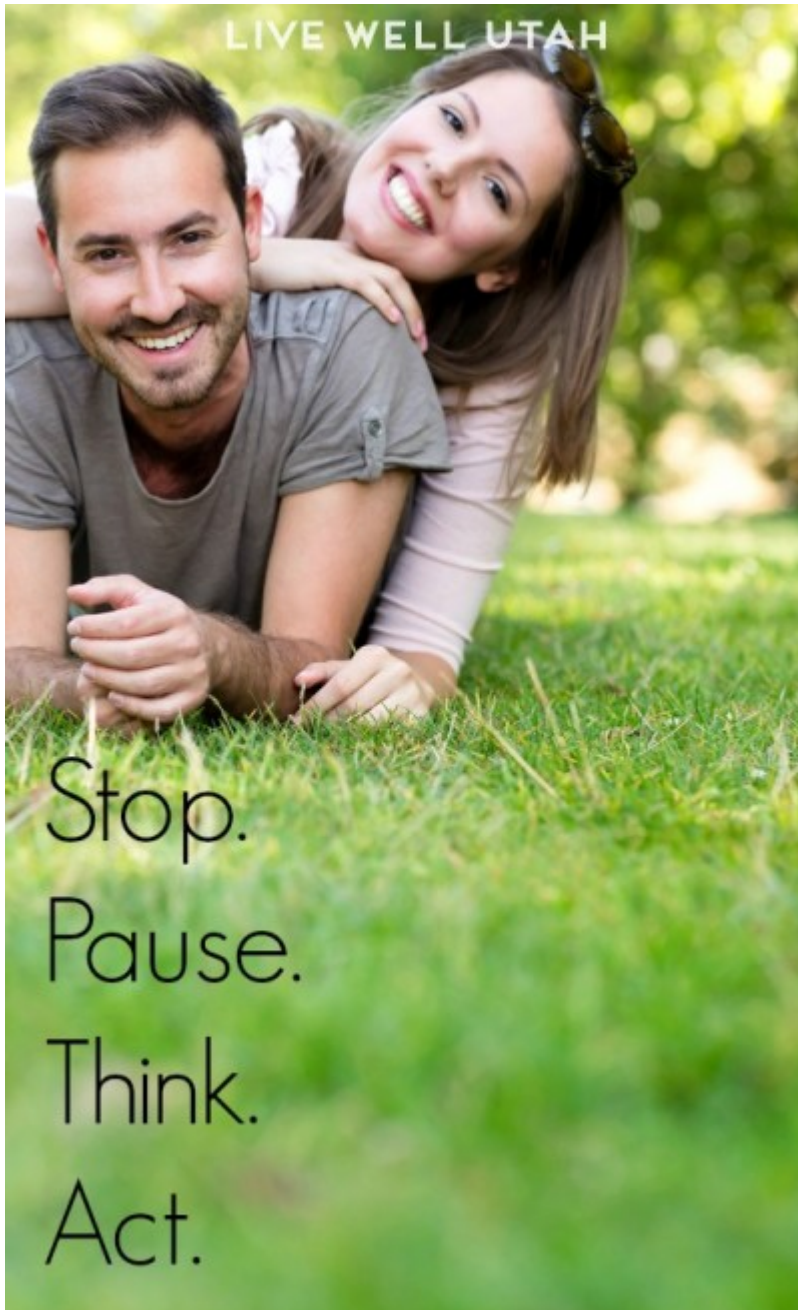
are part of the situation in order to find a solution that works for everyone. The goal is not to just express anger, but to understand and deal with the source of it so negative feelings can be resolved.

Consider: How will I choose to act so that the situation can be improved or resolved?

Remember, anger is a choice. No one can force us to become angry—we have a choice in how we feel and how we respond to situations. While we may have developed a tendency to respond in a certain way to certain events or situations, we CAN change.

By following these steps, we take control of our anger. We choose how we will act instead of reacting and letting our emotions control us.

(stop.pause.think.act)



Naomi Brower is an Extension Associate Professor for Utah State University. She has a Masters of Family and Human Development from Utah State University. Often called the relationship guru by friends, Naomi is passionate about helping others improve the quality of their lives through creating and strengthening their relationships with others.