

Summer heats up our emotions, too

June 28 2016, by Bob Shepard



Credit: University of Alabama at Birmingham

Emotions can heat up when it is hot outside, says University of Alabama at Birmingham psychologist Josh Klapow, Ph.D. Numerous studies have shown heat is related to increased aggressive/violent behavior.

"The discomfort caused by [extreme heat](#) can lead to increased anger and aggression in many people," Klapow said. "Tempers get shorter as we get

hotter, and we are more likely to react angrily to circumstances that wouldn't bother us as much if the weather were cooler."

Klapow says recent events have left many people emotionally primed, and the addition of [heat](#) and discomfort is adding fuel to an already smoldering fire.

"There are a number of emotionally laden situations that are on people's minds now as the temperature's rise, including the Orlando shooting, the rhetoric surrounding the [presidential elections](#), debates on gun control and the continuing specter of terrorism," Klapow said.

Klapow suggests three steps to control anger.

- Relax. Slow down, take a deep breath, calm down. "While it is probably the last thing you want to hear when angry, it is critical to slow down the anger response," Klapow said. "Take deep breaths, which will modify heart rate and [blood pressure](#), and relax your muscles, which will slow anger response. Repeat a phrase such as 'calm down' over and over until your anger fades."
- Rethink. Think the situation through, and see if your anger is misplaced. "Ask yourself why are you angry," Klapow suggested. "Rethinking means coming up with another explanation for the problem that doesn't cause you so much anger. Refocusing your thinking may help you solve the problem rather than just getting—and staying—mad."
- Redirect. Take all that emotional energy and do something positive with it. Try to solve the problem, if possible; but at least turn your energy into something productive, such as exercise or anything that works for you in releasing your pent-up anger or emotion."

Klapow says that [anger](#) is a normal part of life. What we do with it, and

how we manage it, are the keys to good emotional health.

Provided by University of Alabama at Birmingham

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