Anger and the rules in my head

Anger often means a rule of yours has been broken.

Name _____ Date _____

We all carry rules about how people should behave and how the world should work. When a rule is broken, anger follows. Some rules are fair. Some are so rigid that they are broken many times a day.

Rigid rule	Flexible preference
"People should always be on time."	"I prefer people to be on time. Sometimes they will not be."
"Nobody should speak to me like that."	"I do not like being spoken to like that, and I can say so."
"Things should go the way I planned."	"I like things to go to plan. Often they do not, and I can adapt."

A situation that keeps making me angry

The rule of mine that is being broken ("They should...", "It is not right that...")

Where did I get this rule?

What happens to me when I hold it rigidly?

My rule, rewritten as a preference

How might I feel and act differently if I held it that way?

© 2026 Patrick O'Hare Therapy · patrickoharetherapy.com
This handout supports your therapy. It does not replace professional advice.