Cooling down: a menu

Ways to calm your body before you decide what to do.

When anger is high, it is hard to think clearly. Calm your body first and think afterwards. Tick the ones worth trying.

In the first minute

- [ ] Stop talking
- [ ] Breathe out slowly, five times
- [ ] Drop my shoulders, open my hands
- [ ] Count backwards from 20
- [ ] Step back, or sit down
- [ ] Say to myself: "Not now. Later."

In the next half hour

- [ ] Leave the room or go outside
- [ ] Walk fast, run or cycle
- [ ] Splash cold water on my face
- [ ] Have a glass of water
- [ ] Listen to music
- [ ] Do something with my hands
- [ ] Ring someone who calms me down
- [ ] Write it all down, then put it away

Things that feel good and make it worse

- [ ] Going over and over what they did
- [ ] Punching pillows or "letting it out"
- [ ] Drinking
- [ ] Driving while angry
- [ ] Firing off a message or email
- [ ] Getting others on my side

About venting

Research suggests that hitting things or ranting keeps the body fired up and makes anger more likely next time. Burning off energy by walking or running works. Rehearsing the grievance does not.

My top five for cooling down

Where I will keep this list so I see it when I need it

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This handout supports your therapy. It does not replace professional advice.