



# Anger in the Workplace: Understanding the Causes of Aggression and Violence

By Seth Allcorn

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## Anger in the Workplace: Understanding the Causes of Aggression and Violence By Seth Allcorn

Allcorn explores what it means to feel angry at work. Anger has its origins in anxiety that arises from feeling frustrated, humiliated, and threatened at work. Anxiety creates a biological and psychological readiness to act that is guided by whether it is acceptable to feel angry at work. Employees act responsibly if they feel that their anger is acceptable. They may also act in ways that are destructive to self, others, and the workplace if they feel that being angry is not acceptable. Managing the development of anger and its expression in the workplace is an important aspect in designing a better workplace.

The book defines anger and aggression by synthesizing biological, psychological, and social perspectives. The social acceptability of anger and the fear that it interferes with judgement and results in aggression are discussed. Sex and gender-based differences in the experience of and expression of anger and aggression are explored. Learning to cope with anger is discussed. If feeling angry is not avoided then owning one's anger, thinking it through, and acting upon it constructively are important. Anger and aggression can contribute to innovation and productivity. The workplace is, however, a contributor to feeling angry because it promotes feelings of helplessness, persecution, alienation, and worthlessness. Hierarchical organization, power and authority relations, leadership styles, and organizational culture contribute to the development of these feelings. Desires for attachment and the fear of abandonment and desires for autonomy and fear of engulfment in the workplace must be managed to avoid anger. The book concludes by reviewing the relationship between anger and organizational dynamics.

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### **Bibliography**

- Sales Rank: #5599732 in Books
- Published on: 1994-09-30
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.21" h x .50" w x 6.14" l, .91 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 192 pages



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#### Review

... "a welcome addition to the literature on violence in the workplace."-Employee Assistance Quarterly

... "a useful resource. Personnel specialists, managers, and supervisors might improve productivity by developing hiring and training tools, and employees could use this information to help avoid anger and manage it if it arises."- Monthly Labor Review

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#### From the Back Cover

Anger in the Workplace explores what it means to feel angry at work. Anger has its origins in anxiety that arises from feeling frustrated, humiliated, or threatened at work. Anxiety creates a biological and psychological readiness to act which is guided by whether it is acceptable to feel angry at work. Employees are more likely to act responsibly if they feel that their anger is acceptable. They may also act in ways that are destructive to self, others, and the workplace if they feel that being angry is not acceptable. Managing the development of anger and its expression in the workplace is an important aspect in designing a better workplace. The book defines anger and aggression by synthesizing biological, psychological, and social perspectives. The social acceptability of anger and the fear that it interferes with judgment and results in aggression are discussed, as are sex and gender-based differences in the experience of and expression of anger and aggression. Learning to cope with anger and the importance of owning one's anger, thinking it through, and acting upon it constructively are also discussed. Depending how anger is acted out, it can be the source of major contributions to innovation and productivity or a major blocker of change and work. The book explores how the workplace is a contributor to feeling angry because it promotes feelings of helplessness, alienation, and worthlessness. Hierarchical organization, power and authority relations, and

leadership styles contribute to the development of these feelings. Desire for attachment and the fear of abandonment and desire for autonomy and fear of engulfment in the workplace must be managed to avoid anger. The book concludes by reviewing the relationship between anger and organizational dynamics.

#### About the Author

SETH ALLCORN is Associate Dean for Fiscal Affairs at the Stritch School of Medicine, Loyola University of Chicago. He is Executive Director of the International Society for the Psychoanalytic Study of Organizations. Among his many publications are *Codependency in the Workplace* (Quorum, 1992) and *Workplace Superstars in Resistant Organizations* (Quorum, 1991).

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