

Anger is a very human emotion that is inseparable from the human experience and learning to properly deal with anger is a challenge as old as humanity itself. Written accounts from ancient times verify the challenge posed by anger. Cain killed his brother Able in a fit of anger and jealousy. Julius Caesar was murdered by a group of Roman senators angry over his quest for power. In fact, one of the oldest surviving written documents is an angry letter from the 18<sup>th</sup> century BC written to complain about the quality of copper purchased from a merchant. The arrival of social media and our instant access to news means that it has never been easier to engage in angry dialogue or find sources of anger. Whether the perception of our current existence being an exceptionally angry time is accurate or simply a result of our consistent exposure to anger, there is no doubt that unmanaged anger is a personal and public safety issue. An internet search for “killed in road rage” will yield pages of news stories from 2021 detailing incidents in the US where someone died as a result of violence spawned by something as inconsequential as driving behavior. In February of this year, a man in Pennsylvania killed two neighbors because of an argument that began over snow removal. In all these incidents, one or more of the people involved failed to temper the anger fueling the problem and tragic consequences resulted.

Feeling anger is a normal human response. What you do with that feeling is the key to staying safe and free from any legal consequences. Currently, one-third of the people being held in the Benton County Jail are there for criminal charges rooted in anger and violence. Your key to staying safe in tense situations will always be de-escalation. A common component of these anger-filled situations that end in tragedy is the continued escalation of tensions between the parties involved. In almost all instances, if one person refuses to escalate the situation, tragedy can be avoided. The Benton County Sheriff’s Office has published videos on YouTube on the topic of workplace safety. These videos can be found by searching YouTube for “Benton County MN Sheriff’s Office.” One of the published videos focuses on dealing with angry people. While the video was made with a workplace in mind, many of the tactics demonstrated translate into everyday life outside of a workplace. If you’d like some solid advice on how to keep yourself safe in tense and anger-filled moments, give this video a look. In addition to our video, there are many resources available in both print and electronic form that provide instruction on how to de-escalate situations. Much of this advice comes down to a simple concept of thinking before you act or speak. Considering the consequences of a response and weighing those consequences against the importance of the controversy will serve you well. In almost all circumstances, there is a de-escalated solution to the issue that will serve everyone better and make for safer communities. For situations that move beyond everyday frustration and into the realm of criminal activity, law enforcement agencies are ready to assist victims, de-escalate situations, and maintain public safety.

Choosing the path of de-escalation can be difficult for anyone. If you or someone you know has an unusually difficult time dealing with anger, there is professional help available to deal with this condition. The St. Cloud area has several mental health providers who provide treatment to people who may struggle with managing anger. Dealing with this treatable condition will provide a better and safer life for those struggling and those around them.

At some point we will all experience a person who cuts in line, a driver who nearly causes a car crash, or a stranger who is belligerent and insulting. In those instances, I hope that you will reflect upon what is truly important in that moment and what is the safest response. Should you need some additional incentive to choose the path that prioritizes your personal safety, keep in mind the family, friends, and others who count on you. I believe it is safe to say that all the people who found themselves sudden and unexpected victims of anger that turned to violence have people in their lives who now miss

them terribly. Many people faced with anger choose wisely in these instances and continue safely through their lives. I hope you will as well. For more crime prevention information and safety information visit the Benton County Sheriff's Office website at: <https://www.co.benton.mn.us/211/Crime-Prevention>. You can also like and follow us on Facebook and Twitter at @BentonMNSheriff for regular updates and crime prevention messages.