

PART III

Improving Your  
Specific Mood and  
Behavior Concerns



# 8

## Dealing with Irritability, Anger, Aggressiveness, and Violent Behavior

In this part of the book, I organized much of my advice about nutrition, supplements, and lifestyle into specific plans for improving mood and behavior problems. These problems fall into several categories that include

- Irritability, pissy moods, anger, and physical violence
- Anxiety, nervousness, tension, fear, and panic
- Impulsive and distractible behavior
- Mood swings associated with fatigue, mental fuzziness, blood sugar problems, and being overweight
- Depression and down days
- Alcohol and drug abuse

Each grouping encompasses many related mood and behavior issues, ranging from mild to severe. For example, feelings of resentment are related to stronger feelings of anger and violent behavior. Similarly, anxiety ranges from vague feelings of nervousness to panic attacks. Sometimes minor mood problems escalate to more serious ones, and it's usually easier to correct these problems while they remain relatively

minor. The chances of your physically hurting yourself or another person, or damaging your relationships, increase as your moods and behavior become more intense.

In these chapters, you'll notice that there is often overlap between moods. For example, anxiety is frequently intertwined with depression, and post-traumatic syndrome usually entails both anxiety and depression (although I have placed PTSD in the chapter addressing anxiety problems). I've categorized moods for the purpose of this book based on dominant characteristics.

### **Get Aware, Get Willing, and Get With It**

One key step in improving moods and behavior is being proactive and fighting the inertia that often keeps us from changing our lives for the better. *Inertia* is a scientific term that describes an object's resistance to movement or its inability to stop moving once it's started. In this context, it refers to a person's resistance to change. Helen Selwitschka, R.N., a psychiatric nurse in Tucson, Arizona, sums up her anti-inertia strategy in a simple phrase: "Get aware, get willing, and get with it."

Although this maxim might sound like an oversimplification (along the lines of the "Just do it" advertising slogan), it actually lists steps that are necessary in the long-term effort to improve your moods, behavior, and quality of life. Don't let the long-term nature of the steps scare you off. You can begin working on all three steps almost immediately and simultaneously—even if you take only baby steps—and you'll quickly see the benefits. Selwitschka's view has been shaped by years of helping people with addictive and self-destructive moods and behavior patterns.

- First, you must become aware of your mood or behavior problem and how it affects your life and the people around you. This awareness may prompt you to seek professional psychological counseling and engage in personal introspection to understand what's wrong with your moods and behavior. At that point, you may realize that you would be happier if you improved some aspects of your life.
- Second, you must be willing to act on your newfound understanding and follow the recommendations of your counselor or therapist.

You will likely need to develop a plan or specific goals that describe what you will do differently.

- Third, you must be willing to act on your knowledge and your plan, working to modify your moods and your actions. Making these changes may be difficult, but with each baby step, you become more capable of making further changes. Those changes might include recognizing and changing bad behavior, modifying eating habits, taking nutritional supplements, and improving other aspects of your lifestyle.

## **Anger and Physical Violence**

Feelings of anger encompass a wide range of negative and hostile feelings toward other people, as well as toward institutions (such as the government or political parties). Anger-related feelings and behavior (how you express your feelings of anger) include brooding, resentment, annoyance, aggravation, rudeness, sarcasm, passive-aggressiveness, impatience, irritability, inflammatory language, outbursts, negative energy, road rage, hatred, hostile-personality disorder, vital exhaustion, destructive behavior, juvenile delinquency, and adult criminal violence.

### **What You Should Know**

Anger is a secondary emotion, meaning that it develops in response to a primary emotion, such as frustration, hurt, or pain. For example, if your spouse has a sexual affair, your feelings of hurt and betrayal may be expressed as anger. When you're angry with another person, give some thought to *why* you really feel angry—that is, the primary emotion triggering your anger. What has that person done to hurt or frustrate you?

People with hostile-personality disorder have a short fuse and react quickly and with intense anger to feelings of stress. This tendency toward explosive anger appears to stem from a combination of genetics and poor nutrition, resulting in low levels of certain neuronutrients and neurotransmitters. It's also a result of learned behavioral habits. The hair-trigger response that typifies hostile-personality disorder can be modified through dietary improvements, supplements, psychological counseling, and lifestyle changes.

Brooding and resentment are related to anger and, like a simmering dish, tend to cook. I'm sure you've heard the phrase "He's really stewing." Resentment is a feeling of anger that's bottled up. Often, resentment occurs when we feel slighted or put down, or feel that people are acting superior or trying to control us. People with feelings of resentment relive or brood about painful experiences, frequently thinking about what they would do differently if given the chance or what they might do to get even.

On a day-to-day basis, anger is expressed in many ways. Some people seem to be irritable, grumpy, cranky, or "on the warpath" most of the time, and they may take their anger out on people who had nothing to do with their original feelings of hurt. Chronically angry people also tend to misinterpret other people's words and actions and take them personally. Anger and resentment often feed their own escalation. For example, road rage usually results from pent-up frustration about traffic congestion, which may be expressed through horn honking, reckless speeding and lane changing, or freeway shootings. People who have angry outbursts are often described as losing it or having a meltdown.

Impatience is a form of annoyance and anger that's commonly seen in many people's driving habits. A person who is annoyed and impatient with traffic might tailgate, speed, and weave between lanes, only to be stopped at red lights, increasing his or her frustration, annoyance, and impatience. My father taught me the value of pacing while driving—that is, to time my speed so that I hit more green than red lights. This idea of pacing seems to be completely lost on many drivers. It is actually far less frustrating to drive a little slower but to hit more green lights.

Anger taps into primitive brain functions related to physical aggressiveness and survival. The epinephrine (adrenaline) release with anger increases our energy levels for a short while, an important survival trait. Alcohol, which reduces social inhibitions, often increases the expression of anger, either in words or physical actions. That's why alcohol is commonly associated with abusive behavior and fighting. For example, instances of "air rage" have typically involved airline passengers who get drunk and then verbally abuse or physically attack flight personnel.

Psychologists have long thought that anger is related to feelings of low self-esteem or self-worth; however, this idea is now being chal-

lenged. Some psychologists contend that poor self-esteem may, conversely, be the result of feelings of anger. There is evidence that anger is more related to a lack of control over one's life or an inability to change things for the better, often combined with a desire to get back at people who are believed to be responsible.

Is there anything good about anger? It's a normal emotion as long as it is appropriate to the situation and quickly dissipates afterward. Practicing forgiveness can help to reduce anger. Anger increases our physical energy and mental focus, which is good as long as the anger is not misplaced, misdirected, or hurtful.

### Violent Behavior and Nutrition

Violent behavior is essentially a crescendo of anger. Over the last thirty-five years, a small number of researchers, law enforcement personnel, and psychiatrists have investigated how poor nutrition contributes to anger, destructive behavior, and violence. They have found that inadequate nutrition can alter moods, thinking processes, and a moral sense of what is right or wrong.

At the Pfeiffer Treatment Center, located in the Chicago suburb of Warrenville, doctors are researching the use of nutritional supplements to treat severe mood and behavioral disorders, including extreme anger, destructive behavior, and criminal violence. Staff at the center conduct a thorough nutritional and biochemical workup of patients and then prescribe a customized nutritional supplement regimen.

In an analysis of 207 randomly selected patients, the center's scientific director, William Walsh, Ph.D., found that customized supplements led to a 92 percent lower frequency of physical assaults and 53 percent fewer occurrences of property damage. Walsh reported that three-fourths of patients with intense angry outbursts and violent behavior had abnormally high levels of copper relative to zinc. In fact, the high-copper, low-zinc pattern is strongly associated with an explosive temper, "like a volcano going off." About one-third of the patients had difficulty dealing with sugar and other refined carbohydrates, which aggravated existing mood and behavior problems.

In his research, Walsh has consistently found nutrient-handling problems in violent criminals. In an analysis of mineral patterns in thirty

serial killers and mass murderers, he frequently found elevated levels of lead or cadmium, which are highly toxic and interfere with normal brain chemistry. Walsh traced many of these mineral problems to low production of metallothionein, a sulfur-containing protein needed to properly use zinc and to protect against lead and cadmium.

In another study, C. Bernard Gesch, a professor of social work at Oxford University, England, tested the effects of a combination of supplements or placebos on 231 young adult prisoners eighteen years of age and older. The supplements were comparable to conventional once-a-day vitamin formulas, plus essential dietary fats (such as omega-3 fish oils and gamma-linolenic acid).

At the beginning of the study, almost all of the prisoners were found to be deficient in selenium, a mineral that can affect mood, and more than two-thirds of the prisoners were also deficient in magnesium, potassium, iodine, and zinc. Overall, prisoners taking the supplements for several months committed one-fourth fewer offenses. Similar benefits can be achieved in reducing less serious everyday mood and behavior problems.

### Quick Tip

#### Seven Fast Ways to Turn a Bad Mood Around

1. Go to the bathroom.  
Don't laugh! It's a great place to hide out for a few minutes.
2. Rub your eyes (lightly, not enough to irritate them).
3. Wash your face.
4. Have a cup of green tea.
5. Go for a ten-minute walk as a time-out.
6. Eat a little protein, such as a couple of slices of deli turkey.
7. Lie on your back on the floor for five minutes and do some stretching exercises.

## Psychological Tips for Dealing with Your Own Anger

You can cool down your own anger before it gets out of hand. Here are some ways.

*Recognize that you're getting mad.* Develop an internal tripwire to alert you to when your anger is building, instead of allowing it to flare up. Next, determine the specific trigger of your anger, such as something your boss or spouse said to you. Then, work on figuring out why you feel angry. Did someone insult you and catch you off guard, so that you couldn't think of a good response until later?

*Cultivate your own reset switch.* A reset switch is a lot like a circuit breaker that cuts off the electricity when there's a power surge. If you often find yourself becoming impatient or irritable, such as when traffic is moving too slow, use your emotional reset switch to improve your mood.

*Take deep breaths.* Simply taking three or four slow, deep breaths can change your brain chemistry and reduce your stress response, which is intertwined with feelings of anger. When stressed, people tend to take short, shallow breaths.

*Practice visualization.* Imagine yourself in a calmer situation. Follow my visualization guidelines in chapter 7.

*Get it out physically but safely.* It may help to physically release some of your anger, especially if you're a guy. A simple exercise is to clasp your hands together and push them against each other. Another is to squeeze a stress ball.

*Develop a stronger physical release, if needed.* Anger causes physical agitation, and you can reduce agitation through regular and intense physical activity in which you let loose without hurting anyone else. Try chopping wood or boxing with a punching bag in your house or a gym. Or create an area in your yard or basement where you can repeatedly kick a small garbage can, smash cans with a baseball bat, whack an inflatable dummy with your hands, or throw pillows or "clay pigeons" (See Quick Tip on page 174) against a wall. Just be careful to avoid accidentally hurting yourself or anyone else in the process.

*Think realistically.* If you're angry about slow traffic, ask yourself whether honking, speeding, running red lights, or weaving in and out of traffic will really save you much time. It won't save more than a minute; however, such driving habits may risk serious injury. Accept the fact that if traffic is congested, nothing you do will get you to your destination faster. (See the Serenity Prayer in chapter 2.) Being patient while driving will also lessen the chances of your inciting someone else's anger.

*Talk about your feelings with someone you trust.* Describing your frustration, hurt, or anger to a friend will release some of your feelings.

The experience is a lot like venting steam to reduce pressure in a pipe or a cooker. A close and understanding friend can help, as can a therapist.

*Avoid situations that repeatedly trigger your anger.* Certain situations are particularly trying, and it's best to avoid them if you can't find another solution. Consider the case of Peter, who was in a relationship with an emotionally demanding and petulant woman. They had serious arguments every few weeks, blaming each other for not doing the right thing. Counseling failed to help, so Peter ended the relationship. He realized that he felt less put upon and angry when he was by himself than when he was dating her.

## Psychological Tips for Dealing with Someone Else's Anger

It can be tricky dealing with someone who is angry, especially if the anger is directed at you. Yet it can be done. Here are some ideas.

*Don't engage the person.* If someone honks at you, it might feel good to shout back or make an obscene gesture. Your actions may further fuel his anger, though, leading to a more aggressive and threatening response on his part.

### Quick Tip

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#### **Heal Your Mind and Body . . . by Breaking Things?**

We teach children not to intentionally break their toys or damage other property. Yet safely getting some of the anger out of your system can do a lot for your mental and physical health. The idea is a little like letting off steam to prevent an explosion.

On the grounds of the Bright Spot for Health, a nutritionally oriented medical clinic in Wichita, Kansas, stressed staff members and patients can walk over to a specified area to throw and break "clay pigeons." These are the same hardened clay disks used in sport target shooting. Of course, shooting isn't allowed here, so people can take a few clay disks, throw them against a wall, and enjoy seeing them shatter.

It works wonders. In one case, a patient with serious skin problems and a lot of repressed anger found that her skin tone improved within days of spending time tossing and breaking the clay disks.

*Back off.* Backing off involves consciously retreating, which is different from simply not engaging. This is especially important if you see body language that hints at impending violence. Calmly leave the immediate environment if another person is rapidly escalating his expression of anger (such as getting louder and louder and more physically agitated), throwing objects, verbally threatening to physically harm you, or trying to grab you. If you need an excuse—sometimes a very angry person may try to restrain you—say you’ve got to go to the bathroom. If there is violence, or if the angry person has a history of being violent, call 911.

*Acknowledge the person’s feelings.* Don’t argue with the angry person—doing so will likely escalate his expression of anger. Instead, listen and acknowledge his feelings, such as by saying, “I understand,” or by rephrasing what he has said. This may have a calming effect because angry people often believe they are not being heard.

*Speak softly and slowly.* Speaking softly and slowly is usually non-threatening. Responding with a loud voice may be interpreted as arguing back. In addition, keep your comments short—speak in sentences, not long-winded paragraphs. People who are angry do not hear a lot.

*Set your boundaries.* If a person is mad at you and is being verbally abusive, set your boundaries firmly but politely. For example, if he calls you a name, calmly say that you’ll listen so long as he sticks to the issues and doesn’t call you names. If the verbal abuse continues, walk away without showing agitation.

*Don’t spread the anger.* If Joe is mean to you, it might feel good to release your resentment and anger on Barbara, who just happens to be passing by. Anger can spread like an infection. If anger is directed at you, and you feel yourself getting angry, don’t direct your anger at someone else.

*Avoid abusive people.* Abusive people may never touch you—they just slash you to pieces with their words and demands. Bosses can be especially abusive because of their own frustrations and their power over employees. Consider the case of John, whose boss regularly put him down to his face and in front of other people. John tried to transfer to another department in the company but eventually left for a new employer.

## **Sarcasm and Passive-Aggressive Behavior**

Sarcasm and passive-aggressive behavior are two common expressions of anger. We often admire a person with a quick, sharp tongue, and sometimes we wish we could say things the way that person does. For example, the comedians Don Rickles and Joan Rivers excel in sarcasm. Yet sarcasm is as sharp as any dagger, and laughing at sarcasm is a little like laughing at someone who tortures kittens. It's a red flag.

Passive-aggressive behavior is another form of anger, although it is subtle and many people can be manipulated by it. Passive-aggressive people are angry because other people don't do what they would like. Instead of describing their feelings, though, they try to manipulate. They often act helpless and clingy, and they tend to be procrastinators. The passive-aggressive person is clever enough to look compliant or cooperative on the surface but may undermine projects with passive obstructionism or by making excuses. Passive-aggressive people may also be argumentative, which is intended to conceal their dependency. The behavior tends to alienate friends and coworkers, driving away the very people who might otherwise be supportive.

## **Vital Exhaustion—A Particular Type of Anger**

Doctors have long understood that persistent feelings of anger are strongly associated with a higher risk of having a heart attack. Yet a condition known as vital exhaustion significantly increases the risk of a heart attack. Vital exhaustion is characterized by a combination of three feelings: extreme fatigue and lack of energy, increasing irritability and anger, and a sense of demoralization.

Psychologically, irritability and anger stem from frustration with feeling beaten down in life and being overwhelmingly tired. The anger may be expressed as flailing about and being irritated at people. Individuals with vital exhaustion are stressed and have high levels of the hormone cortisol. Yet evidence also points to poor eating habits as a contributing factor. People with fat around the middle (belly fat) and prediabetes are more likely to suffer from vital exhaustion. In fact, the larger a person's belly, the more likely that he or she will develop vital exhaustion.

People are more likely to feel fatigued if they don't eat regular meals and they tend to consume junk foods, such as soft drinks, sweets, and fast foods. To increase energy levels, reduce or eliminate these foods from your diet and eat more protein. Simply eating a couple of slices of deli turkey will improve your energy level and mood.

## Dealing with Premenstrual Irritability

People often debate whether premenstrual syndrome (PMS) is an actual medical condition or just a natural part of a woman's life. The truth is that mild PMS symptoms affect upward of 90 percent of menstruating women, and an estimated 8 to 20 percent women experience severe symptoms. Physical symptoms include abdominal and back pain, migraines, and other types of headaches. Behavioral symptoms include irritability, a "climbing-the-walls" feeling, and mood swings.

There is an obvious biological underpinning to PMS symptoms, and some women are far more susceptible to shifting hormone levels because of genetics or nutrition. Certain nutrients, such as the B-complex vitamins, influence the liver's ability to process and break down hormones, and nutritional deficiencies and imbalances can contribute to prolonged elevated estrogen levels.

B-complex supplements have been found to calm women's moods, and vitamin B6 may be particularly important. It's also a mild diuretic, reducing uncomfortable premenstrual puffiness. Many other nutrients have been found helpful in lessening PMS symptoms, most likely because they correct deficiencies. In one study, described in the *Archives of Internal Medicine*, women consuming ample amounts of vitamin D (700 IU daily) were 41 percent less likely to have PMS symptoms. Similarly, a high intake of calcium (1,200 mg daily) was associated with a 30 percent lower risk of PMS symptoms.

In a separate study, British researchers reported that the herb St. John's wort significantly reduced PMS symptoms. The researchers found that a standardized St. John's wort supplement, 300 mg taken three times daily, cut overall PMS symptoms by half and that two-thirds of the women in the study benefited from the herb.

St. John's wort improves the liver's ability to break down chemicals,

including hormones. It also contains many beneficial antioxidants, which may decrease pain and improve mood; however, the herb may diminish the effectiveness of oral contraceptives.

## **Eating Habits**

To temper your feelings of anger, follow my dietary recommendations in chapter 5 and emphasize high-quality proteins, such as chicken, turkey, and fish, as well as abundant high-fiber vegetables. The protein provides amino acids that are needed to make neurotransmitters, and both the protein and the vegetable fiber help to stabilize blood sugar levels. Stable blood sugar levels will reduce the risk of mood swings.

Avoid soft drinks sweetened with sugar, high-fructose corn syrup, and other types of sugar (including “natural” sugars). In addition, stay away from deep-fried foods such as fried chicken and French fries. You will likely benefit from reducing your intake of caffeine (coffee and colas), energy drinks, and alcohol. If you have trouble giving up coffee, limit your intake to two cups in the morning and don’t add sugar. As an alternative to sugar, consider the herbal sweetener stevia, which is available in health food stores.

If you often have to work for long stretches and don’t have time for a nutritious lunch or dinner, keep some healthful snacks handy. These snacks might include slices of deli meats (chicken, turkey, beef, or ham), deli cheese (as long as you are not allergic to dairy products), or nuts (unsalted peanuts, cashews, pecans, or almonds). It won’t take more than a minute to eat some of these foods. You might keep a can of tuna or sardines or a couple of apples handy as well.

## **Helpful Supplements**

Many different supplements can mellow your mood. Most will generally help within a few days, and some within an hour or two. Ideally, you should work with a nutritionally oriented physician or psychiatrist who can order blood tests and identify specific deficiencies. If you are trying to improve your moods on your own, try the following supplements.

*Multivitamin.* As part of your nutritional foundation, take a high-potency multivitamin supplement, along the lines of what I described in chapter 4. It should contain at least 50 mg each of the major B vitamins, including B1, B2, B3, and B6. Formulations will vary somewhat, and larger amounts of vitamins B3 and B6 are fine. Studies have found that multivitamins can help to reduce mood swings, aggressive behavior, and explosive rage. Note: Vitamin B2 will turn your urine bright yellow. The yellow color is normal and not harmful.

*Vitamin C.* The first symptoms of low vitamin C intake are irritability and fatigue, both of which are usually present with anger. Brain levels of vitamin C are significantly higher than levels in the blood. Vitamin C is needed to make certain neurotransmitters, and it protects the brain from amphetamines—one clue to its mind-calming benefits. Vitamin C is also necessary to make carnitine, a compound involved in burning fats for energy in brain and all other cells.

*Omega-3 fish oils.* These contain eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA). Several studies have found that low intakes of these essential dietary fats are related to violence and murder. Not surprisingly, these nutrients have been found particularly useful in reducing aggressive and hostile behavior, including aggressive driving, bullying, verbal abusiveness, and fighting. The omega-3s are incorporated into cell membranes (walls), where they help brain cells to communicate with one another. They also dampen an overactive immune system, which seems to play a role in mood disorders. Start with 3 grams of fish oils daily; you can safely increase the dose up to 10 grams daily. Note: The omega-3 fish oils have a mild blood-thinning effect. Alternatively, you may try 1.5 grams daily of DHA.

*Magnesium.* If you have persistent feelings of irritability, take 400 mg of magnesium citrate, which is better absorbed than other forms of magnesium. Magnesium is a muscle relaxant and a cofactor in the production of serotonin. Note: If a single dose of 400 mg loosens your stools, take 200 mg twice daily.

*GABA and L-theanine.* Daily supplements of GABA (gamma aminobutyric acid) and L-theanine can increase the brain's alpha waves, which are associated with relaxation. A particularly good product is called

“200 mg of Zen,” made by Allergy Research Group. The recommended dose of two capsules, which can be taken once or twice daily, provides 500 mg of GABA and 200 mg of L-theanine. A similar product from the Nutricology label of the same company provides 275 mg of GABA and 100 mg of L-theanine. (See the appendix for ordering information.) You can buy other brands of L-theanine, but look for the “SunTheanine” logo on the label, a sign of quality.

*Mellow Mood.* This proprietary supplement contains GABA, the SunTheanine brand of L-theanine, B vitamins, magnesium, and vitamin C. Taken regularly, it can take the edge off bad moods. If you want to take just one supplement to keep things as simple as possible, I highly recommend Mellow Mood. It’s available from Carlson Laboratories (800-323-4141 or [www.carlsonlabs.com](http://www.carlsonlabs.com)).

*5-HTP.* If you have difficulty sleeping, take 50 mg of 5-HTP (5-hydroxytryptophan) about one hour before bed. This supplement is the immediate precursor to serotonin, and it may reduce aggression. If you notice some benefits from 5-HTP, but not as much as you would like, increase the dosage to 100 mg before bed. If you continue to feel tense or edgy during the day, take 50 to 100 mg three times daily: 15 minutes before breakfast or at least one hour away from eating any food. You can purchase a high-quality 5-HTP product from Carlson Laboratories and Thorne Research. (See the appendix for ordering information.)

*Note:* If you are taking any medications, such as antidepressants, for psychiatric or neurological disorders, you may start to feel overmedicated after taking supplements. As you use natural substances to improve your neuronutrients, you will need less of your medications. Please work with your physician to adjust your medications during this transition period.

## **Lifestyle Recommendations**

If you are irritable, feel angry, have explosive outbursts, or have a tendency toward destructive behavior (breaking or damaging objects) or violence (threatening or actually hurting another person), you can take several steps to turn down the volume.

*Seek professional counseling.* Intense or persistent anger is potentially dangerous to you and other people. Your anger may also be a sign of depression (see chapter 12). Counseling, which is a form of talk therapy, may help you understand the social situations and your own behavior patterns that lead to feelings of irritability and anger. Talk therapy would be best if it were done in tandem with nutritional therapies. Talking with trusted friends may have some benefits, but a good counselor will guide you to your own insights instead of simply offering solutions.

*Avoid people or situations that trigger your anger.* Shielding yourself against anger triggers is a good interim step. For example, if a particular person gets under your skin, do your best to avoid or minimize your time with that person. If certain situations generate a lot of stress and

### How Hank Learned to Lighten Up

Hank worked with customers at an automobile service center. It was important for him to leave work by 5:30 p.m. After all, he had already put in a long day by that time. A couple times a week, however, customers came in around 5:20 to pay for their service, get an explanation of the work that was done, and pick up their cars.

When this happened, Hank had to stay until at least 5:45. He was irritated, often visibly, and sometimes made critical comments to late-arriving customers. Ronald, Hank's boss, saw that the customers didn't like Hank's attitude, but he also respected Hank's knowledge and how well he usually performed his work.

One day Ronald discussed the situation with Hank, who later described the conversation to his wife. Hank's wife suggested that he take an anti-stress B-complex vitamin supplement and also talk with a counselor. The counselor suggested that Hank adjust his expectations, that he think more in terms of working until 5:45, and that he also negotiate for some time off to compensate.

After talking with his boss, Hank got a little comp time in the form of an occasional extra half-hour for lunch. The change in expectations and sometimes having extra time off helped Hank to feel better about working longer. The B vitamins seemed to mellow him out overall, and customers soon commented on his positive attitude.

make you angry, avoid those situations. Eventually, however, you should be able to face these situations or people without reacting to them.

*Increase your brain's alpha waves.* You can reduce feelings of irritation and anger by boosting your brain's alpha waves, which are a type of brain wave associated with relaxation. Meditation and yoga are well known for boosting alpha waves. So is drinking green tea. Part of the effect of green tea is related to its high content of L-theanine, but even the act of sitting and sipping tea is relaxing. (In contrast, coffee drinkers often feed a caffeine addiction or use the beverage as a stimulant.)

Slow, methodical activities, such as sweeping the floor, cleaning, or baking, can also be relaxing, insightful, meditative experiences. To turn mundane activities into meditative experiences, it helps to be in the moment (as I discussed in chapter 7) and pay attention to the details of what you're doing, instead of simply rushing through the activity. Many companies sell tapes and CDs designed to heighten certain mental states, including the production of alpha waves. One of the best of these companies is the Monroe Institute. (See the appendix for ordering information.)