



## **Navigating Anger Amidst Political Turbulence: Guidance for Federal Employees and Contractors**

By Tamia Barnes Tomasek, MA, LCPC

Facilitator, Federal Employee/Contractor Support Group

The current political climate has introduced unprecedented challenges for federal employees and contractors. Recent administrative actions have led to significant upheavals, including mass layoffs, agency shutdowns, and the dismissal of probationary employees. These rapid changes have not only disrupted professional lives but have also strained personal relationships and social interactions. As a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor (LCPC) and facilitator of the Federal Employee/Contractor Support Group, I aim to provide insights into managing the resultant anger and maintaining well-being during these turbulent times.

### **Current Administrative Actions and Their Impact**

In early 2025, the administration initiated sweeping measures to reduce the federal workforce. Key actions include:

- **Mass Layoffs:** Thousands of federal employees, particularly those in probationary periods, have been dismissed across various agencies.
- **Agency Restructuring:** The Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), led by Elon Musk, has targeted multiple agencies for downsizing or elimination, including the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- **Policy Reversals:** Initiatives related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) have been rolled back, leading to further uncertainty and frustration among employees.

These actions have fostered an environment of instability, eliciting feelings of anger, betrayal, and helplessness among the federal workforce.

### **Understanding the Ripple Effect of Workplace Anger**

Anger originating in the workplace doesn't remain confined there; it often spills over into personal and social spheres. This phenomenon can manifest as:

- **Strained Family Dynamics:** Employees experiencing workplace ostracism or frustration may inadvertently direct their anger toward family members, leading to conflicts and diminished family harmony.
- **Social Withdrawal:** Persistent anger can cause individuals to withdraw from social interactions, leading to isolation and deteriorating support networks.



- **Health Implications:** Chronic anger is associated with various health issues, including hypertension and weakened immune function, further affecting personal well-being.

### **Defense Mechanisms: Displacement and Its Consequences**

One common psychological response to unmanaged workplace anger is displacement—redirecting emotions from the original source to a safer target. For instance, an employee unable to express frustration toward a superior may instead exhibit irritability toward loved ones. While displacement can offer temporary relief, it often leads to:

- **Damaged Relationships:** Unwarranted anger toward family or friends can erode trust and intimacy.
- **Emotional Confusion:** The displaced target may feel hurt or confused, unaware of the underlying cause of the aggression.
- **Cycle of Frustration:** Displacement doesn't address the root cause of anger, potentially leading to recurring episodes and escalating tensions.

### **Strategies for Managing Anger Constructively**

To navigate these challenges, consider the following approaches:

#### 1. Acknowledge and Understand Your Anger

- **Self-Reflection:** Identify specific triggers related to recent administrative actions. Understanding the source of your anger is the first step toward managing it effectively.
- **Journaling:** Documenting your feelings can provide clarity and serve as an emotional outlet.

#### 2. Develop Healthy Coping Mechanisms

- **Mindfulness Practices:** Engage in activities such as meditation, deep breathing exercises, or yoga to center your thoughts and reduce stress.
- **Physical Activity:** Regular exercise can help dissipate built-up tension and improve mood.
- **Constructive Expression:** Communicate your feelings assertively yet respectfully, whether by discussing concerns with a supervisor or sharing experiences with peers.

#### 3. Set Boundaries to Protect Personal Relationships



- **Transition Rituals:** Establish routines that help delineate work from home life, such as a brief walk after work to decompress.

- **Open Communication:** Inform loved ones about your current challenges, fostering understanding and support.

#### 4. Seek Professional Support

- **Therapy:** A mental health professional can provide personalized strategies to manage anger and its effects.

- **Support Groups:** Connecting with others facing similar challenges can offer validation and collective coping strategies.

#### Conclusion

The current political environment presents unique challenges for federal employees and contractors. By understanding the sources and impacts of workplace anger, implementing healthy coping mechanisms, and seeking support, it's possible to navigate this period with resilience and maintain both professional and personal well-being.

**Tamia Barnes Tomasek, LCPC**

Tamia Barnes Tomasek Counseling, LLC

Facilitator, Federal Employee/Contractor Support Group

[www.tamiabarnes.com](http://www.tamiabarnes.com)