

Temper, Temper!

By: Ken Hunt, Owner of Steel Gym and AFI-certified fitness expert

We have all seen this behavior at the gym. It's the guy in the corner making faces, yelling, grunting and looking like he is ready to explode. He attacks the weights as if it's an opponent in a mixed martial arts combat.

Clearly he believes that anger and rage will build up explosive power to lift a hunk of steel over and over. Not so! In most cases, sports psychologists now say, getting riled up will ultimately produce apathy and a loss of momentum. Anger and aggression are actually associated with increased 'arousal' and a sense of defeat.

Anger from frustration or failure can have a negative effect on your performance. If you can release anger and negative thoughts, you can improve your strength and form, and decrease the chance of injury.

Try some diffusion strategies to promote relaxation while enhancing concentration.

- **BREATHE** deeply. Repeating positive thoughts or images. Channeling forgiveness of yourself or someone else. (We can all use this even when are not at the gym)
- **WRITE** down any feelings of anger, or any other negative thought patterns, along with how well you do in your training. This 'Anger Log' will help you identify when and how getting mad affects your performance.
- **BEFORE** hitting the gym, the track or the basketball court, visualize the physical exertion as a method of processing excess energy. You'll often find that your mood improves greatly after you've been sweating for a while.
- **WHEN** you're angry with yourself, turn your focus to what you're going to do next. This will keep you from dwelling on mistakes you've just made.
- **ELIMINATE** negative "self-talk." It's lethal to performance. Substitute a positive phrase like "I can do this" or "I feel strong."
- **WHEN** anger paralyzes you, free yourself from it. Count to 10, take deep breaths, and recite your favorite song lyrics. (or if you are really mad, try singing them)
- **IDENTIFY** situations that have made you angry in the past. Then re-visualize them. Reply the event. Then imagine yourself handling things in a more positive way.
- **CHANGE** your mood with cue words or phrases. When you are in the middle of a great performance or experience, think of a phrase you'd like to associate it with, such as "relax," "powerful" or "eyes on the ball." The next time anger is sapping your concentration, think of the phrase to help you relax.

Steel Gym has been named "#1 Gym in New York" two years in a row by the American Fitness Institute for "cost, cleanliness, equipment and service," and has been called "the last real gym left in New York" by famed bodybuilder Victor Martinez. Ken Hunt has been featured in the

New York Times, Men's Fitness, GENRE, HX, Stonewall News, EXIT South Africa and on Sirius Radio and Feast of Fools. The gym is located at 146 W. 23rd St, New York, NY. For more information on Steel Gym, please call 212.352.9876 or visit www.steelgym.com.