

People Say My Behavior Is “Out of Control.” What Do They Mean?

They may mean different things

- Emotional intensity: big reactions that seem out of proportion to the situation.
- Impulsivity: acting before thinking, then regretting it.
- Risk-taking: choices that put you or others in danger.
- Social fallout: arguments, burned bridges, or people walking on eggshells around you.
- Substance use: using alcohol or drugs to cope, then things escalating.

Try not to hear it as a verdict

- Feedback is information, not a measure of your worth. People often say “out of control” when they are scared for you or for themselves.
- Ask one specific question: “Can you tell me one thing I did that felt out of control?” Specifics help more than labels.

Look for patterns, not just single events

- When does this happen? (sleep loss, stress, alcohol, conflict, certain people)
- What happens in your body first? (racing heart, heat, tension, numbness)
- What need are you trying to meet? (relief, connection, control, escape)

What helps

- Name the feeling before acting: “I am furious” or “I am overwhelmed.” Naming creates a pause.
- Remove yourself from the trigger for 20 minutes when possible.
- Practice one grounding skill: cold water on wrists, paced breathing, or naming five things you see.
- Get professional support if the pattern is recurring — therapy, DBT skills groups, or a psychiatrist can help.
- If you feel like you might hurt yourself or someone else, call or text 988 or 911 now.

**If you are in
danger right
now**

Call or text **988** for the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. If there is immediate danger, call **911** or go to the nearest emergency room.

This guide is educational information only. It is not medical, psychiatric, or crisis advice. If you are thinking about hurting yourself, contact 988 or 911 now.

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