

## Module 9: Anger Management

- 7 Steps of Taking Responsibility
- Understanding anger worksheet
- Handling anger (general principles regarding anger; understanding your experience of anger; barriers to expressing anger; penalties for not expressing anger; ways to deal with anger.
- Steps for letting go of anger

Today we're going to talk about anger. We've all felt it, we've all experienced it from others, and many of us have been taught that it's wrong. But, today we're here to learn about it. To learn that anger, as with any other emotion, is neither good nor bad it just is. What's good or bad is how we deal with our emotions, including our anger.

Anger is a normal, healthy emotion. When we express it appropriately we are letting go of the stress and frustration we are feeling at that moment, and those around us understand and usually accept that we are upset. However, when we express anger inappropriately with blame and aggression -- or as I like to say, when we puke our anger out onto others -- it becomes destructive -- both for us and for those we subject to it.

With anger, as with other things that are perceived as negative, there is a tendency to hold something or someone else responsible -- "you **made** me angry" as opposed to "when you did \_\_\_\_, I got angry." When we hold someone or something else responsible for our stress, anxiety, frustration, or anger we feel we have the right to express it in an aggressive, and many times, harmful manner.

There are some simple things we can do to assure that we express our anger in a healthy and appropriate manner.

First we need to realize...

1. We are responsible for our own lives, the choices we make, and the quality of our life experiences.

Then, before we start spewing our anger, we need to...

2. Clarify our thoughts, feelings, needs, and wants. We're the only one who knows what goes on inside of us.

Once we're clear on what it is we're thinking, feeling, needing, and wanting in a situation we need to consider...

3. Compromising with others when our wants or needs are in conflict, or an issue of contention. It's unreasonable to always or rarely get what we want. Therefore, with mutual respect, compromise, and negotiation we can seek an equitable/fair solution so that no one has to feel slighted.

It's our responsibility and right as individuals to...

4. Develop effective skills for managing our lives. Examine the difficulties/problems that we experience, assess how we contribute to these problems, and decide what we are willing to do differently.

Ok, so let's look at some simple steps we can take in an effort to take responsibility for anger and emotions in general.

## GIVE HANDOUT; 7 STEPS OF TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

*Go over this with group – giving examples, if applicable; encouraging group members to discuss and give their views, experiences, etc. Don't just hand it to them and tell them to take it home and look it over!!*

### SEVEN STEPS TO TAKING RESPONSIBILITY (handout)

1. Make a commitment to change in order to improve the quality of your life. *Change is difficult, uncomfortable, and at times frustrating. That's why it's important that we make a commitment to ourselves to change.*
2. Be aware of how the behavior of others, affect you. *How many times in our lives have we been in a good mood and someone close to us is having a bad day, is cranky, hostile, etc. and all of the sudden our good mood becomes not so good? We've actually taken on someone else's mood and abandoned our own. Seek activities which are pleasurable and beneficial to you. People who feel good about their lives are less negative and angry. They are happier, more accepting of responsibility, and take better care of themselves.*
3. Self-care is the core of taking responsibility for your self. Balance your life; nutrition, adequate rest, regular exercise, people and activities that you enjoy, personal growth, things to look forward to, etc. *Oftentimes, we let our lives get too busy – instead of eating healthy, we do dashboard dining, we burn the candle at both ends so we're too tired to rest, our minds get sluggish, our emotions getting blurry, and we generally don't feel good about life – we're too tired to care. That's why it's so important to balance our lives.*
4. Broadening your resources and support system is a life-long endeavor. Don't limit yourself with minimal resources. Create as many choices for yourself as possible.
5. Clear boundaries and setting limits reinforces everyone being responsible for themselves. Don't do things just to please others. Give yourself permission to say "no." If you ignore this step, you are likely to feel used, abused, and resentful.
6. Define your goals. Break each goal down into manageable steps. Regularly check on the progress you have made toward your goals. You create your own destiny. *Many times we give up on our goals because we make the mistake of trying to do it all at once, not breaking it down into manageable pieces of a larger puzzle. It's like trying to swallow an elephant whole. We can't do it. We have to take it bite at a time to keep from choking. This isn't to say for us not to set our goals high; it simply means in order to get from point A to point Z, we have to consider and travel B, C, D, etc.*

7. Let go. If something is unresolved then take care of it and move on. If there is something that you don't have any control over, then make peace with it, accept it, and let go. Letting go is also important if you choose to remain in situations or relationships which are frustrating to you. You only have control over yourself. You are responsible for your own happiness.

Many times we don't understand our own anger, the nature of our anger. So, there are some questions we can ask ourselves in an effort to gain some understanding of it.

*GROUP EXERCISE: (Encourage group members to share some of their thoughts, feelings, and answers to the following questions. Be open to sharing some of yours! Aid members in exploring the sources, benefits, disadvantages, ways they deal with their anger)*

*NOTE: The remaining time of the group may be taken up by this exercise and that will be OK. As long as the group is productively processing, let them go.*

1. What are the stressors, fears, and frustrations that are at the bottom of your anger?
2. Triggers: What do you think or say to yourself that increases anger?
3. Is anger effective in getting others to do what you want them to do? Explain.
4. What are more effective techniques you can use to get what you want and need?
5. What are resources or sources of support you utilize when you are feeling angry?
6. What are you going to do differently to manage anger? How can you decrease or eliminate feelings of anger?
7. Are there things that you need to limit or eliminate from your life (obligations, relationships, saying yes to everyone, etc.)?
8. How can you get what you want and need through compromise and problem solving?
9. What are your goals of anger management and how are you going to go about the changes needed to reach your goals? (e.g. Goal: I choose to no longer feel angry about all my husband's/wife's behavior. Object: Recognize and accept that he/she is responsible for his/her own behavior.)
10. If you feel that you have tried everything and are unable to resolve issues with a person or situation the only thing left for you to do is to LET GO. How will you be able to make peace with such a situation?
11. How do you feel about wasting so much of your energy, time, and life on anger?

When talking about anger, we need to realize there are a couple of general principles regarding it:

- Anger is a common emotion.
- Anger needs to be expressed for healthy adjustment.

There are many reasons anger seems so difficult to deal with appropriately and that's why it becomes necessary to understand our own experience of anger. Many times we are...

- Socialized to believe that anger is wrong.

Oftentimes

- Anger is associated with anxiety.

Sometimes it is

- Used to control and intimidate others.

Other times we

- Fear anger.
  - Fear of our own anger/rage
  - Fear the anger of others.

We oftentimes forget that

- Anger is a normal reaction to a stimulus

Many of us have

- A belief that we are unable to control anger

We get intimidated/afraid of our own

- Physiological responses with anger (survival emotion)

Some get so uncomfortable with their anger that they pretend they're not angry at all.

- Pretending that you don't get angry can make you sick.

And what we fail to understand is that

- Blocked and unexpressed anger does not go away.

And

- When not expressed assertively and appropriately, anger tends to pop up in destructive ways, such as resentments and hostility.

Some of the Barriers to Expressing Anger include...

1. Fear of disapproval.
2. Fear of the power of our anger.
3. Denial of the fact of our anger.

This usually leaves us...

- a. Stressed Out
  - b. Tired
  - c. Sick
4. We allow others to deny us our right to be angry.
  5. We become avoidant of all feelings.
    - a. Out of touch with emotional experiences in general. We not aware of when we are angry, sad, happy, etc.

There are many prices to pay for not expressing our anger. We can become...

1. Depressed – usually experienced as feeling incompetent, unworthy, etc.

We often have...

2. Anxiety – often experienced with fear.

We sometimes feel...

3. Guilt – because we are socialized to believe that it is wrong to feel angry.

We begin to engage in...

4. Self-destructive activities.
  - a. Drinking/drugs
  - b. Eating to mask feelings
  - c. Psychosomatic illnesses

- 1) Headaches
- 2) Gastrointestinal problems
- 3) Hypertension

Some may begin to exhibit

5. Aggression/violence

Or we may end up with...

6. Disguised anger
  - a. Hostile humor (sarcasm)
  - b. Nagging
  - c. Silence and withdrawal
  - d. Withholding sex
  - e. Displacement

We need to remember – anger is neither good or bad, it is just an emotion, but it's an emotion that can cause us and those around us a great deal of pain and frustration if not dealt with in an appropriate manner. There are some fundamental things we can do to help ourselves deal with anger and not allow it to deal with us.

First....

1. Recognize anger when you are experiencing it.  
Don't pretend you're not angry because it won't go away. Anger is energy and if it's not allowed to be expended – hopefully, in a nondestructive way – it will come out usually in ways that negatively affect you and those around you.
2. Express anger appropriately when it occurs.  
Express how you feel with an "I" statement and in a courteous, respectful, assertive manner as possible. Remember, we don't have to make others wrong, or feel bad to express our anger.
3. If you're intensely angry, acknowledge it and take responsibility for dealing with it in an appropriate and constructive manner.  
There are lots of ways to deal with intense anger – you can work it off doing an activity that allows you to expend the energy in a nondestructive way; you can exercise to work off the energy; you can talk to someone-express your emotions with someone who can empathize; or you can write your emotions/feelings out in a journal.

Bottom line is – we are responsible for our anger and what we do with it. No one else is. There are a few things we can do to let go of anger.

1. Awareness of your feelings and behaviors.
2. Take responsibility for your emotions and responses.
3. Attitude – will greatly influence your success or failure. If you have a negative attitude, don't expect good things to happen.
4. Self-talk. What you say to yourself will determine how you think and feel. It is a choice.

5. Don't take responsibility for people and other things that you don't have control over. The only person and thing we have control over is ourselves.
6. Develop resources and a support system that encourages the positive changes in you and in your life.
7. Self-care behaviors. People who take care of themselves feel better about who they are, have more energy, and are more likely to be happy.
8. Develop positive self-esteem.
9. Develop positive alternative responses to counter the older anger responses.
10. Practice rehearsing the new responses. Keep a journal to track and reinforce change. A journal will also clarify issues which require further problem solving, or dysfunctional patterns which are keeping you from the progress and change that you desire.

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3. Self-care is the core of taking responsibility for your self. Balance your life; nutrition, adequate rest, regular exercise, people and activities that you enjoy, personal growth, things to look forward to, etc.
4. Broadening your resources and support system is a life-long endeavor. Don't limit yourself with minimal resources. Create as many choices for yourself as possible.
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6. Define your goals. Break each goal down into manageable steps. Regularly check on the progress you have made toward your goals. You create your own destiny.
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