

GOT ANGER?

PRACTICAL ANGER MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES FOR

TEENS ONLY

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BY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Title</u>	<u>Page</u>
Is This Book Right for Me?	3
<i>Got Anger?</i> Quiz	4
Anger Management: It's Not Just About Anger, Anymore	5
So, What's the Big Deal About Anger?	6 -7
Myths About Anger: Special Challenges for Teens	8
Me and My Anger: No, the Devil Didn't Make Me Do It	9
Is Your Anger Getting Out of Control?	10
Common Abusive Behaviors Checklist	11
The Role of Self-Talk and Cognitive Distortions in Anger Management	12
Dueling Self-Talk: Positive or Negative	13
The Distorted Dozen: 12 Styles of Distorted Thinking	14 -15
How False Beliefs & Self-Talk Trigger Anger	16
You May Be Right... You May Be Wrong: Taking a Second Look at Negative Assumptions	17 -18
What Triggers your Anger?	19
Ways to Make an Argument <i>Worse</i>	20
Communication Bloopers	21
The Anger Journal	22 -23
Using Anger as a Defense	24
The "Addiction" of Anger	25
The "Secret" Connection Between Anger and Depression	26
The 8 Commandments of Fair Fighting	27
In This Corner... Dirty Fighting	28 -29
In This Corner... More Dirty Fighting	30 - 31
Conflict Negotiation	32 - 33
Time out	34

Time Out Contract	35
Why be Aggressive or Passive When You Can Be Assertive?	36 - 37
Things That People Confuse	38
Teens, Anger and Substance Abuse	39
7 Common Myths about Anger and Violence	40
Possible Effects of Angry Behavior	41
What Can You Do to Control Your Behavior?	42
Anger Management Guidelines: STOP	43
Steps to Anger Management	44
Self-Help Ideas for Anger Management	45
Anger, Alcohol, and Drugs	46
Anger and Stress Management	47
Stress Management Skills	48
How My Body Responds to Emotions	49
Communication	50
Barriers to Communication	51
Practicing New Communication Responses to Common Stressful Situations	52
Changing Thoughts, Attitudes & Beliefs	53
You May Be Right... You May Be Wrong: Taking a Second Look at <i>More</i> Negative Assumptions	54
Basic Conditions for a Healthy Relationship	55
Sticks and Stones ... Words Can Really Hurt, Too	56
Talk/Listen/Repeat Technique	57
"I" Statements	58
Active Listening	59
7 Steps to Safe and Productive Arguments	60
Final Note	61

How to order this book: Contact Mark Miller, MFT, at (661) 255-6634.
Agency discount on multiple orders.

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IS THIS BOOK RIGHT FOR ME?

Chances are this book can be helpful because you would not have opened it unless you thought you or someone you know has a problem with anger. Many teenagers struggle with how to deal with their issues of anger. People who care about teenagers – like parents, other family members, teachers, counselors and friends – also struggle with how to cope with the anger of an adolescent.

Just why are so many teens angry? Teens face a lot of stress these days because families are often under a lot of pressure. There are single parents who have to rely upon the teenager in their family to take care of their younger brothers and sisters. Many families struggle with financial pressures, unemployment, drug and alcohol abuse of a family member, spouse and child abuse. Teens also handle a lot of pressure from their own peers in order to be accepted at school. How you look and how you act are often judged everyday by other peers. No teen wants to look like a "nerd" or your reputation can be ruined for a long time. You can end up feeling like you are under a giant microscope and that your parents, teachers, and other peers are watching your every move – just waiting for you to do something wrong so they can criticize you.

Teens often have problems with anger because of the developmental tasks that they must experience as they maneuver through the adolescent years. Teens usually demonstrate impulsive behavior where they may act first but think about the consequences later. Teens have a sense of immortality as if nothing bad can happen to them. They often take risks and are influenced by other peers who tempt them to take on some not-so-safe challenges. Teens also must deal with the psychological job of developing their own identity and eventually growing up and moving on from their family. This process takes years and usually involves the teen showing anger to express his or her independence.

No matter how you slice it, being a teenager can be hazardous when it comes to the issue of anger.

**So, if you still are not convinced that this book is right for you, take the
Got Anger? Quiz:**

- Are you easily irritated and annoyed? *yes*
- Do you often yell at your parents or stepparents? *no*
- Do you experience road rage? *yes*
- Are you often angry with your teachers or other authority figures? *no*
- Do you make – then lose – a lot of friends because of your anger? *yes*
- Are you often angry with your brothers and sisters? *yes*
- Do you have a lot of arguments with your boyfriend or girlfriend? *yes*
- Are you angry because you have to do homework? Because you have to do chores around the house? *no*
- Do you get angry a lot at your job? *yes*
- Do other people tell you to “calm down” because you often get so angry? *yes*
- Have you ever been so angry that you hurt someone physically? *yes*
- Do you have stomachaches, headaches or other physical problems when you get angry? *yes*
- Do you often think about hurting someone else because you are so angry? *yes*
- Have you thought about hurting yourself because you of your anger? *yes*
- Do you have legal problems because of your anger? *no*

Sometimes we can have problems with our anger and be the last one to realize it. So, if you are a teenager, take a moment and be really honest with yourself. If you answer “yes” to any of the above questions, then talk to someone about your anger and get some help from a counselor or a teacher – any adult that you trust. If you are a parent, don’t ignore your teen’s issues with anger because they will not magically go away. Angry children often grow into angry teens – and then into even angrier adults.

This book is a self-help workbook written specifically for the issues that teens face. The more time and effort that you put into the book, the more you will increase your ability to handle your anger and resolve problems more effectively. For those teens that are already seeing a psychotherapist, the lessons in this workbook can be even more effective if you talk with your therapist about them.

Psychotherapists and group facilitators of anger management programs may find this workbook helpful, as the lessons are short, succinct and easily apply to common everyday situations. This book is for teens that voluntarily come to treatment, as well as for those who are court-ordered due to issues of anger.

The authors of this workbook are all certified by the *Los Angeles County Probation Department’s Domestic Violence Monitoring Unit* to conduct Batterers’ Treatment Programs for court-ordered clients. Mark S. Miller, MFT, is the founder and executive director of *Emerge from Anger*, which offers treatment groups for batterers and anger management groups for men and women in Santa Clarita,

California. The program also has teen anger management groups for males and

females. Kendall Evans, MFT, is a clinical staff member at *Emerge from Anger* and a professor at several graduate schools in the Los Angeles area. Patricia Patton, Ph.D., is a psychologist and a clinical staff member with *Emerge from Anger*. All three have private practices in addition to offering various workshops on the subject of anger management and domestic violence.

If you would like more information about the *Emerge from Anger* program, contact Mark Miller at his Santa Clarita office at (661) 255-6634 or his Sherman Oaks office at (818) 783-0781. The program also offers continuing education workshops and home study courses for psychotherapists.

ANGER MANAGEMENT: IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT ANGER, ANYMORE

If you have looked at some of the lessons in this book, you've already noticed that we cover a lot of helpful information. Some people make the mistake of thinking that anger management only teaches you how to handle your anger better. But that's just the beginning. Anger management strategies should include teaching communication skills, social skills, stress management and self-care techniques, as well as evaluating one's own values, beliefs about power and control, gender role expectations and family role modeling.

Sometimes anger is not really about anger at all – it could be a cover-up for deeper feelings, like sadness, fear, frustration, embarrassment, shame, depression, guilt and anxiety. Sometimes anger is an easier feeling to express because we feel powerful and in charge of a situation. We get attention when we are angry, even if the attention is negative. Many times we would rather feel angry than some of the other feelings because at least we don't feel and look so vulnerable and afraid. But until we identify the feeling that's underneath the anger, we can't really move on in a healthy way. If you notice that you have a lot of deeper feelings as you read this book, such as depression or anxiety, talk to an adult who can help, such as a counselor at school, teacher or psychotherapist – or even your parents, if you think they will listen.

For those teens that are using alcohol or drugs, anger problems can increase while under-the-influence or during the sobering up process. You do not have to be addicted to alcohol or drugs in order for your anger level to increase. Many teens like many adults, cannot use substances because they trigger chemical changes in the brain that interfere with judgment – and we do things that we normally would not do that get us into trouble. If you use or abuse substances, the first step is to get help for this problem. Being sober is an important part of anger management so that your mind can think clearly in stressful situations.

SO, WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL ABOUT ANGER?

Anger is a lot more complicated than a lot of people realize. It's not just a feeling. Anger includes thoughts. It also includes some type of action or behavior. Our bodies react when we're angry, too. Anger is kind of like a layer cake – you know, the kind of cake they have at weddings. But many people don't understand all the complex layers that make up what we call "anger."

Some people have a lot of confusion when it comes to anger. They think all anger is bad and that we should try really, really hard not to be angry. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Read on...

WHAT IS ANGER?

A normal feeling or emotion

- Anger signals that something is wrong – "I am angry because you hurt my feelings when you said I was stupid."
- Anger prepares the body to fight or flee – "I yelled at my sister because she took my CD player without asking me."
- Anger is part of how we protect ourselves – "This guy at school threatened to beat me up over something really dumb. Instead of staying home, I went to school and showed him I wasn't afraid."

ANGER IS MADE UP OF:

- Physical sensations (what my body does)
- Thoughts
- Feelings
- My verbal expression of anger or my behavior

HOW MY BODY REACTS TO ANGER:

- Increased sweating
- increased heart rate
- Faster breathing
- Shaking or trembling
- Brainwave pattern changes
- Face gets red, feels hot
- Increased energy.

ANGRY FEELINGS ARE OFTEN CONTROLLED BY THOUGHTS. SOMETIMES THE THOUGHTS ARE NOT VERY RATIONAL OR ARE NOT ABOUT WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON.

- "I can't take it anymore,"
- "My teacher can't do this to me,"
- "My dad would not do that if he cared."
- "No one else has ever had to deal with problems like mine."
- "Why do I have to have it worse than anybody else in the world?"

THE PERSON'S EXPRESSION OF ANGER OR THEIR BEHAVIOR INCLUDES:

- Physical and verbal attacking
- Violent behaviors such as pounding, slamming and throwing
- Stonewalling or rejecting behavior
- Passive-aggressive behavior

WHAT CAUSES ANGER?

Many situations, thoughts and feelings can lead to anger.
Situations that often lead to anger usually are:

- Frustrating
- Stressful
- Frightening
- Hurtful
- Shaming

ANGER OFTEN COVERS UP OR TRIES TO PROTECT ANOTHER FEELING UNDERNEATH IT SUCH AS:

- Depression ✓
- Grief & Loss
- Anxiety & fear
- Trauma
- Frustration ✓
- Hurt
- Shame
- Guilt ✓
- Disappointment
- Helplessness

ANGRY BEHAVIOR IS NOT THE SAME AS ANGER.

Angry behavior can serve more than one function.

- It can express a persons' feelings
- Relieve the tension of the feelings
- Be used to control someone else

ANGER TIPS:

"You cannot control anger with angry behavior; you can only express it."

Control yourself -
Not the other person
Not the situation"

Look for resolution -
Not for who is right
Not to get even

MYTHS ABOUT ANGER: SPECIAL CHALLENGES FOR TEENS

Some teens face special challenges when it comes to anger management skills because they believe the following myths about anger:

Strong Anger is Justified and Appropriate

Many adolescents may not have been socialized to respond with alternative emotions. Their culture, family or peer group may not have modeled alternative emotional responses, or they may have approved of high levels of anger. In such situations, teens will not see their angry reactions as inappropriate.

Other People are Responsible for their Anger

Angry adolescents often fail to take responsibility for their emotions. They assign responsibility for their emotions to external events. "My mom made me angry!" "It's raining and the game was cancelled!"

The Target of their Anger is not Important

Sometimes a teen truly believes that the target of his or her anger is a totally worthless human being. Because the individual responsible for the person's anger is a worthless piece of (expletive deleted), he/she deserves the angry person's wrath – without any mercy being shown.

Some Teens are Self-righteous

Angry people almost always believe that they have been wronged or treated unfairly. The people "who made them angry" are not just "wrong" – they are seen as morally wrong. Some angry teens are rarely willing to examine their own role in any interpersonal conflicts.

Some Teens Believe in Cathartic Expression

Many angry adolescents believe that people must release their anger. They believe that holding their anger "inside" will eventually lead to greater anger and even illness, and that the expression of anger is healthy and necessary.

They get Short-term Reinforcement

Angry adolescents are often temporarily reinforced for their temper tantrums by significant others' compliance with the teen's demands. Many angry teens end up getting what they want so they learn that anger works – and it gets them a lot of attention.

Some Angry Teens have an "Identity Crisis"

Angry teens sometimes have an "identity crisis" – they often assume the identity of a prosecuting attorney and will debate any issue, no matter how insignificant, to the death. Some teens act like constitutional attorneys and press the issue of "freedom of speech" beyond ethical and legal boundaries. They often believe that if they do not "get the last word" in an argument that they have somehow "lost" self-esteem and power.

ME AND MY ANGER: NO, THE DEVIL DIDN'T MAKE ME DO IT!

At times we think that someone or something “made” us angry, as if we had no choice about how we react. So we feel okay lashing back in anger. It is almost as if we believe that “the devil made me do something mean.” Sometimes we feel “controlled” by external events or situations like:

- Our Parents/Stepparents or Siblings
- Our Friends
- Our School System
- Legal System
- Alcohol/Drug Use
- Our Boss
- Social Workers, Therapists

Sometimes when we feel “controlled” by outside circumstances or other people, we feel helpless and hopeless to change the situation – except through displays of anger. But the good news is that no matter what happens to us, how we respond to a bad situation is still under our control. That’s because we have a brain that helps us think about our feelings and what to do about these feelings.

DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN FEELINGS, THOUGHTS AND BEHAVIOR

Sometimes, especially when the feelings are strong, we make the mistake of believing that feelings directly lead to or control our behavior.

- Feelings ⇒ Behavior (Mistake!)

THE PROBLEM WITH THIS ARRANGEMENT IS THAT SOMETIMES THE FEELING IS IN REACTION TO INTERNAL PSYCHOLOGICAL EVENTS AND DOES NOT REPRESENT REALITY.

- For example, let’s say you are shy. If you feel ignored by classmates at school you might think they are being mean to you so you get angry. But maybe they don’t know you are shy and actually think you are stuck-up. So they ignore you because they think you don’t like them.
- Also, some forms of danger in today’s world do not require a physical response. For example, attacking your computer because it is not working only makes it worse.
- Running from emotional problems that we are afraid of only allows them to fester and worsen.

It is healthier to control our behavior with our thinking.

- Feelings ⇒ Thinking ⇒ Behavior

SHOULD WE IGNORE FEELINGS?

- Of course not. This model does not suggest ignoring feelings - just not letting feelings be in control.
- Feelings often signal that action needs to be taken. Our brain helps us to think through our feelings and make the right choices about how to proceed.

IS YOUR ANGER GETTING OUT OF CONTROL?

Take a look at your own level of anger by using the following guidelines:

- You show aggressive body language, such as, grimacing, clenching your fists, “staring down” someone else, etc.
- You use verbally abusive language, e.g., frequent swearing, name-calling, threatening statements, etc.
- You often make critical, judgmental comments to others
- You often challenge authority figures because you’d rather be in charge
- You show a pattern of explosive outbursts, such as, destruction of property, throwing objects, grabbing other people, or even hitting them
- Use of passive-aggressive behaviors, e.g., procrastination, “forgetting,” social withdrawal, or deliberately promising to do something just to get the other person to leave you alone
- Your teachers or friends have complained about how you show your anger toward them
- You use alcohol or drugs to calm down from an angry outburst
- You react in a few seconds with a strong show of anger.
- Knowingly hurts the other to win or punish – physically or emotionally.
- Always has to win an argument – has to be RIGHT. Never says, “I’m sorry.”
- When hurt or disappointed, has to attack or get revenge.
- Ignores the other person’s needs (even during an argument).
- Will not let the other’s requests or complaints influence their behavior.
- Blames everything on the other person or on other outside influences.
- Can only see his or her own point of view, and acts as if any other point of view is stupid, clearly wrong, or immoral. Takes most things personally.
- Reacts to disagreement as if the other person is attacking or being defective for not agreeing.
- Acts as if he or she believes that he or she has the right to tell the other what to do, where to go, how to think, what to wear, who to be with, etc.
- Acts as if s/he believes that cooperation and listening mean obedience.

COMMON ABUSIVE BEHAVIORS CHECKLIST

PUT A CHECK BY THE STATEMENTS BELOW THAT DESCRIBE YOUR BEHAVIOR.

- The threat of physical violence or physical violence
- Verbal attacks, insults, name-calling, sarcasm, exaggerated or frequent criticism, accusations, and so on
- Emotional attacks such as ignoring or stonewalling, being nice to others but not to friends or family
- Sexual abuse (including the threat of physical violence if the partner does not cooperate with sexual behavior the partner does not want)
- Sexual insults, exaggerated jealousy
- Physical intimidation through violence against property
- Violence and abuse against pets
- Violence and abuse against younger siblings, threats to hurt the sibs
- The "Look"
- Lecturing
- Threats to harm self
- Punishing a girl/boyfriend for not "obeying". Refusing to cooperate
- Keeping partner dependent / Preventing girl/boyfriend from independent activities such as getting an after-school job or going on activities with other friends
- Isolating the girl/boyfriend from others such as family and friends
- Using direct and indirect insults, criticism, and mind games to undermine The boy/girlfriend's confidence and self-respect
- Threatening peers just to "impress" your friends
- Getting your friends to threaten or intimidate someone you do not like
- You threaten to spread rumors around to hurt the reputation of someone you dislike
- You threaten to hurt a person's family member because he or she has done something to anger you.

THE ROLE OF SELF-TALK AND COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS IN ANGER MANAGEMENT

- “Self-talk” means the comments we say to ourselves when something happens to us.
- We use self-talk every day but we are often not aware of what we are telling ourselves
- Self-talk can completely change our outlook and either help us *think* our way through a situation or *hurt* us by increasing our anger for no reason.
- When we are stressed, our thoughts or self-talk can be stressed, too – and we usually make poor decisions.
- When we have positive self-talk messages, we are more likely to respond rather than react.
- Self-talk can be *positive* or *negative*.

NEGATIVE SELF-TALK

- Negative self-talk is when our emotions do the thinking for us.
- Fear often causes negative self-talk, although it usually is seen in our actions as anger.
- When we come across someone who is not using good anger management skills, our *own negative self-talk* about that person can lead to violence or even an arrest.

The following are examples of negative self-talk:

- I can't believe my girlfriend did that!
- Who does my mom think she is!
- My boyfriend doesn't care about me at all!
- Nobody is going to take advantage of me like that!
- I'll show him! I won't back down!
- If I walk away, my friends will think I'm a wimp!
- They did that on purpose just to make me mad!

POSITIVE SELF-TALK

- Positive self-talk helps us to look at the situation and the other people involved and think about alternative ways of understanding what happened – and different ways of handling the situation.
- Positive self-talk can slow down our anger and help us think about constructive ways of coping with the circumstances.

The following are examples of positive self-talk:

- I can stay in control of myself even when the other person is out of control.
- I don't have to prove myself to this person.
- I can take a time-out.
- I don't have to win this argument.
- I can take some deep breaths and calm down.
- This is not worth getting expelled over.

DUELING SELF-TALK: POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE

Read the following vignette and identify how the type of self-talk increases or decreases the person's expression of anger.

JOHN, AGE 16, FAILED HIS MATH CLASS FOR THE SECOND TIME. HE HAS TO TAKE IT OVER, AGAIN, IN SUMMER SCHOOL, OR HE WILL NOT HAVE ENOUGH CREDITS TO GRADUATE. HIS FAMILY HAD TO CANCEL THEIR SUMMER CRUISE TO PUERTO VALLARTA. IDENTIFY JOHN'S NEGATIVE SELF-TALK FROM THE RESPONSES BELOW. IDENTIFY JOHN'S POSITIVE SELF-TALK MESSAGES. WHAT ARE THE EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL CONSEQUENCES OF THIS SELF-TALK?

RESPONSE #1:

John says to himself, "I failed my math class because my teacher hates me. He just wanted to make me angry and ruin my summer. I'll show him!"

Reaction: John skips a week of summer school and fails the class for a third time.

RESPONSE #2:

John says to himself: "I failed my math class because I am a big loser. I am stupid just like my dad says I am. I'll never pass Algebra."

Reaction: John "turns his anger inside" and feels depressed. He talks to his school counselor about dropping out of school. He stays in his bedroom a lot and listens to music or watches TV.

RESPONSE #3:

John really wants to graduate from high school so he "sucks it up" and takes his parents up on the offer to get a math tutor. He admits to himself that he goofed off the first two semesters and didn't really work very hard at school.

RESPONSE #4:

John tells his parents that the math teacher hates him and has picked on him all year. He doesn't think it's fair that he failed the class. The parents talk to the school principal and threaten to bring a lawsuit against the school district if their son's grade is not changed. The parents claim that John has been under a lot of pressure this year and he needs a vacation to Puerto Vallarta. They will have a psychologist evaluate John and write a letter in his behalf to prove that he's too depressed to pass the math class.

RESPONSE #5:

John finds his math teacher one day after school and starts a loud argument with him. The school security guard is called and the argument escalates. John is eventually expelled from the school district. John's father is so angry that his son will have to attend summer school in another district that he initiates a loud argument with the school principal. The police are called, but John's father is not arrested. The father is proud of John for standing up for his rights.

THE DISTORTED DOZEN: **TWELVE STYLES OF DISTORTED THINKING**

It is not just the situation or how another person acts that contributes to our anger. *How we think* has a big impact about whether we feel angry and just what we do with that anger. Sometimes our way of thinking becomes distorted – it's like wearing a pair of glasses that is too strong for our eyes and our vision becomes blurry. Distorted thinking can lead to angry feelings that are unreasonable to a situation.

1. Fortune-telling

Assuming a negative outcome to a situation as if you were “mind-reading” the thoughts of others; E.g., you assume your parents will turn you down if you ask them to extend your curfew so you get angry even before you ask him for it.

2. Personalizing

You believe that everything people say or do is personally directed at you. E.g., you assume that a slow driver ahead of you is driving that way on purpose just because he knows you are late for school and wants to make you angry.

3. All-or-Nothing Thinking

You think in absolutes, i.e., everything is “black or white.” There is no middle ground. You have ironclad rules about how you and other people should behave. E.g., you get angry with your girlfriend for canceling a date at the last minute – but you do not take into account that the girlfriend suddenly became ill.

4. Overgeneralization

You come to a negative conclusion about someone or something based upon just one incident. Then, you expect it to happen over and over again. E.g., one of your favorite CDs is missing - just because your younger sister stole one of your CDs five years ago, doesn't mean that she stole another CD from you.

5. Magnification or Minimization

Also known as “making a mountain out of a molehill” syndrome. You blow things out of proportion or diminish their importance and ignore the positive. E.g., your friend rejects you and you think your life is “over.”

6. Emotional Reasoning

Reasoning that is based on feelings vs. reality-based evidence. E.g., you are angry with your boyfriend because you have a feeling he is cheating on you, yet all the evidence indicates that he is being faithful. So, if you *feel* as if your boyfriend is cheating, then he *must* be cheating.

7. Assuming Inappropriate Blame

You accept too much responsibility in a situation, or you blame others for your own problems. Either way, you feel angry, frustrated and burned-out. E.g., you spend hours on the phone for a few days helping out your best friend when her boyfriend breaks up with her. When you get the cell phone bill, it is \$300.00. You feel angry and used because you have such a large cell bill to pay.

8. Castastrophizing

You assume that there will be unrealistic and overly negative outcomes in most situations. E.g., you assume that going to a therapist with your family will only prove that you are wrong and that your parents are right. So, you get angry with your mom when she makes an appointment with a counselor.

9. Myth of Fairness

You get angry and resentful because "life isn't fair" at all times, in every situation. You believe you alone can judge what is "fair" and that other people are deliberately being unfair just to make you angry.

10. Anxiety-Provoking Language

You often use judgmental words like "should, shouldn't, must, ought," etc. You get angry when others (or yourself) don't live up to or agree with your expectations.

11. Myth of Always Being Right

You act like an attorney, always trying to prove your point to yourself and others. You will go to any length to deny or hide that you have made a mistake. You get angry when others give your feedback or disagree with your point of view.

12. Myth of Change

You believe that if you just pressure someone enough they will eventually change to make you happy. E.g., you nag your parents for months to buy a new car that they can't really afford. You then ignore how stressed they feel trying to make the car payments.

Give two examples of how you have used any of the 12 styles of distorted thinking in your own life. What was the outcome? _____

HOW FALSE BELIEFS AND SELF-TALK TRIGGER ANGER

Our beliefs and what we tell ourselves (called, “self-talk”), are the main causes of our anger – rather than the actual frustrating events, our problems or the misbehavior of others. Anger is not a direct result from what has happened to us but how we choose to react to what has happened.

Society often has certain false beliefs that can contribute to our anger. Some families also teach and role model these same false beliefs. Consider the following myths that often trigger anger in many people.

1. People must always agree with me, otherwise, it is a sign of disrespect.

This expectation is unrealistic as people naturally have different opinions. Just because someone disagrees with you doesn't mean they disrespect you – it just means they have a different point of view about something. Sometimes an argument can start because you tell yourself that you are being “challenged” by the other person. For instance, a teenager would debate with his mother every time he disagreed with her because he did not want to “lose.” Some people misunderstand disagreements as a competition – when they are just differences of opinion.

2. I must be perfect, and I expect everyone else to be perfect.

With this false belief, you can end up feeling angry at yourself when you make a mistake, and angry at others when they do not live up to your unrealistic expectations. For example, a teenager gets angry with his parents because they refuse to pay for the new SUV that he wanted. Instead they buy him a used car.

3. I must know everything, and I expect everyone else to know everything.

This false belief can lead to frustration, anger and low self-esteem because it is impossible to “know everything.” An example of this false belief is when a teenager expects an employee at a music store to know about a particular CD, but he does not have the information. Instead of telling yourself that it is unrealistic for any employee to know about every item in the store, you get angry and call him “stupid.”

4. I must be “strong” at all times.

This false belief leads to anger, especially when someone is feeling sad, anxious, afraid, or vulnerable in some way, because the person tells himself he should not show “weak” emotions. He or she might cover up these “weaker feelings” by getting angry. Let's say a teen boy was sad when his girlfriend left him, but he acts angry because he does not want his friends to think he misses her.

5. I have to win at all times, or else, I am a loser.

Some people tell themselves that life is one big competition. They see common daily events as personal “challenges” to their self-esteem. For instance, a teenager always tries to be first in line or ahead of other cars on the road. He wouldn't consider letting someone cut in front of him or he would feel judged by others as a loser. He brags to his friends how he never gives anyone a break.

YOU MAY BE RIGHT...YOU MAY BE WRONG: TAKING A SECOND LOOK AT NEGATIVE ASSUMPTIONS

Sometimes we automatically assume things about other people or situations that just are not true. After all, we do not all think alike or “size up” a situation in the very same way. We don’t all have the same values, learned rules, beliefs, experiences, wants and needs.

So, the next time you think that something “should” be done in just the way you want it to be done, reconsider that there may be no one ‘right’ or “wrong” way. When we keep this in mind, we are not as likely to get so angry when others don’t do things like we expected.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING NEGATIVE THOUGHTS THAT CAN LEAD TO MISUNDERSTANDING AND ANGER:

- **I WANT TO DO IT MY WAY**

Many teens truly believe that the “world should revolve” around their every want, need and wish. This is known as having a sense of entitlement. The attitude behind this is, “If I want something very much, I should have it, no matter the cost to others.” Examples of this include: expecting appreciation from others, expecting never to be alone, and demanding that other’s know your needs without you saying them.

Give one example from your own life of when you wanted to do it your way. What was the outcome? _____

Anger management tip: Remember that others have the right to set limits and Say “no” to your wants and needs.

- **FAIR IS FAIR?**

One of the most important lessons of life for teens to learn is that “life is not fair” – and then, how to deal with the various unfair situations in their lives. But many teens still have the false belief that “life must be fair” – and that *only their expectations* are “fair.” These teens often believe that if someone disagrees with what they think is “fair” then the *other person is wrong or unfair.*

Give one example from your own life of when you tried to manipulate someone else using the idea that he or she was not being fair. What was the outcome? _____

Anger management tip: Sometimes “fair” is just a cover-up for the selfish belief that “my needs are more important than yours.”

- **NAG, NAG, NAG TO SUCCESS?**

You can't expect to change people through angry pressure, excessive criticism, nagging and complaining to them. People genuinely change when it is rewarding to them, and they choose to do so.

Give one example when you tried to nag or pressure someone else into doing something for you. What was the outcome? _____

Anger management tip: Remember that nagging your parents into buying you something just because "all your friends" have it will hurt your relationship with your parents. It will also cause mistrust the next time you ask them for something.

- **THE TEST OF LOVE**

A common negative thought is that your parents should be willing to do ANYTHING for you if they "truly loved you." Statements such as, "If you truly loved me, you would do... (whatever I want) are manipulative and controlling.

Give one example when you tried to pressure someone else into doing something for by using this "test" of love. What was the outcome? _____

Anger management tip: Your parents have the right to disagree with you. This is not a sign that your parents do not love you.

- **YOU EARNED IT, YOU DESERVE IT**

Another false belief that leads to anger is that if someone hurts my feelings, then he or she deserves my anger – even if my anger hurts or destroys the relationship. As the old saying goes, "two wrongs don't make a right." In other words, just because someone "blasts" us in anger, we do not have the right to "blast" back.

Give one example when you blasted someone else in anger and thought you deserved to do it. What was the outcome? _____

Anger management tip: We can choose better ways to respond - not react – to other people's angry outbursts.

WHAT TRIGGERS YOUR ANGER?

Knowing your anger triggers can help you to be more aware of your feelings so that you can be better prepared to deal with your anger.

Rate the following triggers or causes of your anger on a scale from 1 – to – 5, with “1” being the least anger provoking, to “5” being the most anger provoking.

- _____ Teachers
- _____ Waiting in line
- _____ People who are rude or inconsiderate
- _____ Traffic jams
- _____ Females or males
- _____ People who are prejudiced
- _____ Lying
- _____ People who falsely accuse me of lying
- _____ People who are more popular or smarter than I am
- _____ Co-workers who aren't doing their jobs
- _____ My brothers and sisters/step family
- _____ Poor drivers
- _____ People who cheat
- _____ My boss or coach
- _____ People who cut in line
- _____ Criticism of me
- _____ My girl/boyfriend
- _____ Lack of appreciation
- _____ People who ignore me
- _____ My parents

WAYS TO MAKE AN ARGUMENT WORSE

There are certain things we can do that will almost always make an argument even worse than it already is. Here's a list of some of them. The next time you are beginning to argue, you might want to avoid doing the following:

- **Sudden limit setting:** "That's it! I'm out of here!" "I can't take it anymore! I'm done!" "I'm running away! I'm going to live with ____." There's nothing more you can say to me."
- **The silent treatment:** "There's nothing wrong." "There's nothing to discuss."
- **Using curse words/swearing:** "Damn you!" "Fuck you and your rules!"
- **"Not-so-innocent" observations:** "I noticed that you didn't give me the money that you owed me today."
- **Dismissing Comments:** "I'm sick and tired of hanging around losers like you guys!" "Do me a favor and get out of my life!"
- **Ultimatums:** "Either you have sex with me or I'll break up with you!" "This is your last chance or I'm leaving you."
- **Accusations:** "You went to that party without me, didn't you!"
- **Manipulating with guilt:** "I can't believe you did that!" "You know better than to have done that!"
- **Embarrassing statements:** "You've gained so much weight, Mom, I hate to be seen with you in public. How could you let yourself go so much?!"
- **Using nonverbal, critical sounds:** Loud sighing, audible groaning, judgmental sounds like "tsk, tsk"
- **Tone of voice:** cold, sarcastic, harsh, judgmental, whining, mumbling
- **Body language:** shaking a clenched fist, shrugging your shoulders, leaning forward in an intimidating way, shaking your head, tapping your foot
- **Facial Expressions:** Grimacing, sneering, frowning, rolling your eyes, biting your lip, narrowing your eyes in a threatening manner

Give an example of how you made an argument worse by doing any of the above behaviors: _____

COMMUNICATION BLOOPERS

Name-calling, judging, & criticizing:

Attacking a person's character.

"You won't amount to anything!" "You're such a loser." "You're an idiot!"

Lecturing, teaching:

Talking down to someone, as if they are not very intelligent.

"My way is the right way." "I'm telling you this for your own good." "Blah, blah, blah"

Ordering another person to do something:

"Just do what I tell you to do."

"Stop crying." "Don't be afraid."

Warning or threatening the other person that negative consequences will happen if s/he does a particular action:

"If you don't buy me a car, you'll regret it." "If you don't let me go to the party, I'll run away and you'll never see me again!"

Preaching and moralizing:

Using words like "should" and "ought."

"Parents shouldn't yell like that."

"Teachers should be more understanding toward their students."

Giving unsolicited advice:

Giving suggestions or advice without being asked.

"If you're so unhappy with Dad, just get a divorce."

"If you didn't let Mom walk all over you, she'd respect you more."

Interpreting, analyzing:

Telling other people why they are saying or doing something.

"You criticize me because you like to hurt my feelings."

"You push my buttons on purpose so I'll get in trouble."

Withdrawing, denying, isolating:

Avoiding the problem or the issue.

"I'm just tired, I'm not really angry with you."

"No, there's nothing the matter so stop asking me."

Sarcasm, humor:

A passive-aggressive way to express angry feelings.

"I was just joking when I said it looked like you had gained weight."

Give examples of how you have used any of the behaviors listed above. What was the outcome? How did the other person respond? _____

THE ANGER JOURNAL

Write down the steps or events that led up to your anger and how you dealt with your feelings. Include the following:

- What stresses or feelings did I feel in my body before I felt angry? _____

- What thoughts did I have when I was angry? _____

- (E.g., Did I blame others? Did I believe that the other person did something deliberately? Did I have unrealistic expectations?)
- Was I experiencing any other stressors? _____

- Did my anger give me relief from any other emotions, such as sadness, fear/anxiety, depression, etc.? _____

- Are there any positive ways to get what I want? _____

- Is there a way I can do something for myself to satisfy my needs? _____

- What other support systems can I use to help me deal with my anger or solve my problem? _____

- Should I have said "no" and set better limits for myself? _____

- Can I negotiate for what I want? _____

- How can I “let go” of my anger? _____

- What can I do about the situation? _____

- Did I cover up my feelings of anger by using substances? _____

- Are my expectations about the other person unrealistic? _____

- Are my expectations about myself unrealistic? _____

USING ANGER AS A DEFENSE

Anger is often used as a “psychological defense” – in other words, anger can be used to cover up or distract from other painful feelings or experiences. Anger can hide such painful feelings as:

- guilt
- shame
- fear or anxiety
- frustration
- grief & loss
- embarrassment
- unworthiness & low self-esteem
- helplessness or hopelessness

Anger becomes a defense when it is used over and over again to avoid experiencing other uncomfortable feelings.

- Over time, we lose touch with these uncomfortable feelings and we continue to avoid them by staying angry.
- After awhile, the only feeling we express is anger.

- Anger is more comfortable for me to express because: _____

- The emotions I feel most awkward or embarrassed about showing include ____
because I feel _____

- Anger lets me ignore such uncomfortable feelings as: _____

- When I am angry, I usually receive the following attention from others: _____

- The things that usually make me the most angry are: _____

- What other feelings could I be experiencing other than anger in these situations? _____

THE "ADDICTION" OF ANGER

Anger is such a powerful feeling that it can be misused in many ways. As a result, we can become "addicted" to anger because it can serve many dysfunctional purposes. Anger can make us feel powerful, yet other emotions can make us feel "weak." It is no wonder that many people prefer feeling angry instead of afraid, sad or embarrassed. The more we avoid experiencing these painful feelings by being angry, the more likely we are to become "addicted" to anger.

Answer the following questions to help you learn more about your own connections to anger and how it may be an emotional crutch or "addiction":

- How does your anger keep you from dealing with constructive criticism or feedback from others? _____

- Do you show anger so that you can avoid hearing the other's person's opinions or feelings? _____

- How does your anger keep you in the same dysfunctional relationships or situations? _____

- Does your anger keep you from looking at how you are not living in the way that you would like to be living? _____

- Does your anger help you say what is hurting you – but it comes out in an angry manner? _____

- How does your anger prevent you from making changes in your own life because you are too focused on blaming the other person? _____

- How does your anger keep you from dealing with your fears? With losses? _____

- How does your anger prevent you from facing your own doubts or criticism about yourself? _____

THE "SECRET CONNECTION" BETWEEN ANGER & DEPRESSION

Anger and depression are often easily confused with one another. In fact, some types of depression have been described as "anger turned inward." In this way, we may be directing anger at ourselves instead of toward the person or situation that we are really angry with.

Depression can also include feelings of loss or grief. This often includes feelings of low self-esteem, inadequacy, or feeling unworthy, "stuck" or a "failure."

Some people may not consider anger an "acceptable" feeling – especially in females. An angry female may be stereotyped as a "bitch" or a "shrew." Thus, some females internalize their feelings of anger and end up feeling helpless, hopeless and depressed.

Depression can actually be a substitute for anger or an escape from it. Some people use depression as a way of not letting others know what is going on with them or for not being emotionally or physically available. Other people allow their feelings to build up to the "boiling point," where they only express their feelings when they are angry.

Answer the following questions to help you learn more about your own feelings of depression and how it may be a cover up for anger:

Depression or sadness is more comfortable for me to express because: _____

Depression lets me ignore such uncomfortable feelings as: _____

When I am depressed, I usually receive the following attention from others: _____

The things that usually make me the most depressed/sad are: _____

What other feelings could I be experiencing other than depression in these situations? _____

What does society think about a female who is angry? A male who is depressed?

THE EIGHT COMMANDMENTS OF FAIR FIGHTING

Write 8 of your own "fair fighting" rules. Although some people argue to "win" their friend "loses" and so does the relationship. If you want to maintain friendships, it is best to argue fairly. Many people use the following ideas as examples of fair fighting.

1. Set a mutually agreed upon time and place to discuss the issue or problem.
 - Focus on one problem at a time or it gets too confusing
 - Don't bring up old arguments or problems from the past
2. Maintain your dignity and the dignity of your relationship.
 - No name-calling
 - No threats ("If you don't do it my way, I'll leave you!")
 - No violence & no verbal abuse
 - Don't attack the other person's character ("You're a lousy girl/boyfriend.")
 - Don't criticize your friend's family or friends
3. Listen to the other person without interrupting.
 - Don't tune-out the other person by thinking about something else or thinking about what you want to say next
 - Be open to feedback from the other person – maybe you can learn something from them
4. Identify and verbally discuss what you feel.
 - Genuinely listen to the other person's feelings.
 - Don't judge the other person's feelings or try to talk him/her out of feeling a certain way.
5. Use "I" messages.
 - Don't blame the other person.
 - Avoid saying statements that start with, "You....."
 - Don't use "hot button" words such as, always, never, ought, should, etc.
6. Discuss possible solutions.
 - Ask for what you want. Don't expect the other person to read your mind and automatically know what you need.
 - Ask the other person what s/he wants
 - Identify ways to compromise and negotiate
7. Take a time-out if things start to become too heated.
 - Separate and cool down for awhile
 - Take a walk, listen to music, or do deep breathing to relax
 - Return at an agreed upon time and resume talking
8. Use teamwork.
 - Don't use the other person's problems as weapons to strike back
 - Don't trade insults for insults.

IN THIS CORNER...DIRTY FIGHTING

Communication that is disrespectful can easily escalate a simple argument into a huge battle. Instead of resolving a disagreement, dirty fighting techniques cause further hurt through manipulation and control tactics.

Review the following "dirty fighting" techniques. Which ones have you used?
What was the outcome?

- ***Ignoring*** –

If you truly listen to you're the other person, you might be seen as valuing and respecting his or her thoughts and feelings. Instead of showing the other person the common courtesy of respectfully listening to him or her, pretend to be watching TV, reading some thing, or falling asleep while they are talking. The more serious the topic of conversation, the more you should ignore your partner. Eventually, the other person will give up talking to you, and you'll finally get the quiet you deserve.

- ***Tit-for-tat*** –

When the other person complains about something you have done or said, immediately complain about something he or she has done. For example, if your girlfriend complains that you are flirting with other females, respond by saying some thing like, "If you hadn't gained 10 pounds over the holidays, I wouldn't have to look at other girls!" If you trade off complaint against complaint, you never have to take responsibility for your own actions and nothing will get resolved.

- ***Labeling*** –

By labeling the other person in a negative way, you can lower his or her self-esteem dramatically. Eventually, the other person will truly believe he is an "idiot" or that she is a "loser." If you use such psychological labels as "neurotic," "borderline," "codependent," or "alcoholic," you will seem superior to the other person, while also covering up the real issues where you may be at fault.

- ***Everything including the kitchen sink*** –

The next time your argue with another person, don't stick to the topic at hand. Talk about as many problems as you can think of, especially those from the past, so that you can convince the other person that she or he has always been wrong. If the other person doesn't remember the past offenses, so much the better, because he or she will also look like her memory is also going bad.

- ***Woe oh, woe is me*** –

Play the martyr role by recalling every slight injustice or hurt you have ever suffered by the other person. Include plenty of details so the other partner can't get a word in edgewise. Be sure to sound hurt and self-righteous. This technique can be used to justify almost any selfish action of yours. For instance, "Since you were on vacation, I had to find another date for the winter formal dance."

- ***Bad timing*** –

As they say, "timing is everything." When you want to argue, pick the best time to go for the other person's throat – e.g., late at night, when the other person is sick or tired, during their favorite TV show, or just before you're the other person is leaving for work or school. Start an argument when the other person least expects it so he or she will be too shocked to respond very well.

- ***The "Why" Inquisition*** –

Bombard the other person with meaningless "why" questions – e.g., "Why were you late?" "Why didn't you take out the trash?" By asking "why" you are implying that something is terribly wrong with the other person (instead of a simple problem behavior). You also sound like an authority figure - and the other person has to answer as if he were a "child" explaining his naughty behavior to his "parent."

IN THIS CORNER...MORE DIRTY FIGHTING

- ***Attacking one's character –***

Don't focus on the current problem or issue for too long, otherwise, you may have to admit some responsibility in the matter. Instead quickly shift into attacking the other person's personality or character. For instance, use inflammatory statements like, "If you weren't such a bad mother, I wouldn't be hooked on drugs," or "If you were a better girlfriend, I wouldn't spend so much time flirting with other girls." Focus the attacks so that the other person's most sensitive or vulnerable areas are brought up.

- ***Pulling rank –***

You can stop an argument fairly quickly before you have to admit any responsibility by pulling rank – remind the other person that you are smarter, more experienced, older (or younger, if that helps your cause), or that you are more popular. Remind the other person that she or he had "nothing" before you entered the picture – say this quickly before the other person realizes it makes no sense. Don't hesitate to exaggerate or lie as much as possible to enhance your status at the other person's expense.

- ***Fortune-telling –***

Protect yourself from having to make any real changes or taking responsibility for solving problems by predicting the future. Statements like, "You will never change," or "You will always be a lousy mom" make the situation seem hopeless and the other person seem like a loser. If you predict that you will abandon the other person at some future point, e.g., "One of these days, I'll get so fed up that I'll pack my bags and run away" you can instill fear and insecurity in your parents. This will scare your parents or friends into appreciating you more.

- ***Humor and Sarcasm –***

This method is a great "sneak attack" where you can say any cruel comment to the other person without getting in trouble because "you were just kidding." If the other person reacts in anger to your comments, then accuse him or her of "being too sensitive." You can also insult the other person's intelligence by pretending that you didn't really intend to insult them by being sarcastic - yeah, right!

- ***Turning up the fire –***

Heat up an already heated argument by exaggerating the importance of an issue with inflammatory statements like, "If you really loved me, you'd do what I asked," or "This goes to show that you don't care about me." Make every issue in the relationship, no matter how small, seem absolutely a life-and

death matter. This technique is even more effective if you demand immediate attention to the issue.

- ***Mind reading*** –

Pretend to be wise and all-knowing by deciding you know the *real* reason behind the other person's actions. By taking on this superior attitude, you can avoid having to take responsibility for your own actions. Statements such as, "You only said that to hurt my feelings," or "You did that to embarrass me in front of my friends" put the other person on the defensive. While the other person is struggling to explain his or her actions, you look cool, calm and collected.

- ***Blame, blame, blame*** –

No matter what terrible thing you did or said, always hold the other person completely responsible for the problem. Don't admit your behavior had any part whatsoever in the conflict. Never apologize and never admit that you will change any thing about your behavior. Pretend to be the innocent victim, once again.

CONFLICT NEGOTIATION WORKSHEET

Conflict can be so difficult to handle that sometimes we need a guideline to follow. The following information is like an instruction manual for conflict negotiation that can be applied to any situation. Can you think of an example in your own life where these guidelines can be applied?

Describe the problem situation:

- Who is involved in the problem situation? _____

- What events led up to the problem situation? _____

- Why is this situation a problem for me? _____

What results do I want to see in this situation?

- What do I want to see changed in the problem situation? (Be specific) _____

- What changes am I willing to make in this situation? _____

- What changes would I like the other person(s) to make in this situation? _____

What does the other person want to see changed in this situation?

How do I want to feel about myself after I negotiate these changes?

How do I want the other person to feel about me?

In this problem situation, how do my wants clash with the other person's wants?

What are some different ways that the problem can be negotiated?

In order to find a compromise in this situation, I will (e.g., change my demand about....., delay my request for....., change my views about....., etc.):

In order to find a compromise in this situation, the *other person* will (e.g., change my demand about....., delay my request for....., change my views about....., etc.):

What are my "bottom lines" in this situation (wants I cannot give up)?

What are the "bottom lines" in this situation for the *other person* (wants the other person cannot give up)?

The other person(s) and I have decided upon the following compromises for this problem situation (be specific about what is expected from everyone involved):

The compromise was successful/unsuccessful because:

If the compromise was not successful, what are some ideas for renegotiating?

TIME OUT

Time out is simple: You say: "I NEED A TIME OUT" - and you leave.

- You go for a walk, listen to music or whatever else helps you calm down.
- You do not drink alcohol or use drugs. You do not drive.
- You do not go over all the reasons you are angry.
- Instead, you remind yourself that you care about the other person and of your own self-control. You relax.
- Within an hour you come back.

You always come back.

- Time out is not a threat to abandon. You try to deal with whatever problem there was.
- If you are still too angry - if the other person still seems to be the "enemy" - then you take another time out.
- You have to return or "check-in" within an hour so that the other person knows what is happening, but you do not try to talk while you are still angry.
- You may have to schedule a discussion of the problem for a later time that both of you agree on.

Time out is hard.

- It feels artificial. It requires self-control while you are upset.
- If it is used as a weapon, it will not work at all.
- It requires ignoring who is "wrong and focusing on safety first.
- Often people will ask, "Why do I have to be the one to leave?" The answer is simple. You leave because you are bigger. Because it is your responsibility to make the situation safe, whatever the cost.
- Because if you argue about who is to leave, time out will not happen, and problems will. It is not because you are wrong or less important.

Other people complain their partner will stop them from leaving.

- It is important to talk this over with the other person first, so that they know that you will return.
- It will help them let you go.

If you are committed to safety first, time out will work.

- If your pride is more important, it may not.
- If you use it, time out will give you a way to prevent problems.
- With it, you can be proud of being safe.

TIME OUT CONTRACT

Whenever I notice that my anger or my friend's anger is starting to get to an uncomfortable level, I will do the following:

Step 1

Give an agreed upon, non-blaming signal for time out.

-OR- Say a statement such as:

"I need some time to cool off, so I'm taking a time out."

"I don't want us to get into a big fight, so I'm going to take a time out."

"I don't want to lose my temper so I am going to take a time out."

Step 2

I will leave the area immediately.

I will do something to calm down, like take a walk, exercise, deep breath, listen to music, or I will do _____.

I will not think about ways to get even the other person.

I will not do anything that increases my anger level.

I will not use drugs or alcohol.

I will not drive or do any activities that could be dangerous to others or myself.

Step 3

The time out will be _____ minutes in length (usually no less than an hour).

Step 4

When I return from time out, I agree to check the other person to see if she/he is ready to talk or if we need to extend time out.

If we both feel ready to talk, I agree to accept responsibility for my actions and work with the other person to find an acceptable resolution to the problem.

I will use fair fighting techniques.

Step 5

Whenever the other person wants a time out, I will respect his/her needs and agree not to prevent the time out in any way.

Signature of both people: _____

Date: _____

Note: This contract can also be used with family members to help manage anger between parents and children, as well as brothers and sisters. It can also be applied with step family members.

WHY BE AGGRESSIVE OR PASSIVE WHEN YOU CAN BE ASSERTIVE?

- Being aggressive can sometimes get you what you want, but at what cost?
- Aggression alienates people and hurts them.
- It can also be a trigger for others to react with even stronger aggression, making a situation dangerous.
- In contrast to being aggressive or passive, being assertive usually gets the job done without hurting anyone.
- And you keep your self-respect and dignity.

What is assertiveness?

It expresses your own wants and needs in a way that does not violate the rights of others or intimidates them. It is honest, straightforward and expressive.

What is aggression?

It expresses one's own needs at the expense of others. Includes hostile outbursts or angry overreaction. Uses methods such as getting even, putting the other person down, shaming and humiliating. An aggressive person decides his/her way is the only way.

What is non-assertiveness?

Refusal to verbalize one's needs and wants; Is emotionally dishonest; Allows others to cross important boundaries and infringe upon their rights. Can withhold their opinions to hurt and manipulate others.

What does assertiveness look like?

You appear confident and show respect for yourself and the other person. You have direct eye contact with the other person, but you are not staring at them.

What does aggression look like?

You appear very angry, out of control: Can sound self-righteous; Feels superior at the time but later feels guilty and bad about one's self. Often glares at the other person to intimidate them. May have clenched fists. Uses a sarcastic or haughty tone of voice.

What does non-assertiveness look like?

You seem anxious, weak, hurt or sad. Your body slumps and you look like a victim. Whines, mumbles or is teary. Speaks quietly or in a monotone voice.

What does **assertiveness** sound like?

Uses direct statements, e.g., "I think...", "I feel..." Shows empathy and a willingness to understand the other person's point of view (even though you may disagree with it), e.g., "What do you see in this situation? What are your ideas about solving this problem?"

What does **aggression** sound like?

Uses threats, name-calling, judgmental statements, accusations, and put-downs. Interrupts, intimidates and tries to control the conversation, thoughts and emotions of the other person. Uses manipulative statements, e.g., "If you don't do as I say...", "Are you crazy...", "You better listen to me or I will..."

What does **non-assertiveness** sound like?

Uses vague or rambling statements, e.g., "I wonder if I could...", "Maybe you could, uh, or you could, well..." The other person is confused and may get impatient or angry.

What does being **assertive** accomplish?

You may or may not achieve your desired goals. But you will feel good about yourself and the other person will feel good, too. You maintain self-respect and self-confidence.

What does being **aggressive** accomplish?

You achieve your goals by hurting the other person – possibly destroying the relationship. You lose self-respect and may feel guilty and out of control.

What does being **non-assertive** accomplish?

You do not get your needs or wants met. May feel resentful and angry because the other person does not give you the response you desire. Avoids uncomfortable situations and conflict. May feel depressed over time and misunderstood by others.

Give an example of when you used **aggression** in a situation. How could you have handled the same situation in an **assertive** way? _____

Give an example of when you used **non-assertiveness** in a situation. How could you have handled the same situation in an **assertive** way? _____

Give an example of when you used **assertiveness** in a situation. What was the outcome and how did you feel about yourself? _____

THINGS THAT PEOPLE CONFUSE

Respect is NOT the same as Fear:

Some people try to force others to “respect” them using intimidation and threat. Violence and the threat of violence create fear, not respect. Spanking, for example, creates fear, not respect. Fear often leads to submission, but it also eventually leads to shame, anger and rebellion. If an angry person is also afraid, they may express their anger indirectly, but they will express it. True respect, on the other hand, leads to cooperation, admiration, pride and emulation.

Understanding/Listening is NOT the same as Obedience:

Some people accuse the other person of “not listening,” when they really mean that the other person is not following directions. Some people say they have a “communication” problem when they really mean that there is no agreement about who makes the decisions – who has the power.

Being “Right” is NOT the same as Winning:

Some people damage their relationships by insisting on being “right,” having the last word, or having their way. Ultimately, they push others away and fail to get their own needs met.

Strength is NOT the same as Dominance:

Some people feel that compromise and cooperation show weakness. Always having to have one’s own way actually shows fragility, not strength.

Caring is NOT the same as Control

Many people confuse caring with control. Sometimes, caring does require some control; parents, for example, have to control small children. But parents also have to gradually relinquish their control and focus on the child learning self-control. Sometimes it is love to allow others to make their own mistakes.

Love is NOT the same as Jealousy

Jealousy is not love. It is possessiveness. Jealousy is an expression of insecurity. Love does not seek to control. Love does not seek to cage.

Love is NOT the same as Need

Many people say, “I love you,” but mean, “I need you.” Jealousy, for example, is based in need, not love. Need also exists and should be respected, but it is not love. If you need someone, you will be tempted to try to control and manipulate them. If you know you need them, you have the option to control yourself. If you love someone, you want him/her to be happy, even if what s/he wants does not make you happy. Love gives support and admiration. Need is controlling and demanding.

TEENS, ANGER & SUBSTANCE ABUSE

- Any alcohol or drug use – no matter how slight – can turn a small argument into a raging four-alarm fight.
- If the person who is with us is also drinking or using, the argument then has the potential to get even more out of hand.
- Just as with driving under the influence, where we are legally responsible for all of our actions, we are also responsible for our anger even when we have been drinking or using.
- Alcohol's physiological effects make a person less capable of determining if another person is behaving in a threatening way.
- Alcohol – disinhibitor of repressed anger
- Alcohol alters how the brain functions – changes in neurotransmitters can increase the likelihood of violence, esp. during withdrawal, when irritability is increased.
- People's expectations about drinking determine how they will behave.

Consider the following questions about your use of substances and how it may be related to your display of anger:

- Describe any negative or dangerous choices you have made while using alcohol or drugs. _____

- In your family, who has or had problems with alcohol or drugs? How did their behavior impact you when they were under the influence? _____

- Give some examples of how using alcohol or drugs increased your anger. ____

- How would you have responded differently to the same situation if you had been sober? _____

- What have you done while drinking or using drugs that you later felt sorry about? _____

- Who have you hurt emotionally while drinking or using drugs? Give an example. _____

- What feeling(s) does your drinking or use of drugs numb? _____

- The next time I am drinking or using drugs and feel that I am beginning to get too angry about a situation, I can _____

7 COMMON MYTHS ABOUT VIOLENCE & ANGER

- **ANGER CAUSES VIOLENCE.**

FALSE! Anger does not “cause” violence. Violence is just one of many responses to anger. There are many ways to deal with anger besides violence. You can ignore a situation, you can talk or write about your feelings, and you can exercise, to name a few.

- **THROWING OR BREAKING OBJECTS IS NOT ABUSIVE – AS LONG AS I DON'T HIT ANYONE.**

FALSE! Throwing or breaking objects is a sign that your anger is out of control. It is emotionally abusive and very scary for others to see you throw or break objects. The most effective way to express anger is to *respond* to a situation. How you show anger is a deliberate choice that you make – not a *reaction where your emotions control you*.

- **WHEN SOMEONE DOESN'T LISTEN TO ME, I HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO BE VIOLENT.**

FALSE! If another person is not “listening” or agreeing with you, there are many choices that you have besides violence. You can see a counselor, you can talk to a priest, rabbi or minister, you can write a letter expressing your wants and needs, you can ask for advice from a friend, you can read books about relationships, and you can take a time-out. You can also leave the relationship.

- **IT IS OKAY FOR MALES TO BE VIOLENT BECAUSE THEY DON'T EXPRESS FEELINGS AS WELL AS FEMALES.**

FALSE! This is a very negative view of males – it implies that males are so emotional that they cannot control their feelings so they become violent.

- **IT IS THE MALE'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE HIS GIRLFRIEND'S FRIENDS.**

FALSE! This belief is an insult to females as it implies that they cannot be trusted to choose their own friends. People have the right to make their own friends. If your partner's behavior is so untrustworthy, then you don't have a real relationship.

- **EXTREME JEALOUSY AND POSSESSIVENESS ARE SIGNS OF LOVE.**

FALSE! Love is built on mutual trust and respect. If you don't trust your partner and feel that you have to monitor her every move, then you don't really have a relationship.

- **IF A MALE DOESN'T CONTROL A FEMALE IN A RELATIONSHIP, THEN SHE WILL CONTROL HIM.**

FALSE! Healthy relationships are about *sharing power and control* and negotiating differences of opinion.

POSSIBLE EFFECTS OF ANGRY BEHAVIOR

Any Behavior that People do Repeatedly has Some Benefit.

- Angry behavior does express the feeling in its intensity, and it can release tension.
- Angry behavior also covers the negative feelings underneath, and can help a person feel powerful, active and right.
- Angry behavior often also does result in the other person giving in and being controlled. Angry acting people get their way sometimes.
- In addition, because angry behavior has some functional effects, it is hard to give it up, especially if you do not know what else to do.

Angry Behavior also has Negative Effects.

- It makes other people hurt and unhappy, particularly with the angry person.
- Angry behavior creates resistance and opposition.
- Some angry behavior results in damaged property, getting suspended from school, getting grounded, ending friendships, losing jobs and so on.
- Angry behavior makes the angry person feel badly about him or her self.
- In addition, angry behavior usually adds to the anger rather than reducing it.
- Angry behavior can lead to "catharsis," but not before it burns itself out.
- You cannot control anger with angry behavior; you can only express it.

Additional Effects of Anger on the Angry Person

When anger is chronic, or held in, or when it is frequent, it can have negative effects on the angry person's body.

- Angry men have been shown to have an increase in the likelihood that they will have a stroke or a heart attack within two hours of a temper outburst.
- Anger is associated with higher blood pressure, strokes, heart attacks, and intestinal problems.
- Part of the problem is that the preparations the body makes to be ready to fight are hard on the body, particularly if there is no physical activity to work them out.

When is Anger Appropriate?

Anger, like any other feeling, is always "appropriate," if that is what the person feels. We can influence our feelings, but we do not control them. The issue is what to do with anger.

What do you do with Anger?

Use it as a signal to know that you need to find out what is wrong, and plan what to do about it.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO CONTROL YOUR ANGER?

- Identify specific ways where you have previously handled angry situations that resulted in negative consequences
- Identify specific causes/triggers for your anger
- Practice forgiving yourself and others in angry situations
- Identify past or current hurtful situations that add to your level of anger
- Identify ways to be empathic instead of angry
- Practice being assertive instead of aggressive
- Write a letter to the person you are most angry with. Then write a letter of forgiveness to that person. (Don't send the letter – it's just for your own benefit.)
- Exercise on a regular basis for stress management
- Practice deep breathing to relax and let go – even when you are not angry
- Talk to a trusted friend when you are angry
- Journal your thoughts and feelings when you are angry
- Try to see the other person's point of view when you are angry.
- Ask yourself – is this issue worth getting angry about?
- Pretend you are being videotaped the next time you are angry.
- Listen to music that helps you to relax.
- Do artwork of some kind
- Listen to the sounds of nature – leaves rustling in the wind, birds singing, etc.
- Think about the “dream car” that you would like to own someday
- Pretend you won a million dollars – what would you do with the money?
- If you are in recovery, go to a 12-Step Meeting, call your Sponsor or read the Big Book

Anger Management Guidelines

*Never take it – or make it – personal (even if it is).
Make it a problem to be resolved, not a conflict you have to win.*

STOP, THINK, OBSERVE and PLAN - (STOP)

- STOP** – Do not REACT..... Know what you are doing.
THINK – Engage your mind. If you can't, take a time-out.
You, not your feelings, should control your behavior.
OBSERVE – Gather information. Do not act in ignorance
Do not read minds or guess – check it out!
Look for the other person's point of view, or a different way of seeing the situation.
PLAN – Look at possible consequences before you decide what to do. Do not react without thinking.

Commit to making No Attacks – no name calling, no insults, no sarcasm, and no intimidation. If you cannot, take a time-out!
The process – how you behave – is as important as the result.

Express yourself (if it is safe to do so) in “I” statements – (“When this behavior or event happens, I feel....”) - say what is
Underneath your anger – this approach avoids both stuffing and attacking.

If you feel you have to DO something physical – take a Time Out.

When you are verbally attacked, DO NOT DEFEND. Do not agree to dance that particular dance. Focus on understanding their upset, and not on arguing with their point. If you can find a way, agree with something the other person has said. Comment on the other person's feelings, and if not inflammatory to do so, their behavior. Ask what they want from you. Repeat back to them what you think they are feeling, and how they came to feel that.

Keep calm. If the other person, or the situation, escalates, get calmer. Use silent positive self-talk to counter any thoughts or impulses you may have leading you to attack. Focus on calming yourself down, and keeping calm. Take deep breaths. Sit down.

Steps to Anger Management

1. Notice and identify what you are feeling. If you are overwhelmed, take a time-out. Never make decisions while in the middle of a strong feeling.
2. Explore why you might be feeling this way. Is it in response to your surroundings? Your mood, or physical condition? Is there a problem? Is there an opportunity to do something productive? If necessary, talk to others, meditate or journal to get clarity.
3. If the problem is that you are feeling overwhelmed still, find ways to relax, take a break, get assistance, and in general take care of yourself.
4. Is this a situation that requires action? If not, just stay aware.
5. If action is needed, what actions might you take? (Brainstorm, be creative).
6. Evaluate the possible consequences of possible actions.
7. Pick an action that leads to positive consequences.

Steps to Regulate Feelings in General

1. Pay attention to how you are feeling. Do what you can to avoid or minimize being stressed, hungry, tired, or lonely.
2. If you cannot avoid these problems, be extra careful with others and with yourself, while you are feeling these things. (See above for in the moment management).
3. Plan self-care activities such as relaxation exercises or breaks. Make time to talk to supportive friends. Make time for recreation.
4. Remember that you cannot take care of others if you do not take care of yourself.
5. Be gentle with yourself, even when you are trying to improve in some way.

SELF- HELP IDEAS FOR ANGER MANAGEMENT

First deal with your emotional reaction (your frustration, anger, rage, etc.) before attempting to handle your situation (the event or person with whom you are angry).

- Do some deep breathing, count to ten, take a walk, listen to relaxing music, watch TV, etc., to calm yourself down BEFORE you try to solve the problem or deal with the other person.

Replace anger and rage with healthier feelings, like being annoyed or irritated.

- Re-label your intense angry feelings with less severe labels, such as being inconvenienced or frustrated. These new labels help us to understand our feelings in a different, more manageable way.

When deciding whether to continue to be angry with another person or to forgive them, try this written exercise.

- Make two columns – in one column, list the advantages of giving up your anger about a particular person. In the other column, list the disadvantages of letting go of your anger toward that same person. Possibly the biggest advantage of letting go and forgiving is that you will feel much less stressed by not carrying around such a “big weight” of anger.

Replace aggression and anger with assertiveness.

- Instead of trying to bully or intimidate another person into doing something, ask for your wants and needs in an assertive way. By being assertive, instead of aggressive, you are showing respect for both yourself and the other person. And the other person is more likely to be less defensive if you use assertiveness instead of aggression.

Realize that your beliefs and self-talk are the main causes of your anger – instead of the actual frustrating events, problems, or wrongdoings of others.

- Our beliefs may be so unrealistic that we are sure to be disappointed and then angry. By decreasing your demandingness toward yourself, others around you, and the world, your anger level will decrease. The next time you are angry be aware of what you tell yourself about others, about events and situations, and about yourself.

Beware of your critical and judgmental attitudes toward others.

- Decrease your condemnation of the world around you. Work on building up your frustration tolerance and your self-acceptance. Instead of criticizing someone, try to identify ways of being more understanding, forgiving and empathic.
- We often “nourish” our anger by repeatedly telling ourselves irrational or unrealistic beliefs, and dwelling on the mistakes and negative actions of others.

ANGER, ALCOHOL, AND DRUGS

For most people, our feelings and expressions of anger increase dramatically when we are drinking or using drugs. We do not have to be "falling-down drunk" to have substances negatively influence our anger. Any alcohol or drug use – no matter how slight – can turn a small argument into a raging four-alarm fight. If the person who is with us is also drinking or using, the argument then has the potential to get even more out of hand.

Just as with driving under the influence, where we are legally responsible for all of our actions, we are also responsible for our anger even when we have been drinking or using. Being under- the- influence is no excuse for aggressive behavior toward others.

Consider the following questions about your use of substances and how it may be related to your display of anger. You may decide to change your patterns of substance use after you answer the following questions.

Describe any negative or dangerous choices you have made while using alcohol or drugs: _____

In your family, who has or had problems with alcohol or drugs? How did their behavior impact you when they were under the influence? _____

Give some examples of how using alcohol or drugs increased your anger. How would you have responded differently to the same situation if you had been sober?

What have you done while drinking or using drugs that you later felt sorry about? _____

Who have you hurt emotionally while drinking or using drugs? Give an example. _____

What feeling(s) does your drinking or use of drugs numb? _____

The next time I am drinking or using drugs and feel that I am beginning to get too angry about a situation, I can _____

ANGER & STRESS MANAGEMENT

When under stress, we can experience many different symptoms, such as, stomach upset, headaches, heart palpitations, insomnia, and appetite changes. Stress can eventually lead to the development of ulcers, high blood pressure and even heart attacks. We can also experience panic attacks, anxiety and depression while under stress.

Usually we get angry more easily and quickly when under pressure – and our anger is usually more intense. Identifying the stressors in our lives and learning how to cope with them can actually help us manage our anger.

Consider the following questions about your stress level. Then review the “Stress Reduction Skills” on the following page.

What are the biggest stressors in my life currently? _____

When I am under stress, my body reacts by: _____

When I am under stress, the emotions I usually experience include: _____

When I am feeling stressed, I usually take it out on the following people (my partner, my children, my co-workers, my family, myself, etc.): _____

What have I done in the past to cope with my stress that *has not been helpful* – or – how has it made the situation worse? _____

What have I done in the past to cope with my stress that *has been helpful* – or – how has it made the situation better? _____

What messages do I tell myself when I am experiencing stress (for example, “I can handle this,” or “This is hopeless,” etc.): _____

STRESS MANAGEMENT SKILLS

Since stress is part of all of our lives, it is a good idea to find stress management techniques to help us cope. Review the following stress management skills and make a specific plan to include them into your life.

- **Physical exercise:** Schedule time on a regular basis to take a walk or get some physical exercise.
- **Sleep:** Be sure to obtain adequate sleep. When we are rested, stressors do not seem as difficult.
- **Monitor alcohol and caffeine intake:** When under pressure, caffeine can actually increase our physical response to stress because it is chemically a stimulant. Alcohol is chemically a depressant and can increase one's feelings of depression, especially while under stress.
- **Deep breathing:** Deep, slow breathing can help to ease the body's response to stressors. Breathe from the diaphragm/abdominal area, while counting to five.
- **Healthy Eating:** Many people experience mood swings when they eat too much sugar. Consult with your doctor or a nutritionist about how to plan a well-balanced diet.
- **Relax & unwind:** Make time in your schedule to relax on a daily basis – at least 10 or 15 minutes each day. Put your feet up and listen to relaxing music, or go for a walk and enjoy the fresh air. Your spouse and children can “get by” without you being with them for these few minutes – and the short break can make you a happier, more serene partner and parent.
- **Positive imagery:** Take a “mental vacation.” Imagine yourself relaxing at a peaceful scene. Maybe you are visualizing yourself walking along the beach or hiking in the mountains. Focus on your five senses for a more intense experience – in other words, imagine what you are seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and feeling. Breathe slowly and deeply.
- **Be realistic:** Sometimes we get stressed because we try to change people or things that we have no control over. Part of coping with stress is determining what we can change - and what we cannot. For instance, we can not change our partner's gambling or use of alcohol. But we can change our responses to or partner's behavior. By learning to “let go” of our hopes to “change” others, our stress level will decrease significantly, as well as our anger and resentment.
- **Leisure activities:** Be sure to schedule some time for recreational or leisure activities. If you do not have a hobby or particular interest, take the time to find something you are interested in pursuing. Would you like to take an art class? What about learning a musical instrument? Do you like to sew? Are there any clubs that you would like to join? Leisure activities are not luxuries, but necessities in coping with the many stressors that we all face.

HOW MY BODY RESPONDS TO EMOTIONS

Sometimes our bodies recognize that we are experiencing a particular feeling before we identify it for ourselves. For instance, your heart might begin to race, your perspiration may increase, your might develop tightness in your chest, as well as a headache – are you coming down with the flu? Or could you be experiencing anxiety? Or maybe you are excited, afraid or angry?

Our bodies naturally react to all types of emotions. It is up to us to identify these bodily cues and to acknowledge the feelings behind them. By reading our own body language, we can help to determine what we are feeling, and then what to do about that feeling.

For example, some people become so angry so quickly that they do not realize they are angry – they lash out with verbal abuse even before they recognize the anger that is behind it. If we learn to read our physical cues, it can give us a forewarning about our emotions. Then we can decide how we want to respond – not just react – to these feelings.

Answer the following questions to help you get more in touch with how your body reacts to these emotions:

My body reacts to anxiety by: _____

My body reacts to anger by: _____

My body reacts to sadness by: _____

My body reacts to happiness by: _____

My body reacts to danger by: _____

My body reacts to criticism by: _____

My body reacts to guilt by: _____

COMMUNICATION

Communication happens at least two levels all the time:

- verbal, direct and overt
- non-verbal and indirect.

Unfortunately, miscommunication at both levels is as common, and as "normal," as accurate communication.

Verbal communication has several steps:

- thought, and deciding to communicate.
- speaking
- hearing
- interpreting
- reacting (which spills over into nonverbal communication)

Nonverbal communication is even more complicated. It includes:

- tone of voice
- timing
- volume
- posture
- gestures
- expressions

"WHAT YOU THINK I SAID MAY NOT BE WHAT I MEANT."

Good communication is about being clear, but also being patient with the process of noticing and clearing up inevitable misunderstandings.

- Communication also can have many purposes, including expression of feelings to be understood (expressive), conveying information, and demanding compliance with directions (instrumental).

Males sometimes do not use expressive language or understand it well.

- Males often experience females' expressions of feelings as demands for action that the female does not acknowledge.
- Such males need to learn to listen for the sake of listening and understanding instead of getting something done, or asking for or giving advice.

It is more effective for a female to be up front about asking for what she wants - if she is in a situation where others treat her with respect & consideration.

- When women or men are afraid of mistreatment and retaliation, they tend to communicate indirectly, and not clearly.

Most relationships work best when all persons involved perceive the others as feeling unconditional positive regard and accurate empathy, and as being truly genuine and present. This requires that all parties be able to communicate effectively on both verbal and nonverbal levels. Their messages need to usually contain some compliments or other expressions of appreciation, which help the receiver stay open. Anger and criticism create the need to defend and react, unless they are carefully balanced with positives.

BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION

The biggest barrier to communication is motivation, or “attitude.” If one person is not really interested in interacting with or understanding the other – if they are focused on controlling or manipulating the other person, or on dumping their own feelings, or on controlling their own internal chaos – then two-way, interactive communication will be impossible.

Communication includes both “content” (what is said or written) and “process” (how it is said or written). There are both process and content barriers to communication.

CONTENT BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION

- Attacking, blaming, accusing, shaming, etc. (“you” statements)
- Name calling, insults, swearing, sarcasm
- Threats, especially implied or indirect threats
- Placating, seducing, cajoling etc.

PROCESS BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION

- Raising one's voice, using sarcastic intonation or timing
- Moving in a threatening manner, standing up, hovering, getting in the other's face etc.
- Interrupting to change the subject or take over the “floor”
- Monopolizing the conversation, not making room for others
- Refusing to talk, refusing to listen
- Changing the subject before it is done
- Pushing one's own topic when the other is not interested in it
- Changing the focus or level of discussion
- Insisting on “winning” or being “right” – and the other “wrong”
- Not recognizing, admitting, or clarifying normal misunderstandings – treating them as attacks
- “Mind-reading” or expecting the other to “read” your mind (i.e., knowing what the speaker “means” even when they haven't said it directly)
- Saying one thing and doing another

PRACTICING NEW COMMUNICATION RESPONSES TO COMMON STRESSFUL SITUATIONS

When you start to get into a conflicted situation, it is a good idea to have some new communication responses that you have practiced ahead of time. It is helpful to memorize these communication responses. The more you practice these new responses the easier it will be to use them when a discussion starts to heat up.

Active Communication Responses

- Ask for what you specifically need by saying, "I feel (mad, sad, afraid, anxious, etc.) about this situation. What I think I want in this situation is.... (give just one behavioral request)."
- Negotiate with the other person. Ask, "What is your idea about solving the problem?"
- If none of the negotiation ideas are useful, you might decide to "meet halfway" – in other words, do it your way this time, and the other person's way the next time. Or agree that, "If you do something for me, I'll do something for you."
- If the conflict persists, identify ways to take care of yourself. Say, "If this situation continues, I'll have to do (self-care) in order to take care of myself. Examples of self-care include paying someone to do it, doing it yourself instead of spending time with your partner, withdrawing temporarily or permanently from the relationship, or getting the need met elsewhere.

Passive Communication Responses

- Get additional information from the other person. Ask, "What do you need in this situation? What concerns do you have? What is bothering you in this situation?"
- Acknowledge the other person's needs or feelings in a sincere, genuine way. Say, "So what you need is _____." So what concerns you is _____." "So what hurts you is _____."
- Be sure to say the above without being sarcastic or judgmental.
- If all else fails, withdraw temporarily or use time out. Say, "It seems like we're starting to get upset. I want to stop and cool off for awhile."

Helpful Hints:

- If anger begins to escalate, you can repeat responses such as asking for more information, summarizing what the other person feels as well as their wants and needs, and negotiate further.
- Be sure that your tone of voice, facial expression and body language convey that you truly care about the other person's feelings.
- If you are still feeling stuck and angry, go to the self-care response or withdraw or use time-out.

How do you practice these new communication responses?

- You can practice these new communication responses by visualizing yourself getting angry.
- Next, imagine yourself relaxing, dealing with the stress, and being in control of what you say and do.
- Use statements to calm yourself down.
- The goal is to problem-solve and to try and maintain the relationship.
- These communication responses are not intended to be used for revenge or manipulation.

CHANGING THOUGHTS, ATTITUDES & BELIEFS

Sometimes things happen in our lives and we have no control over them. But we always have *control over how we respond* to these situations.

The first step in learning how to respond rather than react is to look at your thoughts. There is no such thing as, "It just happened." There is always a thought process that happens prior to every action.

Whether you choose to use drugs, yell at your children, have an affair or give money to a charity, these are all choices that you make. The way that you decide to respond to a situation is based upon your thoughts or self-talk messages.

When we are stressed, our thoughts or self-talk can be stressed, too – and we usually make poor decisions. When we have positive self-talk messages, we are more likely to respond rather than react.

Look at the following examples of negative self-talk messages and write a new response that is positive.

Negative self-talk messages: "That driver cut me off on purpose. He knew I was in a hurry, and he deliberately forced me to slow down.

Reaction: Honk the car horn, yell at the driver, flash my high beams, throw something at the car, tailgate the other car, make a rude hand gesture, etc.

My new positive self-talk message is: _____

My new response to this positive self-talk message is: _____

Negative self-talk messages: "My son failed his math class because he is a lazy, good-for-nothing loser. He just wanted to make me angry. I'll show him!"

Reaction: Verbally or emotionally abuse the son; Scare, intimidate or physically abuse the son;

My new positive self-talk message is: _____

My new response to this positive self-talk message is: _____

YOU MAY BE RIGHT...YOU MAY BE WRONG: TAKING A SECOND LOOK AT MORE NEGATIVE ASSUMPTIONS

Consider the following negative thoughts that can lead to misunderstanding and anger:

- **BLAME AWAY YOUR RESPONSIBILITY**

When we blame others we are taking away our own ability to make choices or to have any sense of control in a situation. When we blame others, we are assuming that they purposefully did something to hurt us. When we blame, we see the world as "black or white" – but in the "gray" area of life, we can admit the part we have in the situation and do something about it.

Anger management tip: If we spend more time looking at how we could have changed our own behavior in a conflicted situation, instead of blaming the other person, we will feel more in control of future difficult situations and ourselves.

- **PSYCHIC ABILITY?**

Sometimes we assume that the people around us are mindreaders. We assume that they did something on purpose just to annoy or hurt us. For example, if you are late to work, you might assume that the driver in front of you psychically knows you are in a hurry and is just driving slowly to make you angry. Often times, people irritate us by accident or for some unrelated reason. Expecting others to be "magically" aware of our wants and needs at all times is unrealistic and will certainly lead to anger, as people are not psychics.

Anger management tip: When you first begin to notice that you have an expectation about someone else, ask yourself, "Am I expecting this person to be a mindreader?"

- **MAGNIFYING GLASSES**

Life is filled with difficult situations. Yet, some people take these situations and make them even worse, as if they were taking a giant magnifying glass and making small events look bigger. Phrases like, "I never get," "You always," "You should," and so on make a "mountain out of a molehill." When we make a minor problem or disagreement into a major one, we are developing our own catastrophe – and that usually leads to frustration and anger.

Anger management tip: The next time you begin to get really upset, take a deep breath and ask yourself, "Is this situation really that awful? Is my anger way out of proportion to the situation?"

- **IF THE SHOE DOESN'T FIT, TRY TO WEAR IT ANYWAY**

Many arguments could be easily resolved or even avoided if we put ourselves in the other person's shoes and tried to look at the situation through their perspective. Maybe we have not considered an important aspect of the disagreement or have jumped to a conclusion too quickly. When we are open to feedback from others, we are in a better position to resolve a conflict in an intelligent and fair way.

Anger management tip: Write a conversation about yourself and another person. Try to put yourself in the other person's place. This exercise, known as role reversal, can be helpful in understanding the other person's perspective.

BASIC CONDITIONS FOR A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP

- **SAFETY (EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL)**
- **CARING, POSITIVE REGARD, ACCEPTANCE, APPRECIATION, LOVE**
- **NON-JUDGMENTAL RESPECT**
- **UNDERSTANDING, ACCURATE EMPATHY**
- **ATTENTION, BEING EMOTIONALLY PRESENT OR “REAL”**
- **HONESTY, GENUINNESS, “CONGRUENCE” (WORDS AND BEHAVIOR MATCH)**
- **STABILITY, PREDICTABILITY**
- **PLEASURE, FUN, SATISFACTION IN THE RELATIONSHIP**
- **OPPORTUNITY TO EXERCISE COMPETENCE**
- **BELONGING, MEANING**
- **TRUST**
- **BALANCE OF TOGETHERNESS AND SEPARATENESS**

These conditions apply to any relationship:

- Children need these from parents and caregivers to grow up to have strong egos, good self-esteem, good judgement, and a sense of emotional balance.
- Students learn more when they perceive their teacher as providing these conditions.
- Workers who feel this from supervisors produce more.
- Clients in psychotherapy heal best if these conditions are present, and have difficulty or fail if they are not.
- Husbands and wives need to feel these from their partner, and provide them for their partner to make a partnership work.

Without these conditions, people in any situation do not function well. People become what they can be; they “maximize their potential,” most effectively in environments that provide these conditions.

STICKS AND STONES CAN BREAK ONE'S BONES – BUT WORDS CAN REALLY HURT, TOO

When we call someone a name, especially in scorn or anger, we are pushing that person into the tiny box of that name.

- We are implying that they are nothing more than a “----”.
- When that name is a body part or an animal, we are saying that the person is a thing or an animal – less than human.
- We are trying to act as if – and make them feel as if – they are nothing more than an object.

After giving them a label, we begin to think that they are just like that label.

- We all know that being made to feel less than human hurts, especially if the person calling us names is our parent, relative, friend, girlfriend or boyfriend.

In addition, women and minorities are especially vulnerable to name-calling.

- Many of the names they are called are used everywhere they go in society to put them down.
- They are often more vulnerable to name-calling in private as a result.
- Many people who were abused as children react very strongly to being called names.
- Unfortunately, many people are not aware of how name-calling hurts other people in their lives.

Males often hide behind the superficial social acceptability of insulting females.

- Calling women names such as “pussy,” “bitch” and “cunt,” – or
- Calling men “prick,” or “bastard” – is abusive.
- The same is true for using “idiot,” “asshole,” “fat slob,” “nerd” or any other negative labels.

In some ways, using name-calling hurts the “name-caller” more than the victim.

- Name-calling makes the name-caller look bad.
- A victim who has good self-esteem can choose to ignore the insult and the “name-caller.”
- But the “name-caller” cannot escape the distortions in their own judgement and perception caused by their own behavior.

Anyone who doubts that names change how we feel about others, should remember that part of basic training for soldiers during wartime is to train them to call the enemy by dehumanizing names.

- It is easier to kill a “gook” than it is to kill a man
- It is easier to hit a “bitch” than a girlfriend.

Talk/Listen/Repeat Technique

One way to handle a problem situation without it creating an even bigger conflict is the "Talk/Listen/Repeat" Technique.

Here's how it works:

- Step 1 One person is the Talker, and is the other the Listener.
The Talker talks about one subject at a time, just a few sentences at a time.
- Step 2 The Listener only listens at first.
- Step 3 Then the Listener "checks-out" what he (or she) thinks has been said.
- Step 4 The Talker confirms or corrects what the Listener has heard.
- Step 5 If the Talker is finished with the one topic, then the Talker and Listener switch roles. The new Talker now gets to talk about their own feelings.

- Notice that the Listener doesn't correct or challenge what the Talker is saying.
- The Listener is not allowed to defend him or herself against what the Talker says. The Listener just listens, at first.
- The Talker can say what they might like, but they are not allowed to ask for a solution to their problem during this technique.
- The goal is understanding the other person's feelings, not solving a problem.
- Repeating back and checking-out what the other person said during the process decreases misunderstandings.
- This technique also makes it easier for both people to get equal time to express their own point of view.
- Slowing down the conversation also allows each person to think more carefully about what they are going to say, without being interrupted, or challenged.

Here's an example of how it works:

Daughter: "Mom, you don't understand me. If you loved me, you'd let me go to my friend's party. You just don't want me to have fun."

Mother: "So, if I am understanding you right, you think I don't love you and that I don't want you to have any fun because I won't let you go to that party."

Daughter: "Yeah, that's how I feel."

Mother: "I want you to have fun with your friends but I don't know the parents of your friend who's having the party. I am afraid there could be problems at the party if the parents aren't keeping an eye out on things."

Daughter: "It sounds like you are afraid the party could get out of hand because you don't know the parents and how well they can manage the kids at the party."

Notice how the mother and daughter are focusing on their feelings instead of arguing. This is the first step in trying to resolve a problem.

“I” STATEMENTS

- “I” statements are a way of communicating that decreases the chances that you will end up in an argument.
- “I” statements describe a problem without blaming the other person.
- It gives the other person the room to respond without getting defensive.
- “I” statements are different from “you” statements.
- “You” statements set up the other person to feel bad. They almost always argue back. This makes the problem worse. (See below.)

Example of an “I” statement:

“I thought you said you would take out the trash, and it is still here. I feel used and let down when this happens.”

Example of a “You” statement:

“You promised to take out the trash, but it is still here. You always make promises that you don’t keep. That makes you a liar.”

“I” statements focus on the speaker’s feelings. To use this approach, it is helpful to follow this example:

“I felt _____ when _____” (description of event).
(E.g., “I felt hurt and disappointed when you did not keep your promise.”)

Alternatively: “This is how I saw what happened _____,
and this is how it made me feel _____.”

- The more specific the description, the more it comes across as a potentially fallible personal opinion or experience.
- “I” statements are not blaming. They describe your feelings about what the other person said or did.
- Overly general or extreme descriptions often lead to arguments such as “It is not true that I never keep my word”.

It is often helpful to follow this up with a specific request for a fair change.

For example:

- “I would like it if you would not make a promise unless you can keep it.”
- The ideas that lead to your feelings may be in error, but your feelings are always valid and important. Feelings are feeling and can’t be argued with.
- “I” statements open the way for problem solving instead of fighting.

ACTIVE LISTENING

“What you think I said may not be what I meant”

- “Active Listening” is the process of letting the other person know you are listening.
- “Active Listening” is important because it is common to misunderstand each other in everyday communication.
- People show they are listening by:
 - Maintaining frequent eye contact
 - Nodding occasionally
 - Saying “mmmmm”
 - Responding to what is being said
 - Repeating what is being said to “check out” any misunderstandings.
- The way around misunderstandings is to “check out” what the other person seemed to say. For example:
 - “What I think you said is “.....” – am I right?”
 - “Let me check this out. You think that “.....”. Right?”
- If you are talking about something that might be a problem, it is helpful to ask about feelings as well as thoughts.
 - “Lets see, this is what happened, and it makes you feel “.....” – right?”

Repeating the other person accurately does not necessarily mean that you agree with what they have said, or that they are correct.

- You may still disagree. It only means that you understand their feelings, not that you agree.
- Even when you disagree, you can both be cooperative in the process of understanding each other.
- Both people need to understand that you have not done something wrong if you misunderstand and repeat incorrectly.
- You are giving the other person the opportunity to correct your understanding.
- It is important for both people to feel completely understood before trying to solve any problems.
- Often solutions do not work because they were based on incomplete understanding.
- The tone of voice and kind of that you use words are important.
- Sarcasm and criticism are almost never helpful in increasing understanding.
- If the other person gets frustrated or angry with you for not understanding more easily, it may be helpful to say something like:
 - “You are right, I am having trouble understanding you. Please help me understand better.”

7 STEPS TO SAFE
AND
PRODUCTIVE ARGUMENTS

1. NO ATTACKS – PHYSICAL OR VERBAL
2. FOCUS ON FEELINGS & USE “I STATEMENTS
3. LISTEN RESPECTFULLY AND ACTIVELY TO THE OTHER’S FEELINGS AND IDEAS
4. STAY ON ONE TOPIC OR ONE PROBLEM AT A TIME
 - STAY IN THE PRESENT
 - DON’T BRING UP PAST ARGUMENTS
5. CONTROL YOURSELF –
 - NOT THE OTHER PERSON
 - NOT THE SITUATION
6. LOOK FOR RESOLUTION –
 - NOT FOR WHO IS RIGHT
 - NOT TO GET EVEN
7. MAKE NO ONE THE ENEMY

FINAL NOTE

The staff at *Emerge from Anger* would like to thank you for choosing to buy this book. We hope it has been interesting and helpful to you.

We have written other books about anger management and domestic violence (see below). We also offer workshops for psychotherapists for continuing education units. If you'd more information about our books or workshops, please contact our director, Mark Miller, MFT, at (661) 255-6634.

ADDITIONAL BOOKS FOR SALE

Got Anger? Practical Anger Management Techniques for Daily Living, by Mark S. Miller, MFT, Kendall Evans, MFT, and Patricia E. Patton, Ph.D. (This book is written for adults.)

The 'Big Book' of Anger: Applying the Twelve-Step Program of Recovery to Anger Problems, by Mark S. Miller, MFT and Patricia E. Patton, Ph.D.

Substance Abuse and Domestic Violence, by Mark S. Miller, MFT and Patricia E. Patton, Ph.D.

Legal, Ethical, Treatment and Case Management Issues for the Domestic Violence Batterers' Group Facilitator, by Mark S. Miller, MFT and Patricia E. Patton, Ph.D.