

Individualised Anger Management Program Worksheet

1. Introductory Exploratory Questions
2. Definitions
3. Symptoms
4. Personal Anger Episodes
5. Anger Sources and Triggers
6. Anger Management Strategies
7. 10 Anger Management Tips

1. Introductory Exploratory Questions

Arguably, significant personal change must begin with raising awareness. The following are questions that typically arise in discussions of anger management. Please attempt to answer them in as much detail as you can.

1. Who thinks you have an anger management problem?
2. Do you think you have an anger management problem?
3. Why do you or they think that you do?
4. How is it a problem?
5. Have any particular life experiences made it difficult for you to manage your anger?

6. What are typical triggers for your anger?
7. Are you aware of any physical sensations when you are angry?
8. What sort of thoughts do you have while angry?
9. How much control do you believe you have over your angry emotions?
10. How much control do you think you have over your *behaviour* when you are angry?
11. What, if any, techniques have you used to try to manage your anger?
12. Do you have any habits that may exacerbate your anger?
13. What particular challenges do you expect to face in trying to manage your anger?
14. What are your goals in terms of anger management?
15. How would you measure your progress?

2. Definitions

Consider and comment on the following definitions of anger:

- Anger is a state of heightened activation or arousal of the autonomic nervous system (increased heart rate, blood pressure, adrenaline) that is fuelled by our unconscious and conscious interpretations (Gorkin, 1986).
- Anger is an emotion related to one's psychological interpretation of having been offended, wronged or denied, which leads to a tendency to retaliate (Videbeck, 2006).
- Anger is an emotional state that varies in intensity from mild irritation to intense fury and rage (Spielberger, 1983).

Subtypes

- Primary anger: Natural and healthy anger with a problem-solving purpose that motivates and energises us to change our present problematic circumstances.
- Secondary anger: A response or defence against a softer primary emotion like sadness or fear.
- Instrumental anger: Involves strategically influencing others. Used when people believe they can get their way or gain control through expression of anger.
- Maladaptive anger: Involving old familiar feelings that occur repeatedly and consistently that come from past trauma or wounds from either unmet childhood needs and/or unfinished business with significant others from the past.

3. Anger Symptoms

How do you know when you are angry? Anger is not always easily identifiable in one's self or others. Consider and comment on any of the following physical and psychological symptoms of anger you may have noticed in yourself and add any not listed.

Physical Signs

Increased pulse

Sweating

Shaking

Clenched jaw

Hyperventilation

Psychological Signs

Difficulty concentrating

Loss of empathy

Impatience

Memory loss

Absolute or rigid thinking

Behavioural Signs

Interrupting

Tearfulness

Shouting

Physical violence

Stubbornness

4. Anger Episodes

Anger, like all other emotions, exists in degrees. It can be helpful to reflect on the degree of anger experienced during past episodes. Furthermore, learning to monitor the level of anger experienced in the present moment may help you to detach from the emotion and reduce unhelpful immediate reactions.

Recollect significant episodes from your personal history where you have experienced various degrees of anger. 1 signifies very mild irritation and 10 signifies extreme rage. Label the incident; describe your behaviour during the episode and some of the consequences of that behaviour.

Anger Degree	Incident	Behaviour	Consequences
•			
•			
•			
•			
•			
•			

5. Anger Sources and Triggers

The Four 'I's Model of Anger (Donovan, 2002) provides a useful means for identifying the key perceptions that may fuel anger.

- Injustice: Perception that a belief, value or goal is threatened or abused
- Injury: Perception of feeling disrespected, discarded or annoyed
- Invasion: Perception that your freedom, autonomy or boundaries are violated
- Intention: Perception that something should be done about the above

Consider if and how these relate to your own personal history. Identify any relevant anger episodes and any associated perceptions.

Injustice:

Injury:

Invasion:

Intention:

6. Anger Management Strategies

Consider how the following immediate and preventive anger management strategies may be relevant and useful for you and also consider any others which, knowing your personality and personal history, may be helpful for you.

Immediate

Given the potential of strong anger to inhibit reasonable thought and behaviour, very simple techniques are most likely to be effective.

- Monitor anger level as a way of detaching from it or defusing it. E.g. the Traffic Light model:

Green: Starting to get angry but still care
Amber: Feel very angry and approaching threshold
Red: Gone past threshold, but could still pull back and control
Run red light: lost control of behaviour and caused damage
- Breath focus (diaphragmatic or nasal focal point)
- Slow repetition of a mantra, calming word or phrase (e.g. "relax", "take it easy" or "calm down")
- Imagery: Visualize or recall a relaxing experience.

Preventive

Long term skill acquisition possibly requiring professional guidance:

- Communication skill development and assertiveness training
- Physical health and fitness (yoga, walking, meditation, vigorous exercise)
- Cognitive restructuring (examination and challenging of erroneous or unhelpful beliefs that may be contributing to anger)

7. 10 Anger Management Tips

1. Accept that it is normal to feel angry. It's helpful to recognize that anger is often a secondary emotion. We feel angry after we have been disappointed, hurt, frustrated, etc.
2. Acting out our anger in destructive ways is not OK and damages our relationships.
3. Accept that others are not to blame for our anger and that, ultimately, we must take responsibility for our own behaviour.
4. Avoid getting caught up in other people's anger. Though difficult, it is possible to learn to detach a little and become observers rather than participants in the other person's anger.
5. Feeling angry tells us that something is wrong for us, that things are not as we want them to be.
6. Think about what you feel angry about and how you might change the things you find upsetting.
7. Practise accepting the things we cannot change about ourselves, others and the world.
8. Learn to recognize your level of anger so you can get yourself out of difficult situations while you can still think sensibly. If things need to be sorted out, do it later when you're calmer.
9. 'Letting off steam' may make you feel better momentarily but doesn't change the root cause so anger is likely to resurface.
10. Let calm assertiveness be your goal.

References and Recommended Reading

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