

Anger – The Mystery Feeling

What is the mystery feeling all about? The mystery is not anger, the feeling itself, but in the many ways in which people let it out, or hold it in, or twist it until it becomes something else. And, part of the mystery is how far we will go to convince others and ourselves that anger does not exist.

“Sometimes things and people can really get me fried.”

We get angry when we are disappointed about something. Anger happens in us when we notice a gap between what we want or need from the world or someone we care about, and what we are getting. It can also result from a sense of loss, such as the loss of someone through death or divorce, or the loss of health, a job, or a cherished possession. Anger is a signal that we are facing a frustrating or stressful situation. Like traffic signals or road signs, anger and other feelings are there to help us get over the humps and around the roadblocks that are part of everyday living.

“Anger has a way of sneaking out as something else”

For instance: You say you are bored? Maybe what you really are is angry because you seem to be missing out on something.

You say your sex life is not what you would like it to be? Consider how difficult it is to make love to someone you are angry with – or someone who is angry with you.

You can put anger off, hoping it will go away. You can turn it into something else, like overeating, overdrinking or over working. You can become sleepless, sarcastic, or physically ill. And, you can hold it in until it freezes and becomes depression or surfaces as an explosion much greater than the real or imagined hurt. Or, you can acknowledge the irritation, frustration, or hurt as soon as possible:

1. Remember – you are what you say, what you think and what you FEEL. Your feelings are as individual as your footprints. No person is responsible for them but you.
2. Anger usually follows another feeling – such as frustration, fear or hurt which went by unrecognized. Learn to notice the other feeling first.

3. To be hurt, or afraid, or frustrated is to be human. Try to express your feelings in words.
4. Accept anger as one way people get what they want. It is not the only way and certainly not the best way. What you achieve with a temper tantrum is control over another person, not cooperation.
5. Try to see people in a different light. Instead of assuming that they are behaving in certain ways to hurt or anger you, realize that sometimes it is the only way they know how to react in a stressful situation.
6. The way in which you become angry and what you do about such feelings, are both habits. If you regularly let off steam by yelling at someone else, throwing a plate or hitting your child, see it for what it is: A habit which can be unlearned if you choose to change it.
7. Physical exercise relieves tension. It can help reduce the strain of a bad day at work or a quarrel with your spouse. But it is never the whole answer.
8. Saving up minor irritations for one big argument will not provide as much healthy relief as dealing with them, one at a time, as they occur.
9. After becoming angry, do not “drive around for awhile to cool off”. Walk around, or run around, or talk it out, but avoid using machinery of any kind. The automobile may seem to be a convenient, anonymous escape hatch. For the angry driver, it is a hazard to his own safety and

“Take a closer look at how you handle life’s ups and downs”

to the well being of those around him. Angry feelings are harmful when they are totally unexpressed or when they are expressed through physical violence to a child or another adult.

Copyright ©1978 Francis G. Trimble
Copyright ©1978 Francis G. Trimble & the
Canadian Mental Health Association.



Understanding Anger

It's ok to feel angry... It is not ok to hurt someone when you do.

When you get mad, instead of hitting, try the following steps:

1. Notice the signs of anger rising:

- a tight feeling in your neck, your hands, your face
- a hot feeling somewhere in your body, perhaps your ears
- breath coming faster and harder
- heart beating faster
- voice getting louder
- your own special signs

2. Before the explosion... distract yourself, take time out

- Go for a walk or a run
- Take a bath or shower
- Play the piano or some other instrument
- Bake bread
- Mow the lawn
- Don't drive your car... You may hurt yourself or someone else.

3. Talk yourself down

- Don't talk yourself into being angrier by thinking that the person you are mad at is deliberately out to get you or defy you. Tell yourself that they have their own reasons for doing what they are doing, that it may have nothing to do with you.
- Don't exaggerate what is going on. Tell yourself that what is happening is probably not as serious as you think it is.

4. Figure out why you are angry, ask yourself:

- Am I really angry at myself or someone else and am I taking it out on the person close to me?
- Am I really feeling hurt, afraid, sad, disappointed, embarrassed or insecure? Are these other feelings coming out as anger?
- Am I suffering from fatigue or stress that is triggering my anger?

5. Express your feelings verbally, whatever they are

- Describe how you are feeling
- Don't use hurtful words
- Don't blame the other person for how you are feeling

You are in control of your own feelings

You alone choose how you feel and act

Provided by the Office for the Prevention of Family Violence, 1989
Alberta Family and Social Services



ANGER

K.M. Nielsen, M.Ed., R.S.W.

Anger is often the way we distance ourselves from others... and ourselves. And yet we can no more stop feeling angry than we can stop feeling love or affection... unless we shut down our emotions. If we choose to do that we can not do it selectively... shut down one emotion and you shut down them all. It's rather like those Christmas lights, you know the ones where none of the lights work even though only one light bulb is burned out.

It is not FEELING that is the problem... it's what we do with the feelings or what we fear the feelings will cause to happen.

Change is hard work. If you are frightened of your anger; if you regularly numb your feelings; distance yourself from people or situations because you fear what you feel, then it will require lots of determination on your part to change your behaviour.

We cope with anger in many ways!

1. Destructive (violence, suicide)
In self-destructive ways such as violence, suicide or by turning the anger inwards. This can lead to migraine headaches, depression, and sexual dysfunction.

It's not the anger itself that's a problem, but the inability to deal with it effectively and constructively. Emotions like anger just do not go away and we fail to deal with them at our peril.

2. Anger can be a COVER-UP for other feelings.
Sometimes it's easier to get angry than to look at our fear in some situations... fear of rejection, failure, and embarrassment...

QUESTION: Do you ever say to yourself, "Who do they think you are?"
"Why me all the time?"
"It isn't fair?"

Sometimes this is a sign that anger is covering up feelings of insecurity.

Perhaps you deal with anger in a way that your parents did.

QUESTION: How did/do your parents deal with anger?
How do you deal with anger?

3. Sometimes we have stuffed our childhood anger so deep that we feel like a volcano. Have you ever found that one little thing will sometimes trigger a major explosion of anger?

Buried anger, stuffed anger, ignored anger doesn't go away.

It makes little difference whether we deny our anger, cover it up or lash out... the anger remains.

Whether we pour out abuse and pain on others, or turn the anger inwards and punish ourselves, the end result is the same... inner conflict and difficulty with intimate relationships.



Permission to photocopy with credit given to The Family Centre

Room 20, 9912 - 106 Street, Edmonton, Alberta T5K 1C5 Phone (780) 423-2831 Fax (780) 426-4918

Email tfc@the-family-centre.com Website www.the-family-centre.com

AGR002.doc

Anger Discussion Questions

1

Although it might sometimes feel like your anger “explodes” and comes out of nowhere, this is almost never the case. Anger builds slowly, and if you aren’t paying attention, it can happen entirely outside of your awareness. Can you think of a time when your anger caught you by surprise? In retrospect, were there any warning signs you could’ve picked up on?

2

Some people describe anger as a “secondary emotion”. This means that anger is a response to a *primary* emotion, such as hurt, fear, or sadness. For example, someone might feel hurt, and lash out with anger in response. Do *you* think anger is a secondary emotion? Why or why not?

3

Many of us pick up life-long habits related to anger when we’re children, based off of the examples set by our parents. Do you notice any similarities between how you and your family members deal with anger? What are your family’s strengths and weaknesses in dealing with anger?

4

Everyone experiences anger—it’s a completely normal emotion, and it’s healthy within limits. But as we know, anger can become a problem when it gets out of control. When *is* anger healthy, and when does it become unhealthy or harmful?

5

People can express their anger through words, actions, art, or any number of other ways. Do you express your anger in any healthy ways, and if so, what are they? What do you think might happen if you *never* expressed your anger?

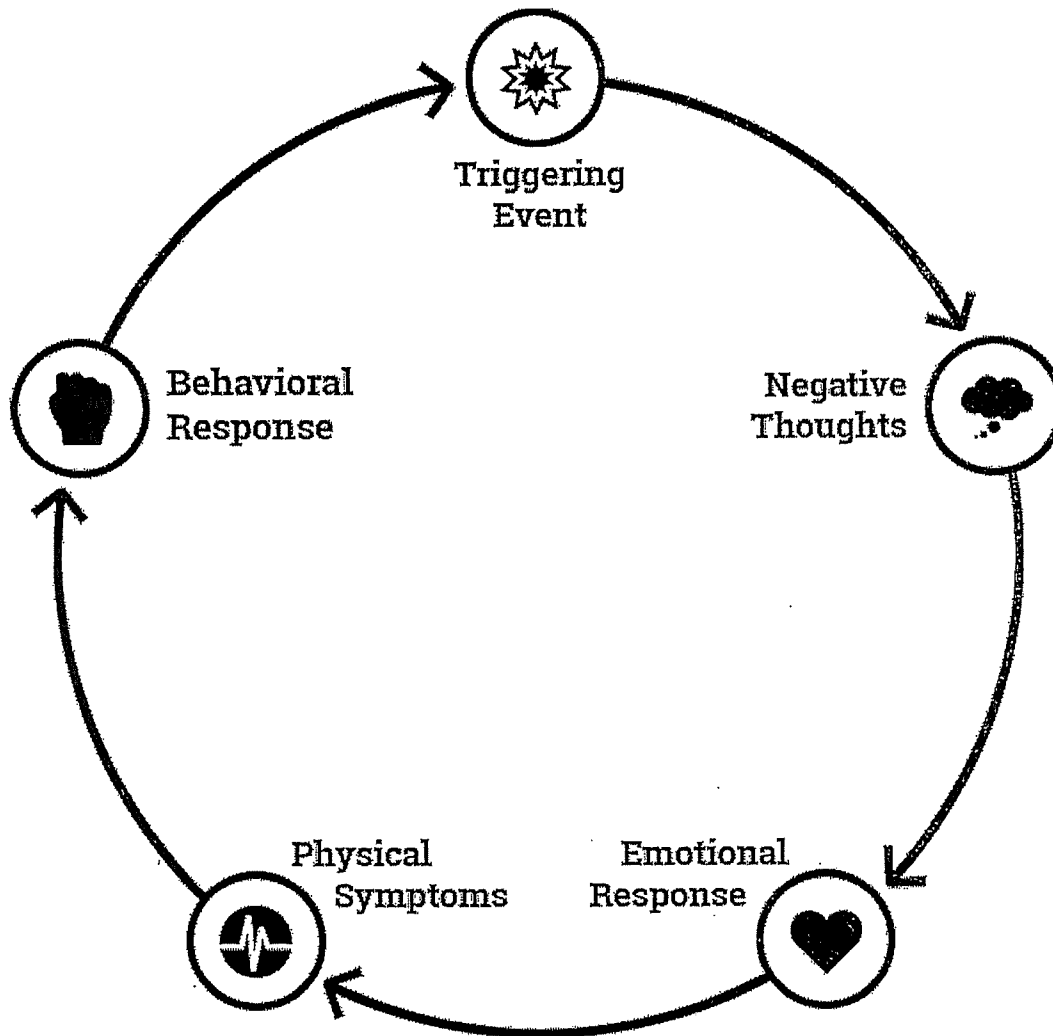
6

How you think about a situation can influence how you feel about it. For example, if you think that someone “has it out for you”, you will probably see all of their actions in a negative light. Can you think of a time when your thoughts affected your anger? In what ways could changing how you think help you control how you feel?

7

What would it look like if someone was really good at managing their anger? Not just hiding their anger or ignoring it, but managing it in a genuinely healthy way. Do you know anyone who manages their anger well?

The Cycle of Anger



Triggering Event

An event or situation “triggers” a person’s anger. Examples:

- Getting cut off while driving.
- Having a bad day at work.
- Feeling disrespected.

Negative Thoughts

Irrational and negative thoughts occur as a result of the triggering event. Examples:

- “I’m the worst parent ever.”
- “The jerk who cut me off doesn’t care about anyone but themselves.”

Emotional Response

Negative thoughts lead to negative emotions, even if the thoughts are irrational. Examples:

- Feelings of shame and guilt due to being the “worst parent ever”.
- Rage directed toward a bad driver.

Physical Symptoms

The body automatically responds to anger with several symptoms. Examples:

- Racing Heart
- Sweating
- Clenched Fists
- Shaking

Behavioral Response

The person reacts based upon thoughts, feelings, and physical symptoms. Examples:

- Fighting
- Arguing
- Yelling
- Criticizing

Checklist for Hidden Anger

Anger is not always obvious. Sometimes it shows up in subconscious behaviours or body reactions. Take a look. You may not feel angry, but if you have signs of hidden anger, you may have some resolving to do....

- ✓ Procrastination in the completion of imposed tasks.
- ✓ Thoughts of revenge.
- ✓ Using sarcasm to be humorous, or making jokes at serious moments.
- ✓ Being cynical or frequently negative about things.
- ✓ Being overly polite, too sweet, or being constantly cheerful in order to “grin and bear it”.
- ✓ Sighing frequently or loudly.
- ✓ Smiling when you really feel hurt, sad, or wish you could cry.
- ✓ Having frequent disturbing or frightening dreams.
- ✓ Having a very controlled or monotone speaking voice.
- ✓ Experiencing difficulty getting to sleep or staying asleep for a whole night.
- ✓ Feeling bored, apathetic, or losing interest in things you are usually enthusiastic about or interested in.
- ✓ Having chronic physical pain or ailments, or ongoing issues with stress.
- ✓ Becoming tired more easily than usual or over-sleeping without feeling rested.
- ✓ Becoming excessively irritable over, or over-reacting to, small issues.
- ✓ Becoming sleepy at inappropriate times or places.
- ✓ Waking up feeling tired.
- ✓ Having facial discomfort, or clenching your jaws, especially while sleeping.
- ✓ Developing facial tics, throat clearing, sniffing, fist clenching, spasmodic movements or other repeated acts that are unintentional or that you are unaware of.
- ✓ Grinding your teeth, especially while you are sleeping.
- ✓ Having a chronically stiff or sore neck or shoulder muscles.
- ✓ Developing repeated headaches which may begin to appear at certain times of the day.
- ✓ Chronic depression.
- ✓ Experiencing chronic stomach or digestive problems.
- ✓ Eating at inappropriate times like the middle of the night, or denying yourself food.
- ✓ Pacing, muttering, swearing or using put downs or socially inappropriate language without being aware.



There is a link between anger and clinical depression, so many of these symptoms look like depression. To determine if you are depressed, make sure to see a medical or mental health professional for proper diagnosis! Also remember that many people coming off stimulants will experience depressive symptoms, and that asking for help with these issues is a sign of being strong enough to take care of yourself and support your recovery!!

Adapted from AADAC Residential Workshops. 2005.

<http://www.creativeconflictresolution.org/jc/maps-1/cognitive-distortions.html>

Gore, Dr. David Karol. PhD. C.Psych. Atlanta. www.drgore.com/hiddenanger/index.php

University of Texas. Counselling & Mental Health Centre. <http://cmhc.utexas.edu/fightingfair.html>

Babuta, Leo. *How to Let Go and Forgive*. <http://zenhabits.net/how-to-let-go-and-forgive/>

Vandersteen, Shirley, PhD, C.Psych. *Forgiveness*.

<http://static.quim.co.uk/sys-images/Film/Pix/pictures/2012/5/3/1336045402297/Mark-Ruffalo-as-the-Hulk--008.jpg>

Cognitive Distortions

Cognitive distortions are irrational thoughts that can influence your emotions. Everyone experiences cognitive distortions to some degree, but in their more extreme forms they can be harmful.

Magnification and Minimization: Exaggerating or minimizing the importance of events. One might believe their own achievements are unimportant, or that their mistakes are excessively important.

Catastrophizing: Seeing only the worst possible outcomes of a situation.

Overgeneralization: Making broad interpretations from a single or few events. "I felt awkward during my job interview. I am *always* so awkward."

Magical Thinking: The belief that acts will influence unrelated situations. "I am a good person—bad things shouldn't happen to me."

Personalization: The belief that one is responsible for events outside of their own control. "My mom is always upset. She would be fine if I did more to help her."

Jumping to Conclusions: Interpreting the meaning of a situation with little or no evidence.

Mind Reading: Interpreting the thoughts and beliefs of others without adequate evidence. "She would not go on a date with me. She probably thinks I'm ugly."

Fortune Telling: The expectation that a situation will turn out badly without adequate evidence.

Emotional Reasoning: The assumption that emotions reflect the way things really are. "I feel like a bad friend, therefore I must be a bad friend."

Disqualifying the Positive: Recognizing only the negative aspects of a situation while ignoring the positive. One might receive many compliments on an evaluation, but focus on the single piece of negative feedback.

"Should" Statements: The belief that things should be a certain way. "I should always be friendly."

All-or-Nothing Thinking: Thinking in absolutes such as "always", "never", or "every". "I *never* do a good enough job on anything."

Anger Log: Keeping a Record

| <i>Situation & Date</i> | <i>Physical symptoms, body cues and behaviour patterns</i> | <i>My behaviour</i> | <i>How I felt</i> | <i>What I would like to have done</i> | <i>Why I didn't do what I wanted to do</i> |
|-----------------------------|--|---------------------|-------------------|---|--|
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |



Permission to photocopy with credit given to The Family Centre
Room 20, 9912 – 106 Street, Edmonton, Alberta T5K 1C5 Phone (780) 423-2831 Fax (780) 426-4918
Email tfc@the-family-centre.com Website www.the-family-centre.com

Blocks To Acting Assertively

Instructions: This exercise will tell you about how you generally deal with your own and others' anger. The aim is only to learn about our own behaviour. Finding a partner, take turns completing each statement honestly with one another.

DEALING WITH MY OWN ANGER

1. When I am angry with people, I usually feel:

- a) *afraid to say anything directly because I don't want to hurt their feelings*
- b) *afraid that if I do say something, it will sound aggressive and they won't like me*
- c) *feel okay about expressing what is on my mind*
- d) *feel anxious and confused about what I want to say*

2. When I am angry with someone, I usually:

- a) *drop hints about my feelings, hoping the person will get the message*
- b) *tell the person in a direct way what I want and feel okay about doing that*
- c) *avoid the person for awhile until I calm down and the anger wears off*
- d) *express my anger sarcastically - getting my point across in humour or a joke about the other person*

DEALING WITH OTHERS' ANGER

3. When someone gets angry with me, I usually:

- a) *think he or she doesn't like me*
- b) *feel too scared to ask why and try to work things out*
- c) *feel confused and want to cry*
- d) *immediately feel wronged*
- e) *think I have the right to understand why he/she is angry and respond to it*
- f) *feel angry in return*
- g) *feel guilty*

4. When someone gets angry with me, I usually:

- a) *end up crying*
- b) *back off*
- c) *ask him/her to explain the anger further or else respond to it in a direct manner*
- d) *get angry in return*
- e) *apologize if I don't understand why he/she is angry*
- f) *try to smooth it over*
- g) *make a joke out of it and try to get him/her to forget it*



Constructive Ways To Handle Anger

Before you get Angry...

1. Recognize and allow yourself to believe that anger is a natural, healthy and valuable **feeling**.
2. Recognize the difference between **feeling** angry and **expressing** anger.
3. Be prepared to own your feelings by using "I" language: "I feel angry!"
4. Learn to recognize what things, people, events, situations, etc. **trigger** your feelings of anger.
Know your buttons as well as those who push them do!
5. Explore ways you can avoid unnecessary anger-producing situations. Develop alternatives.
Don't set yourself up!
6. Develop your ability to relax. Relaxation skills can help you regain control of a situation, especially when they help to desensitize your triggers and buttons.
7. Develop many ways of coping with situations that block your healthy expression of anger by expanding your choice list of expressing anger.
8. Learn to listen and observe undefensively.
9. Develop your skills of self-awareness.
10. Develop a vocabulary of feeling words.

When you are Angry...

1. Recognize and acknowledge your feeling of anger through self-awareness and internal statements to yourself.
2. Apply what you have developed in the 10 areas listed above.
3. Evaluate the situation and decide whether or not you want to resolve the situation within yourself, with others or, maybe, not at all. You choose how you want to spend your energy but remember **anger is energy and can be destructive to you unless it is vented or expressed in some healthy way!**
4. Begin with a simple statement that owns your feelings: "I feel hurt and angry."
5. Avoid blaming statements and "you" language such as, "You make me mad!"



Anger Management Skills

Recognize your Anger Early

If you're yelling, it's probably too late. Learn the warning signs that you're getting angry so you can change the situation quickly. Some common signs are feeling hot, raising voices, balling of fists, shaking, and arguing.

Take a Timeout

Temporarily leave the situation that is making you angry. If other people are involved, explain to them that you need a few minutes alone to calm down. Problems usually aren't solved when one or more people are angry.

Deep Breathing

Take a minute to just breathe. Count your breaths: four seconds inhaling, four seconds holding your breath, and four seconds exhaling. Really keep track of time, or you might cheat yourself! The counting helps take your mind off the situation as well.

Exercise

Exercise serves as an emotional release. Chemicals released in your brain during the course of exercise create a sense of relaxation and happiness.

Express your Anger

Once you've calmed down, express your frustration. Try to be assertive, but not confrontational. Expressing your anger will help avoid the same problems in the future.

Think of the Consequences

What will be the outcome of your next anger-fueled action? Will arguing convince the other person that you're right? Will you be happier after the fight?

Visualization

Imagine a relaxing experience. What do you see, smell, hear, feel, and taste? Maybe you're on a beach with sand between your toes and waves crashing in the distance. Spend a few minutes imagining every detail of your relaxing scene.

Cool-Downs & Time-Outs

A Time-out or cool-down is a tool to use to prevent you from doing or saying abusive things that you know you'll regret later.

Tom,

"I would reach a point where no matter what I learned in the groups or what the court order said, I just didn't care. I was going to do something and nothing could stop me. A cool-down is like preventative medicine. Before you ever get to that place where you don't care anymore, you leave. The situation won't change because you left it for awhile but how you deal with it may change totally."

Steps to Take

1. Talk to your partner about cool-downs right away. Let him/her know that sometimes when you're together it may be necessary for you to take a time-out or cool-down in order to relax. Let him/her know that when you come back, you will agree on a time either later that day or the next day to discuss the issue again. He/she might want to do the same thing.
2. Take a time-out or cool-down every time you think your anger is starting to climb by recognizing your physical and emotional cues and leave the situation (place or person).
3. Do not swear, raise your voice, threaten or use any intimidating behaviour.
4. Go somewhere and try to relax and think positively about yourself. Remind yourself of what your goals are in the program. It may help to walk, jog or do deep breathing to get some tension out. Do not drive, drink alcohol or take drugs.
5. When you come back, decide with your partner on a good time for discussion of the issue. Maybe it is a good idea to talk it over with a third party present, someone you both trust. Sometimes, after a time-out you may both decide that the issue wasn't worth discussing in the first place and you may mutually decide to just drop it. If you decide to discuss the issue and you recognize the cues occurring again - Take a time-out!

Remember these four points about respectful communication and conflict-resolution:

1. You have the right to say what you want to say but you cannot do it in a abusive way, using intimidating or harsh language.
2. In order for communication to be effective, both parties must listen to what the other person is saying and not try to merely convince the other of your position.
3. Good communication requires negotiation and compromise. If somebody has to win the argument then somebody else has to lose it, and you've lost good communication.
4. No single issue is as important as your overall goal of remaining non-violent and non-abusive in your relationship.
5. Time-outs shouldn't be used to avoid communication, only to give you a chance to cool-down.



Permission to photocopy with credit given to The Family Centre

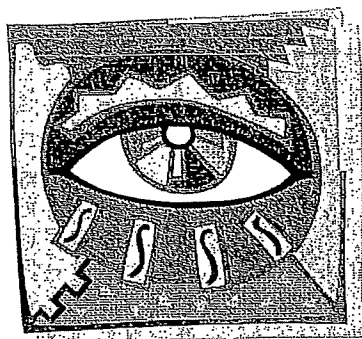
Room 20, 9912 - 106 Street, Edmonton, Alberta T5K 1C5 Phone (780) 423-2831 Fax (780) 426-4918

Email tfo@the-family-centre.com Website www.the-family-centre.com

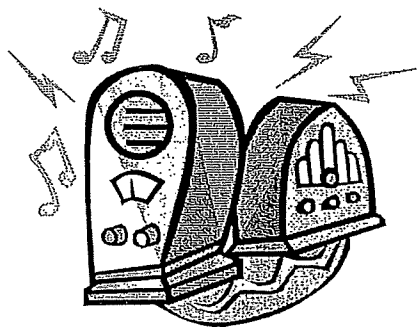
AGR017.doc

“5-4-3-2-1” RELAXATION TECHNIQUE

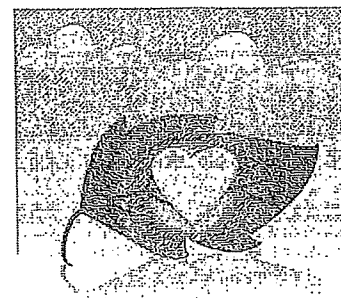
(also known as Betty Erickson’s Induction)



SEE



HEAR



FEEL

- Sit or lie in a comfortable position, and begin to notice what you can see, hear and feel.
- Say to yourself gently:
“I can see... [name any object in your field of vision]”
and repeat for 5 different objects, for example:

| | |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| “I can see a picture” | “I can see a wall” |
| “I can see a lamp” | “I can see a book” |
| “I can see a radiator” | |

[Please note that if you do this exercise in complete darkness and you can’t see anything, you can use imaginary pictures of everyday objects – just visualise them in your mind’s eye, ideally choosing neutral images that don’t have strong emotions associated with them, whether positive or negative]

- Then say to yourself:
“I can hear... [name any sound you can hear]”
and repeat for 5 different sounds, for example:

| | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| “I can hear the ticking of the clock” | “I can hear traffic outside” |
| “I can hear my breathing” | “I can hear a door creaking” |
| “I can hear the wind” | |
- Then say to yourself:
“I can feel... [name any feeling or sensation you experience]”
and repeat for 5 different sensations, for example:

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| “I can feel tension in my shoulders” | “I can feel the pillow under my head” |
| “I can feel the tongue in my mouth” | “I can feel my hair on my neck” |
| “I can feel my hand on my lap” | |
- Repeat the sequence, this time naming only 4 things you can SEE, 4 things you can HEAR, 4 things you can FEEL (the pictures/sounds/sensations can be the same as last time, or different – it doesn’t matter)
- Repeat, naming 3 things you can SEE, 3 things you can HEAR, 3 things you can FEEL
- Repeat, naming 2 things you can SEE, 2 things you can HEAR, 2 things you can FEEL
- Repeat, naming 1 thing you can SEE, 1 thing you can HEAR, 1 thing you can FEEL

By now, if you are not asleep yet, you should feel more relaxed and with much less “chatter” in your mind. If needed, you can repeat the procedure more than once.

Please note that this technique can be used for insomnia as well as general relaxation in stressful situations, e.g. in a waiting room before an interview, during an exam or before difficult meetings.

How Socialization Messages May Negatively Affect Assertion & Help Us To Stuff Anger

| Socialization Message | Effect on Rights | Effect on Assertiveness | Healthy Message |
|---|---|--|---|
| Think of others first; give to others even if you're hurting. Don't be selfish. | I have no right to place my needs above those of other people. | When I have a conflict with someone else, I will give in and satisfy the other person's needs and forget about my own. I will allow my rights to be violated. | To be selfish means that a person always places her/his needs above other people's. This is undesirable human behaviour. All healthy people have needs and strive to fulfil these as much as possible. Your needs are as important as other people's. When there is a conflict over need satisfaction, compromise is a useful way to handle the conflict. |
| Be modest and humble. Don't act superior to other people. | I have no right to do anything, which would imply that I am better than other people. | I will discount my accomplishments. I encourage other people's contributions and keep silent about my own. When I have an opinion, which is different than someone else's, I won't express it. | It is undesirable to build yourself up at the expense of another person. However, you have as much a right as other people to show your abilities and take pride in yourself. |

Permission to photocopy with credit given to The Family Centre

Room 20, 9912 - 106 Street, Edmonton, Alberta T5K 1C5 Phone (780) 423-2831 Fax (780) 426-4918

Email tfc@the-family-centre.com Website www.the-family-centre.com



How Socialization Messages May Negatively Affect Assertion & Help Us To Stuff Anger cont.

| Socialization Message | Effect on Rights | Effect on Assertiveness | Healthy Message |
|---|--|---|--|
| <p>Be understanding and overlook trivial irritations. Don't bitch and complain.</p> | <p>I have no right to express anger or even to feel anger.</p> | <p>When I'm in a line and someone cuts in front of me, I will say nothing.</p> <p>I will freeze my feelings.</p> | <p>It is undesirable to deliberately nit-pick. However, life is made up of trivial incidents and it is normal to be occasionally irritated by seemingly small events. You have a right to your angry feelings and if you express them at the time they occur, your feelings won't build up and explode. Express your anger assertively rather than aggressively.</p> |
| <p>Help other people. Don't be demanding.</p> | <p>I have no right to make requests of other people.</p> | <p>I will not ask my friend to reciprocate babysitting favours.</p> <p>I will allow myself to be used.</p> <p>I will not ask for a pay increase from my employer.</p> | <p>It is undesirable to incessantly make demands on others. You have a right to ask someone else to change their behaviour if their behaviour affects your life in a concrete way.</p> <p>A request is not a demand. However, if your rights are being violated and your requests for a change are being ignored you have a right to make demands.</p> |

Permission to photocopy with credit given to The Family Centre

Room 20, 9912 - 106 Street, Edmonton, Alberta T5K 1C5 Phone (780) 423-2831 Fax (780) 426-4918

Email tfc@the-family-centre.com Website www.the-family-centre.com



Defusing Toolbox

"If the only tool you have is a hammer, you see all your problems as nails."

These tools can be used in any setting whether you are part of the conflict or facilitating between those that are in conflict.

1. Acknowledgement - "I see you are upset"
2. Validation - "I'd be upset too if that happened to me"
3. Encouragement - non-verbal and verbal cues to get them to tell you more "Tell me more about how this happened."
4. Reassurance - "It's OK, we'll get this straightened out"
5. Empathetic responses - acknowledge their feelings and content "So you are feeling angry because Joe missed the deadline and now the report is overdue."
6. Open ended questions - "What have you done so far?" "How do you feel about this?"
7. Summarize - "So you expected her to have the report done by Friday at noon so you could do your section."
8. Reframing - changing negative into a positive "So it's important to you that people meet deadlines." "So you value...."
9. Agree -(if you really do) - "You are right" "I agree with you..."
10. Apologize - only if sincere and you mean it
11. Commit Involvement - "It's really important to me that we work this out. Can we do it now, or do we need to meet later?"
12. Be honest and genuine ..."I feel..."
13. Momentary Delay - " This is really important, just give me a minute to ..."
14. Humor - use it if it works for you.
15. Attentive Silence

BE HARD ON THE PROBLEM, EASY ON THE PEOPLE



Fair Fighting Rules

Before you begin, ask yourself why you feel upset.

Are you truly angry because your partner left the mustard on the counter? Or are you upset because you feel like you're doing an uneven share of the housework, and this is just one more piece of evidence? Take time to think about your own feelings before starting an argument.

Discuss one issue at a time.

"You shouldn't be spending so much money without talking to me" can quickly turn into "You don't care about our family". Now you need to resolve two problems instead of one. Plus, when an argument starts to get off topic, it can easily become about everything a person has ever done wrong. We've all done a lot wrong, so this can be especially cumbersome.

No degrading language.

Discuss the issue, not the person. No put-downs, swearing, or name-calling. Degrading language is an attempt to express negative feelings while making sure your partner feels just as bad. This will just lead to more character attacks while the original issue is forgotten.

Express your feelings with words and take responsibility for them.

"I feel angry." "I feel hurt when you ignore my phone calls." "I feel scared when you yell." These are good ways to express how you feel. Starting with "I" is a good technique to help you take responsibility for your feelings (no, you can't say whatever you want as long as it starts with "I").

Take turns talking.

This can be tough, but be careful not to interrupt. If this rule is difficult to follow, try setting a timer allowing 1 minute for each person to speak without interruption. Don't spend your partner's minute thinking about what you want to say. Listen!

No stonewalling.

Sometimes, the easiest way to respond to an argument is to retreat into your shell and refuse to speak. This refusal to communicate is called stonewalling. You might feel better temporarily, but the original issue will remain unresolved and your partner will feel more upset. If you absolutely cannot go on, tell your partner you need to take a time-out. Agree to resume the discussion later.

No yelling.

Sometimes arguments are "won" by being the loudest, but the problem only gets worse.

Take a time-out if things get too heated.

In a perfect world we would all follow these rules 100% of the time, but it just doesn't work like that. If an argument starts to become personal or heated, take a time-out. Agree on a time to come back and discuss the problem after everyone has cooled down.

Attempt to come to a compromise or an understanding.

There isn't always a perfect answer to an argument. Life is just too messy for that. Do your best to come to a compromise (this will mean some give and take from both sides). If you can't come to a compromise, merely understanding can help soothe negative feelings.

How to Let Go and Forgive

Everyone has been hurt by another person at some point - perhaps you were treated badly, your trust was shattered, or your heart was broken. While this kind of pain is normal, sometimes it will hang around for too long, causing you to relive it over and over and this can make it hard for you to let it go.

Holding on to pain causes problems. While it will not only make you unhappy, holding onto pain can ruin relationships, keep you from doing your best work possible, distract you from family or other important things, and it can even make it hard to trust and be vulnerable to try new things or being new people into your life.

Everyone needs to learn to let go. It is important to be able to forgive, so you can move on, be happy and experience a fulfilling life. This is not a lesson that is easily learned, and it takes trust to take the chance to forgive. It means giving up the comfort of the anger or hurt you have been nurturing, and it means moving on. Does that mean that you like being angry or hurt? Not necessarily, but you may have gotten used to it, so taking it away can be a little scary.

Forgiveness can change your life.

Forgiving someone does not mean that you forget what has happened, or that the past is magically gone. It does not even mean that they other guy will even be aware of or change their behaviour. All it means is that you are taking charge of your life and choosing to let go of the anger and the pain by moving into a more serene and noble place.

*Forgive others, not
because they deserve
forgiveness, but because
you deserve peace*

- unknown -

QryDay.com

Forgiveness is not easy, but ANYONE can learn to do it. IT IS A CHOICE!

✓ **Commit to letting go.**

This is not something you are going to do in a single second. You might not even do it in a whole day. It can take time to get over something, so commit to changing by telling someone you trust. Know that you are willing to recognize the pain that has been hurting you!

✓ **Think about the PROS and CONS.**

Make yourself a list of all the ways this hurt or anger has affected you negatively. Has it kept you using? Maybe it has kept you from healthy, loving relationships. Has it affected your health? Or your ability to follow your dreams? Does it make you unhappy? Take a good look at the CONS and identify that there is need for change. Then make a list of all the benefits you could have from forgiveness. It could make you happier. Free from your past. It could make your health better or improve your relationships

Adapted from AADAC Residential Workshops. 2005.

<http://www.creativeconflictresolution.org/ic/maps-1/cognitive-distortions.html>

Gore, Dr. David Karol. PhD. C.Psych. Atlanta. www.dr.gore.com/hiddenanger/index.php

University of Texas. Counselling & Mental Health Centre. <http://cmhc.utexas.edu/fightingfair.html>

Babuta, Leo. *How to Let Go and Forgive*. <http://zenhabits.net/how-to-let-go-and-forgive/>

Vandersteen, Shirley, PhD, C.Psych. *Forgiveness*.

<http://static.quim.co.uk/sys-images/Film/Pix/pictures/2012/5/3/1336045402297/Mark-Ruffalo-as-the-Hulk--008.jpg>

- ✓ **Realize that you have a CHOICE.**
You have absolutely NO control over the actions of others - none whatsoever - so there is no point in trying. On the other hand, you can not only control your actions, but also your thoughts! You can stop reliving the hurt! You can choose to move on! YOU have this power! Now you just need to use it.
- ✓ **Empathize.**
You know this one. Put yourself in the other fella's shoes. Start from the place of trying to believe that the other person is not bad, but just did something wrong. Maybe they honestly did not know any better. Maybe they only did what they knew. What might have happened to that person in their past to cause them to hurt you? This is NOT saying that what happened to you was okay. It just helps you to try to understand and empathize.
- ✓ **Understand YOUR responsibility.**
Looking at the situation from an objective view point, ask yourself if there is any way you could have been partially responsible for what happened. What could you have done to prevent it and what could you do to prevent it from happening again? Were you in the wrong place? Maybe you were treating someone inappropriately, too. Were you under the influence? This is NOT to say that you are taking all of the blame, or even that you are taking responsibility away from the other person. This is just an opportunity to realize that addicts are not victims - but rather, *survivors who have been participants in life.*
- ✓ **Focus on the present.**
Okay. You have thought about the past, and it is over. It is not happening any more, except in your memories where it causes stress and unhappiness. It is time to bring yourself into the present moment. What is happening right now? Where will you choose to find joy today, in life as it is happening. Stop reliving the past, and remember that when it comes back in your memories, you can acknowledge it, but do not stay there - you will miss today!
- ✓ **Allow peace to enter your life.**
While you focus on the present, try to be aware of your breathing. Imagine each breath that you exhale is carrying the pain and anger from the past, and it is being released from your mind and your body. Imagine each breath you inhale to be filled with peace and serenity. Release the pain and the past. Focus on the peace and the present.
- ✓ **Feel compassion.**
Finally, forgive the person and realize that in doing so, you are releasing yourself from pain, and you are choosing to move on. Feel empathy for the person and wish happiness on them. Let love grow in your heart. It may take time, but you can do it! If you feel stuck, repeat some of the suggestions until you feel safe enough to forgive.



Adapted from AADAC Residential Workshops. 2005.

<http://www.creativeconflictresolution.org/jc/maps-1/cognitive-distortions.html>

Gore, Dr. David Karol. PhD. C.Psych. Atlanta. www.drgore.com/hiddenanger/index.php

University of Texas. Counselling & Mental Health Centre. <http://cmhc.utexas.edu/fightingfair.html>

Babuta, Leo. *How to Let Go and Forgive*. <http://zenhabits.net/how-to-let-go-and-forgive/>

Vandersteen, Shirley, PhD, C.Psych. *Forgiveness*.

<http://static.guim.co.uk/sys-images/Film/Pix/pictures/2012/5/3/1336045402297/Mark-Ruffalo-as-the-Hulk--008.jpg>

