Anger Management Series

Choices

Instructor Guide

VAMC Fayetteville, AR
Quality Healthcare
Where Veterans Come First
August 1, 2000

Acknowledgements

Anger Management Series

Choices

This document would not have been completed without assistance from the following organizations

VISN 16 MIRECC
VAMC Fayetteville, AR

And the support of our immediate supervisors

Carol A. Phillips, MD, Chief of Psychiatry

And

Mr. Walter R. Rather, LCSW, Chief of Social Work

We extend THANK YOU to all.

To our colleagues: If you have comments, or questions to ask, or would just like to converse with a mental health colleague, we would be pleased to hear from you. Feel free to write or call any time. We may be reached at 501-444-5048, or email via VISTA or Outlook.

Very respectfully,

Eddy L. White, LCSW **JoAnn Smith, LPC**

Table of Contents

Introduction

Patient Handbook
Session 1: What is Anger?
Session 2: Dimensions of Anger
Session 3: Anger Expressions
Session 4: How Your Thoughts Affect Your Anger
Session 5: Mental & Behavioral Skills
Session 6: Conflict Resolution
Session 7: Forgiveness
Session 8: Making Choices
Recommended Reading
References
Handouts

Introduction

This instructor guide has been written to provide a clinician with the group work material necessary to conduct an anger management series. Many references have been used to construct these guides. Many veterans have been participants in these groups, and their recommendations have been incorporated into this material. We encourage you to personalize this information as you find it beneficial to you and your patients.

Goal: Management of Anger
Our goal is for group participants to learn healthy ways to manage their feelings of anger, to have mental and behavioral tools available to them so they can make choices about how and when they will express themselves, and to express themselves in beneficial ways.

Copyright Information
We have made every effort to contact originators of any copyrighted material. We encourage you to abide by copyright agreements as well. We use several handouts from companies who have copyrighted material. We have included samples in our handouts section, and encourage you to purchase the applicable material as you desire. The addresses and other contact information of the companies we use are listed in the Reference section of this guide.

Adult Learning Theory
As an instructor, you set the tone for the group. Good group work practices are congruent with adult learning theory as pioneered by Malcolm S. Knowles. The group is designed as a safe and supportive environment where each individual's unique characteristics are valued. Adults are practical, so each lesson is infused with examples that are applicable to the group member's particular situation. Generally, the veterans who attend group know why they came, and what they want to accomplish while in the group. The clinician is tasked to identify those goals as the veteran expresses them and to tailor the group content along those lines. The clinician must listen to the patients, and adjust the lesson to fit the needs of the participants as it is expressed on that particular day. In this way, we allow the veterans to direct the tempo, direction, and content of the groups as much as possible. Examples are designed to be as clinically relevant, and individualized as possible. The group experience over time becomes a tapestry woven with group content, clinical direction; and participant needs, desires, and understanding. We have found the veterans to be:

- Self-directed
- Practical
- Goal-oriented

We have found it important for the clinician to be these things and:

- Encouraging
- Respectful
- Flexible
- Relevant
- Energetic

Introduction

Prescreening Interview

Each person who attends group has been through a prescreening interview. During this interview, we assess a patient's willingness to attend group, their capability to tolerate a group environment and their mental ability to participate with the group. We have developed a short screening form to assist with our evaluation. This is included at the end of this section.

Course Format

Each session is outlined in a similar manner. The design is meant to tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them, and tell them what you told them. Repetition of concepts through several examples and on several occasions is an important aspect of this group experience. There is always a short review of the previous material before introducing a new concept. The format of each Session is as follows:

Introductory Remarks
- Review of previous material
- Explain and demonstrate a new Stressbuster
- Today's Topic

Session Objective
Key Questions
Group discussion
Handouts
Homework
Thought for the Day
Closing Remarks

Humor is such a valuable stress management technique that we take every Opportunity to intertwine cartoons, jokes, or humorous video material into our presentations. Many of these items (the Sunday comics, for instance) are not included as handouts, but we encourage you to collect humorous items and to weave them into all your presentations.

Italicized Remarks

Italics are used in the text to indicate comments for the instructor.

24 Hour Policy

If you find yourself after leaving group today anxious about something, depressed, angry or other strong emotion which you can't seem to modulate within 24 hours, then give us a call or simply walk into clinic and one of us will see you.

Pre- and Post-Test Assessment Forms

- Anger Group Prescreening Progress Note Template
- Anger Questionnaire (ANGR)
- Patient Satisfaction Questionnaire

Anger Prescreening Progress Note Template

Demographics:
Referred by:
Primary Therapist:

Employment:
Current living arrangement:

Positive Indications for Group:
( ) Desires help with anger dyscontrol.
( ) Previous group work.
( ) Willing to contract for "No physical or verbally assaultive behaviors to other group members while in the group".
( ) Willing to remove self from group if vet feels that he/she may be losing behavioral control.

Contraindications for Group:
( ) Severe Cluster B Personality Disorder (Antisocial/Borderline/Histrionic/Narcissistic)
( ) Head Trauma w/residual behavior problems.
( ) Unstable Seizure Disorder,
( ) Legal Complications (e.g. charges pending, on parole).
( ) Dementia.

ANGR Screening Pre-test score:

Comments/Impression:

Elapsed time of appointment: _____ minutes.

Plan

Anger Questionnaire (ANGR)

1. Do you easily get annoyed or irritated with things or at people?

1	2	3	4	5
very often	often	sometimes	seldom	never or rarely

2. Usually, how intense or strong is your annoyance or irritability with things or people?

1	2	3	4	5
very intense	much	somewhat	a little intense	never or rarely

3. How often do you get into a mood of annoyance or irritability, where the feeling tends to last and you begin to feel annoyed and irritated with almost everything?

1	2	3	4	5
very often	often	sometimes	seldom	never or rarely

4. How difficult is it for you to stop feeling annoyed or irritated once you begin feeling this way?

1	2	3	4	5
very often	often	sometimes	seldom	never or rarely

5. Do you easily have outbursts of temper?

1	2	3	4	5
very often	often	sometimes	seldom	never or rarely

6. Usually, how intense or strong are your temper outbursts?

1	2	3	4	5
very intense	much	somewhat	a little intense	never or rarely

7. When you have temper outbursts, to what extent do you lose control of yourself?

1	2	3	4	5
extremely	strongly	moderately	a little uncontrolled	none

8. How much are YOU bothered by these temper outbursts you cannot control?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely

9. Do you ever have the urge to beat, injure, or harm others?

1	2	3	4	5
very often	often	sometimes	seldom	never or rarely

10. Usually, how intense or strong are your urges to beat, injure, or harm others?

1	2	3	4	5
very intense	much	somewhat	a little	very little intensity

11. How much are **YOU** bothered by these urges to beat, injure, or harm someone?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely

Anger Questionnaire (ANGR)

12. In the past 12 months, have you been involved in a physical fight with someone?

1	2	3	4	5
never often	once	twice	three times	4 or more times

13. How much are you bothered by getting into frequent arguments?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely

14. How much are you bothered by urges to break or smash things?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely

15. Do you ever express your anger by shouting or yelling?

1	2	3	4	5
very often	often	sometimes	seldom	never or rarely

16. Do you ever express your anger by throwing things?

1	2	3	4	5
very often	often	sometimes	seldom	never or rarely

17. How much are you bothered by shouting or throwing things?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely

18. Do you tend to hide, hold back, or suppress anger even when directly provoked?

1	2	3	4	5
never	a little bit	sometimes	quite a bit	extremely

19. How much are you bothered by **NOT** being able to express anger?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely

20. Do you tend to carry over your anger from the situation making you angry to other situation where anger is not appropriate? (for example: getting angry at work and taking this anger home with you).

1	2	3	4	5
never	seldom	sometimes	often	very frequently

Patient Satisfaction Form

Anger Management Group

INSTRUCTIONS: Circle the number which best represents your opinion, or fill in the blanks, where appropriate.

1. **Were you satisfied with the <u>overall</u> group experience?**

1	2	3
Very satisfied	Neutral	Not at all satisfied

2. **Was the information provided <u>helpful</u> to you?**

1	2	3
Very helpful	Somewhat helpful	Not at all helpful

3. **What did you like <u>best</u> about the group?**

4. **What did you like <u>least</u> about the group?**

5. **What would you recommend to <u>improve</u>** the **group?**

6. **Would you recommend this group to others?**

Yes No

Ground Rules for Group Sessions

1. **CONFIDENTIALITY:** What you say in the group stays in the group. You can talk about your own experiences outside the group, but it is unacceptable to talk about others' experiences outside the group.

2. **LEAVING THE GROUP:** The group usually lasts an hour and a half. There are no formal breaks during this time. Restroom breaks are sometimes necessary. We ask that you quietly leave the room and return.
   The group exists to assist you in working through your feelings and we do you a disservice if we do not address your feelings. Should you become angry in-group, we would like for you to stay and discuss the issue in-group if at all possible.

3. **TREATMENT ISSUES:** You are here because you desire changes in your life. You are responsible for your treatment issues. It is not the responsibility of the therapist or group members to drag the issues out of you. No one will make you be here and no one will make you participate.

4. **FOCUS OF THE GROUP:** The primary focus of this group is to explore ways to manage your stress levels, and behavioral responses, especially angry responses. You are responsible, as a part of the group, for keeping the focus there.

5. **PARTICIPATION:** You are responsible for your individual level of participation in the group. Know that your progress toward wellness depends on your participation, and not the group or leader. Everyone in the group is a leader and a helper.

6. **ATTENDANCE:** Completion of the group means attending a minimum of 6 out of 8 sessions. We strongly encourage you to attend all 8 sessions, if at all possible, because we have found that those who complete all 8 sessions receive the most benefit from the group.

7. **RESPECT FOR ONE ANOTHER:** As a group member you can expect to be heard when you speak. We know it is important for you to express your ideas. You want to be heard, and we want you to have the Opportunity to be heard. Thus, it is best for one person to speak at a time. Please give your attention to the speaker.

8. **GOALS FOR THIS GROUP:**
   When this group is finished we would like for you to:
   a. have expressed no physical or verbally assaultive behavior to other group members and to have demonstrated no behavior which warrants legal action against you during the course of the group
   b. be able to identify your individual anger cues
   c. be able to identify passive, assertive and aggressive behaviors
   d. have developed a personalized anger control plan
   e. have verbalized CHOICES for the behavior you express to others.

Thank You for being here today. We appreciate you.

Session 1: What is Anger?

OBJECTIVES:

- To introduce the physical, emotional, and behavioral aspects of anger.
- To define and discuss our Personal Anger Expression.
- To introduce the Anger Control Plan.

KEY QUESTIONS:

- How do I respond when I'm angry?
- What is my body's response to an angry situation?
- How do I begin to manage my angry response?

HANDOUTS:

- Stressbuster #1: Deep Breathing
- Anger Booklet
- How do you <u>really</u> feel today?

HOME WORK ASSIGNMENT:

- Become aware of and learn the following things about yourself:
    - Your anger level when you awake in the morning.
    - Where you carry anger tension in your body
    - How much personal space you need around you to be comfortable
    - How you respond when someone enters your personal comfort space

Thought for the day: **THINK BEFORE YOU VENT**

Session 1: What is Anger?

OUTLINE

1. Opening remarks/Housekeeping information

2. Definition of anger
   - normal emotion
   - range of feeling
   - frequency

3. Responses to anger
   - physical
   - emotional
   - behavioral
   - physiological

4. Anger Control Plan
   - introduce concept
   - start plan

5. Personal Anger Expression
   - definition
   - illustration

Session 1: What is Anger ?

Introductory Remarks
Welcome.
This is a voluntary group, and I'm glad to see each of you here today.

Some of you I have met before, and others I don't recognize. *(I go around and introduce myself shake hands, and learn first names.)* Over the course of the series, I'll get to learn something about each of you. Today, the one thing *I* know is that each of you has said to someone, "I have a problem with anger." And you've found your way here today. You've made a good start. The one thing all of us have in common in this room is a problem with anger.

Prior to coming here today, each of you should have met with either me or another clinician for a pre-group assessment. During that time, one of the things we ask you to do for us is to complete a one page form which helps us get an idea of how you express anger, and to what extent anger is a problem for you. If anyone is here today who has not completed this form, I'd like for you to take a few minutes now and complete it. *(check group. If anyone has not completed the ANGR assessment, ask him or her to do so flow).*

If anyone in today's group has never seen me, please let me know now. *(check group for hands, nods, etc. If anyone so indicates, ask him or her to see co-therapist flow and schedule an intake preferably before the next scheduled session so they can start the group then. Once this and any additional ANGR forms are completed, continue with group.)*

Complete housekeeping by going over when and where future group meetings will be, where the bathrooms are, smoke breaks (we don't have any), and group rules.

Each session I'll be handing out information that pertains to the day's topic. I encourage you to hang onto this information, take it home, and share it with your family, especially with wives and children, so you can all be learning together.

Purpose of the group:
The purpose of this group is to look at ways to manage your anger; to make it work for you. We want you to find healthy ways to manage your feelings of anger, and constructive ways to express yourself.

We will not tell you to not be angry. Anger is a natural emotion. We all came with the ability to be angry. Infants cry when they are hungry. They quickly learn to display anger when they don't get what they want, when they want it. Look at their faces. Anger is a natural, normal expression of displeasure or dissatisfaction. We want you to learn how to make it work for you

Excessive anger destroys relationships. We want you to learn how to express yourself so that your relationships remain intact. We will give you tools to help you manage and

tolerate your angry feelings so you can make a choice about how you will express yourself. Are there any questions up to this point? i.e. *Question Break*

Stressbuster #1: Deep Breathing
One of the ways you will learn to manage your anger is by learning to manage your stress level. So, each session I'll take 5-10 minutes and introduce to you what we call a Stressbuster. Each one will be different, so by the time you have completed the group, you will have been introduced to a minimum of eight different ways to manage your stress levels. I don't expect you to know them all, but I do encourage each of you to practice these and find one or two that are comfortable and helpful for you. Claim the one or two that you like and let the others go by. Today's Stressbuster is Deep Breathing. This is how it works. *(Insert instructions and practice with group for approximately 10 minutes, and then pass out handout to take home.)*

Anger Control Plan
Each session will build on information that has been presented and discussed previously, so to help us keep track of the many ways that you will develop for managing anger, we will start what we call an Anger Control Plan. *(Place the title "Anger Control Plan" on a flip chart and write "Deep Breathing" on it).* This is a beginning for you. We will add to this Plan each week as we discuss ways to manage your anger. I've started it for you today, but before long you will find that you are able to come up with your own ways to successfully manage your stress and angry responses.

Definition: What is Anger?
What is anger?
Anger is a feeling. Like other feelings it has a wide range from the trivial and momentary to an intense, powerful, longstanding emotion. We have a wide range of words we use to express this feeling. We have a feeling component of ourselves from the moment we are born until the moment that we die. Often, we have a number of feelings going on at the same time, but we are limited by our vocabulary to describe what we feel. It is noticeable that once we use a word to describe our feeling,, no matter how many other feelings may be competing for attention, the one we name is the one we associate with the event. By naming it, we bring that feeling to the forefront. We focus our attention on it. With anger being a powerful, intense feeling. If it's a part of the situation, we name it. It then is our emotional state.

Think of your emotional state at any one time like a river that has water naturally flowing downstream. Imagine taking a knife and cutting a slice through that river and looking at what you have in there. There would likely be bits and pieces of many things, a fish, a rock, tree limb, minnows, a worm, sunlight, dark, turbulence, or calm. Those many things are the many emotions you may be experiencing at any one time. When you name one component, it becomes your focus. Feelings are like that. You may have several feelings going on at the same time. When you name one feeling, that one becomes your focus for that time.

Session 1: What is Anger?

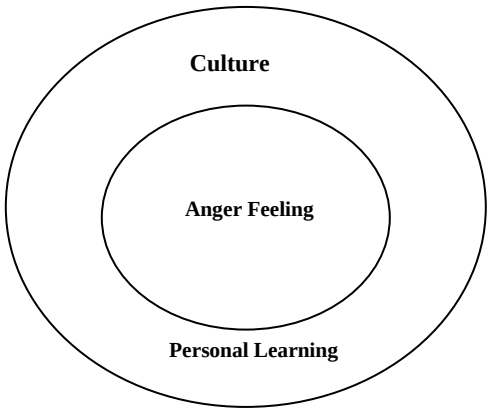
Your feelings change over time just like the river continues to flow, your feelings flow, evolve, change; and they change in color, intensity, and duration as time passes.

What are some of the words we use to describe different intensities of anger? Let's look at some of these? *(List anger-oriented words on board for them to see).*

e.g. irritated, irked, annoyed, resentful, bitter, rageful, hateful, etc.

We have many words in our vocabulary to express varying degrees of anger. As we go along in our group, we will continue to look at the language we use to express
our feelings of anger, and determine among ourselves how important language is as we express ourselves to others.

Personal Anger Expression
Anger like love, sadness, and happiness is a basic human emotion-one of our primary emotions. Feelings just are. They are neither GOOD nor BAD. Anger is a natural emotion. It tells us when something is going on that does not fit our 'rules' for the world. It is a way of protecting us from perceived threats.



= Personal Anger Expression

How we express it is something we learn. Our personal anger expression combines our feeling, our personal learning and our culture.

Before you can predict how another person will respond, it is helpful to know how you respond. We want you to be a 100% expert about yourself. We want you to know precisely how you respond physically, mentally, emotionally, and behaviorally.

How do you know when you are angry?
(We are going to explore the physical, menial, emotional, and behavioral responses the group members have when angry. As they call out something, place on board under one of these headings.)

Session 1: What **is Anger?**

Physical Signs will look something like this:

- Heart rate increases
- Sweating
- Red face
- Muscle tension (head, neck, shoulders). This is the Stress Triangle).
- Upset stomach
- Diarrhea or constipation
- Clammy hands
- Grind teeth or jaw tension

Emotional Signs will look something like this:

- Irritable
- Anxious
- Nervous
- Numb

Behavioral Signs will look something like this:

- Yelling
- Cussing
- Throwing something
- Can't sit or stand still
- Eating
- Drinking

It is so important for you to know what your individual anger responses are that for next week, I want you to notice when you get angry, where you feel it in your body first. There will be one place that your body uses to indicate to you that you are getting angry. Find out what your cue is.

Remember, feelings just are. They will change.

If you will, picture standing on the edge of the White River watching the water go by. It's a Continuous stream. It goes on all the time. That is the same with your emotions. From the moment you are born until the moment you die, you have some emotional component to your life, every day, and every breath. Now imagine taking a knife and slicing through that river water. In it, you would find all kinds of things-a fish or two, rocks, a log half sunken, beer cans, etc. That's like your individual emotions. They are all a part of you but at any one moment in time, you may be feeling one or many emotions at the same time. It's a curious thing about our language though. As soon as you put a name on any one of those emotions, that's the one your brain will remember. That's the emotion your brain will associate with that moment in time. Just as the river continuously changes, yet always remains the same. Wait a moment, your feelings will change. Remember, feelings just are. They will change. If you will, picture standing on the edge of the White River watching the water go by. It's a continuous stream. It goes on all the time. That is the same with your emotions. From the moment you are born until the moment you die, you have some emotional component to your life, everyday,

and every breath. Now imagine taking a knife and slicing through that river water. In it, you would find all kinds of things-a fish or two, rocks, a log half sunken, beer cans, etc. That's like your individual emotions. They are all a part of you but at any one moment in time, you may be feeling one or many emotions at the same time. It's a curious thing about our language though. As soon as you put a name on any one of those emotions, that's the one your brain will remember. That's the emotion your brain will associate with that moment in time. Just as the river continuously changes, yet always remains the same. Wait a moment, your feelings will change.

You say, I'm always angry? Maybe so. To check this out, when you awake in the morning, before you get out of bed, before you talk to anyone, take a moment and decide what your anger level is prior to getting out of bed. Are you angry when you first awake in the morning? This is important for you to know because whatever level of anger you are carrying when you first awake in the morning is yours. You haven't interacted with anything or anybody except yourself—in your own mind, so whatever you are feeling at that time is all yours. Check it out. This will be a reference point for you. This will help you determine how much anger and stress you carry in your body all the time. Use a 1-10 scale. If 1 = you are not angry, and 10= you are violent; where are you when you first awaken in the morning? If you find you are awakening angry, start asking yourself, What is this about? What baggage am I carrying with me? This will be a good time of the day to do a stress reliever—maybe deep breathing while you are in the shower, or shaving.

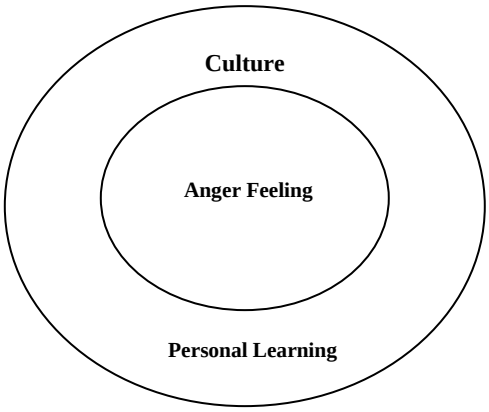
Each of you knows where you carry stress in your body. Each of you was able to say what part of your body was in discomfort when you get angry. When you look at yourself in the mirror to shave in the morning, decide where you are on that 1 to 10 anger scale. This is the first part of your Personal Anger Expression.

Why do we get angry?
(Invariably someone will say they get angry because someone" makes them" or because they want something to happen that isn't happening, or they want to get their way Use whatever you get from the group, to introduce the cultural aspect of anger. We're using this to introduce the concept that their anger expression has more than just their feeling involved, it's contextual and cultural.)
It works! In American society we learn early on that expressions of anger often allow us to get what we want. The baby starts out with the red face, screaming and gets attention from Mom or Dad. The two year old may throw a temper tantrum—why? —to get something they want. Even adults may throw a fit to get what they want. We've all heard, the "squeaky wheel, gets the grease." How do we get what we want—be a squeaky wheel.

Here's an example. There was a TV show not too long ago in which a man had a car accident. He went to his local police station to get a copy of the accident report to send to his insurance company. When he went into the office, there were two ladies behind the counter. Neither was in any hurry to assist him, but one did come to the counter when he started making his request. He was polite, and asked for a copy of the police report for

his insurance company. Routine stuff, huh? Nothing unusual to ask for. Well, the clerk is not overly enthused about helping him, and tells him to put in a written request and they'll send it to him in a month or so and she starts to leave the counter. He is still nice, but indicates that he really needs to take a copy with him. He asks her to check and see if the report is completed. Then, she gets a little testy and says words to the effect, "well, it's probably not completed yet, and just put your request in writing." At this point the guy realizes he is getting nowhere with this clerk, and she has made it clear to him that she intends to do nothing at this time. This is unacceptable to him. You can see it. He swells up, leans over the counter, his voice becomes louder, his request becomes a demand, the politeness goes out the window, and more words to the effect, "Now, **look** lady, **I** don't know who **you** are but I **need** a copy of that report, **now**. It has been long enough for the report to be **finished** and you need to go **look** for it. The clerk moved. He was disturbing the office, and she amazingly found the report, gave him a copy, and got him out of the office. Does this sound like a familiar scenario? I call it, "Anger for effect." This man had control. He used anger because it works in our country.

Would this behavior work in Japan, or China, or Russia, or Spain? Maybe, maybe not? In other cultures, an outward and noisy display of anger might not produce the same result. So, when we think about how we express anger ourselves, we have not only the internal feeling we call anger, we have what we have learned about anger, and what our culture defines as acceptable or unacceptable expression. Altogether, we call this our Personal Anger Expression. A goal of this group is to help you use this expression in beneficial ways, so rather than ending up in a verbal or physical altercation and destroying relationships, you can more often get the response you desire from others.



= **Personal Anger Expression**

Summarize

You've been a good group today. I realize we can't solve all your problems with anger in this one session, and I encourage you to be patient with us. You've made a good start. You have at least one item on your Anger Control Plan. I encourage you to practice it. We've explored what anger is, how it is felt in your body, and how it gets used in our society. For your homework assignment, I want you to spend the next two weeks finding out where you carry anger in your body, and what your first physical cue to anger is. We'll go from there next time.

Session 2: Dimensions of Anger

OBJECTIVES:

- Self-knowledge about predictable patterns of anger responses.
- Identification of the nature and habitual responses of his/her anger.
- Explanation of the dimensions of anger.

KEY QUESTIONS:

- How will understanding the dimensions of my anger help me manage my anger responses?
- What are my habitual anger responses?
- What role do physical, mental, and behavioral management skills play in developing my personal anger control plan?

HANDOUTS:

- Stressbuster #2: Meditation
- Hi and Lois cartoon
- Emotional Umbrella?

HOME WORK ASSIGNMENT:

- Be aware of situations, people, thoughts and other specifics that are the source of your anger and what you are doing to generate and promote it?

Thought for the Day: **Life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it.**
(Charles Swindoll)

Session 2: Dimensions of Anger

OUTLINE

1. Review of previous session.

2. Self-awareness
   - Achieved by self-monitoring.
   - Takes mystery out of anger.

3. Dimensions of your anger.
   - Habitual responses
   - Belief System
   - Learning & Culture
   - Situational

4. How often are you angry?
   - How intense on a scale of 1-10 is your anger?
   - How long are your anger episodes?
   - How do you express your anger?

Knowing the above takes the mystery out of anger**.** Now, you are ready to begin personalizing your anger control plan.

Session 2: Dimensions of Anger

Review of previous session:
Homework review: Was each veteran able to recognize his or her physiologic cue to the feeling of anger?

Stressbuster: Deep Breathing: Was each veteran able to incorporate this Stressbuster into his or her daily lives? Review the technique with them. Introduce the idea that this technique can be used standing up, sitting, or lying down. When they are in public or private. When they are walking or in one place. A good time to practice this technique is when they are sitting in the waiting room waiting for group to start, or in line at the grocery store or at a stoplight. Anywhere, anytime. Breathing is natural.

Stressbuster #2: Meditation
Refer to handout and go over the key points to meditation. We have audiotapes, which have various meditative exercises on them that the veterans can checkout for a two-week period. We also have several different kinds of Daily Meditation Books the veteran can checkout for a two-week period.

Anger Control Plan
Add meditation to the list. Ask veterans if they used any other techniques the past two weeks to modify or manage their feelings? Add their responses to the list.

Dimensions of Anger

Habitual Responses

Today, we will introduce you to specific ways of identifying the nature of your anger, specific skills to change your "habitual" responses to anger, and help you develop an anger plan that is specific to the dimensions of your anger. To know what you're supposed to do about handling your anger, you must become an expert in understanding yourself. You need to know… what makes you angry? What are you doing to generate and promote it? How often, how intense, how long are your anger episodes and how do you express your anger? What is the purpose of your anger? Who are you angry toward? Is your anger directed toward others with the intent to hurt them, or is it the result of life stressors such as divorce, illness, financial losses and physical limitations?

Over time, anger responses develop into patterns that in turn become a habitual way of responding when you are angry. In order to understand the way you habitually respond, you need to monitor your anger. This self-awareness is achieved by self-monitoring. Is your anger on-going? Do you carry it around with you like baggage from situation to situation? Last week, I asked you to monitor yourself when you first awoke in the morning, before you got out of bed. What did you find out? Were any of you angry when you first woke up, before you talked or saw anyone? On a 1 to 10 scale, with l = I'm not angry and 10 = I'm very angry, where are you when wake up in the morning? What level of anger have you become used to carrying around with you all the time?

Session 2: Dimensions of Anger

We often hear, “I have no warning. My anger comes out of nowhere. I have no control over it” Is this how you feel about it when you get angry? Do you see your anger as being spontaneous, appearing without warning? *(Pause)* This perception is not quite accurate. Imagine driving, stopping at a stoplight, and as the light turns to green, a car next to you honks its horn and goes whizzing by. How do you feel like responding? How do you respond?

Now, imagine the same scene, but this time when the car goes whizzing by you, you see in big letters HIGHWAY PATROL on the side of the car. How do you feel like responding? How do you respond? *(Invariably someone in-group responds negatively and probably aggressive in the first instance, and when they see that the car is a police car, their response is modified).* Amazingly, you have some control.

<u>Belief Systems</u>
Our anger is fueled by our Belief system. As such, it serves as a defense mechanism that allows us to maintain control in any given situation. Anger distances us from others because of fear of the emotional pain that can result from becoming too emotionally close to another person. But, the trade off is not having the warmth and closeness one receives in an intimate relationship. Your challenge during this group is to address your faulty beliefs, and by doing so, regain a measure of emotional control over how, when, and in what manner you choose to express your anger.

We have reviewed your physiological responses to anger. Now, let’s look at what is going on in your mind? *(Use Hi and Lois cartoon).* New research on origins of anger indicate that anger is generated and sustained by the perceptions we have of a particular anger producing event, rather than the actual event itself. You may perceive your anger as being caused by someone doing something to you that you don’t like. For example, you are driving home from work and another driver cuts you off in traffic. To avoid a collision, you slam on the brakes, skid and barely miss hitting anther vehicle. You perceive the other driver as being rude, inconsiderate, and careless with little regard for your safety. You may even feel like THAT DRIVER PURPOSELY GOT IN HIS CAR TODAY TO ANTAGONIZE YOU. As you believe that, you become angry. Your beliefs about the incident result in your becoming very angry. Although relieved that you were not injured, you may retaliate by making several derogatory remarks about the other drivers driving skills, such as “ditwads”, (Driving in traffic without adequate driving skills).

A+B=C

However, your anger is generated more by your perceptions of the event rather than the event itself. The A-B-C model of emotions, derived from the work of Albert Ellis, states that your feelings are the result of your interpretations of, or belief systems regarding what happened to you, and not the event itself. Ellis would say that “A” the activating event is the car cutting you off in traffic), “B” is your belief system regarding “A”, the activating event. “That driver cut me off intentionally” is the inflammatory thinking, and “C” is the consequences of your intellectual, emotional (belief system) regarding the event. In other words, it was not the act of the car cutting you off in traffic “A” but our belief system about the event “B” that results in “C” your level of anger.

Session 2: Dimensions of Anger

A+B=C

You may over generalize and view all drivers as bad drivers. A less inflammatory way of perceiving the event is to consider what was going on with the other driver. Was there a family emergency? Was he en route to the hospital? Is it possible you may have been in the other driver's blind spot and he did not see you in the rearview mirror? The point to be made here is that your "self-talk" (what's going on in your head) at "B" determines how you responded to the event you experienced. If your self-talk at "B" (your belief system) is highly irrational, you are likely to overact to the event.

If your "self-talk" is rational and healthy, you are likely to respond in healthy ways.

Learning & Culture

Another element of your anger is what you have been taught and learned from your family and culture. The values and rules of expressing anger may differ even within our own society. Many anger habits learned within the family are resistant to change, as we become older adults. This learning is instrumental in what we do when we are angry. For example, some men in our society are taught to not hit women. Was anyone here taught that? Were you also taught to not hit men?

Lets look at gender rules that are different within the same culture. e.g. when two women are having a conversation they often smile and nod at each other, respond with "oh yeah", "you don't say" and make many probing interruptions. The speaker is encouraged by these responses and feels "listened too". Conversely, when men communicate one speaks, one listens. Interruptions to the speaker are annoying. If the listener interrupts the speaker, the speaker becomes annoyed, views the interruptions as rude and may challenge the listener by raising his voice. In a conversation across gender, men typically do not respond and the woman may be annoyed because she feels he is not listening. Yet, he views her interruptions as intrusions. The same culture. Two sets of rules.

Over the past 20 years, in American culture, anger has been an accepted practice. Its expression has been encouraged in a number of ways. During the 60"s the phrase "If it feels good, do it" was prevalent and the attitude of "It is Ok to express your anger" was common. In recent years, our views regarding expression of anger are beginning to change and research has shown that demonstrations of anger actually add fuel to our anger. While our culture presents the attitude "anger is ok", other cultures may view the way we express anger as uncouth.

Situational

The fourth element of anger is the situation one is in. Is there a power differential? One may be unwilling to express anger to anyone who has more power, such as an Employer, Policeman or Spouse. You may quickly evaluate, "What will be the consequences of my

anger"? Will I lose my job if I tell my boss exactly what *I* think he can do with his job? If I tell that police officer what I think about him giving me a ticket, will I receive a larger fine, or worse yet, go to jail? If I tell my wife exactly what I am thinking and feeling, will she leave me? Is the situation one in which I can safely express my anger?

Anger Response = Habitual Response, Personal Belief System, Culture, and Situation.

Our anger is the total sum of our habitual responses, our personal belief system, what we have learned from our families and culture plus what situation we are in. Most of our angry habits are invisible to us. As we learn our anger response and come to recognize the ineffectiveness of our habitual anger responses, add new information to the mix, then we can incorporate new behaviors with which to practice successful anger management.

Above all, remember, it is. all right to feel angry. It is a normal feeling. What is important is how you express your feeling. How do you modify a habit? It takes practice. Lots of practice.

Self-awareness + Knowledge Hope

Homework
This week, use the tools we have put on the Anger Control Plan. When you become angry, look at your perceptions, your beliefs about what is 'Suppose" to be happening in the situation. How can you 'cool off so you don't do any more damage to the situation?

Next group, we will focus on expressing your anger so you can arrive at a solution that is agreeable for you.

Session 3: Anger Expression

OBJECTIVES.

- Review Sessions I and 2.
- Today's focus: Expressing angry feelings in a successful manner.
- Discuss control issues in terms of total behavior and basic human needs.

KEY **QUESTION:**

- How can I express I'm angry in such a way that *I* can be heard, and so others can respond in a favorable manner?

HANDOUTS:

- Stressbuster #3: Self Talk
- Practicing Anger Management

HOME WORK ASSIGNMENT:

- Continue Practicing Deep Breathing and Meditation
- Monitor your self-talk
- Change negative self-talk to positive or neutral responses

Thought for the Day: **EVERYBODY WANTS TO CHANGE HUMANITY BUT NOBODY WANTS TO CHANGE THEMSELVES.**

Session 3: Anger Expression

1. Review of previous two sessions
    - Anger definition
    - Personal anger expression
    - Anger control plan

2. Control Theory
    - Total behavior
    - Basic needs

3.Self expression
    - Verbal vs. non-verbal
    - Aggressive vs. assertive
    - Self-talk

Session 3: Anger Expression

Review Previous Sessions

- Anger is a natural, normal emotion. The feeling is okay.
- You can learn new behaviors.
- You can control your behavior.
- You have a Choice.

Anger Definition

Anger, like love, sadness, and happiness is a basic human emotion—one of our primary emotions. By itself, anger is neither good nor bad. It's a natural emotion. It tells us when something is going on that does not fit our rules for the world. It is a way of protecting ourselves from perceived threats.

Personal Anger Expression

One component of anger expression is what we learn. Feelings just are. They change. The influence of culture on our expression of anger we explored during our last session. The last component of our anger expression comes from what we learn. How we express anger is something we learn. Reacting brashly can ruin relationships, or lead to violence with even worse results for others and us. Here is a little food for thought about anger that was recently in our local paper: **"Sometimes when I'm angry I have the right to be angry, but that doesn't give me the right to be cruel."**

Our range of expression often goes from 'Bottling It Up' on the one extreme to 'Spewing It Out' on the other. Neither extreme is healthy. We are looking for ways to balance the teeter-totter. We are looking for options. Ways to modify our feelings; ways to manage our verbal expression of anger; ways to modify our behavioral responses to anger.

Anger Control Plan

So far on the Anger Control Plan we have discussed deep breathing, meditation We've talked about some ways to gain time to think, to calm yourself. Counting to ten is old advice that isn't so bad. It gives us a personal time-out. One gentleman who has been through group told us his method for managing his anger was to walk out of the house whenever he felt himself becoming angry, and to keep walking until he noticed he was no longer angry. Only when he noticed he was no longer angry, did **he** turnaround to walk back to the house.

A key point of the above story is the man had learned his physiologic cue for an anger response. Check this out with the group. Then, ask if anyone has an experience with becoming angry and how they handled it that they would like to discuss.

What are some other ways that have worked for you the past couple of weeks?

Put any anger control methods on the Anger Control Plan you are building from week to week This discussion can lead into today's focus.—Anger Expression

Session 3: Anger Expression

Total Behavior: Physiologic, Feeling, Thinking, Doing
As we reviewed the ANGR questionnaires and group assessment information, we discover that many of you feel like you have no control of yourself when you get angry, that this anger erupts without warning. . . like a volcano, spewing grit and grime onto others. I suggest to you that you have more control over your expression of anger than you realize.

Try this simple experiment. Raise your right hand—not left—right hand. That's it. All the way above your head. Great. You were able to do that. It's a behavior, voluntary and almost 100% under your control.

Now think green. Blot out other thoughts and think green. Can you see the color, green? Yes, this is possible for you, but it may take some concentration to keep the thought in your mind. Green will slip in and out of your mind as I say the word, and it will tend to slip away quickly as your mind goes on to other thoughts.

Now, while you are sitting here, right now, I want you to generate intense fear. Go to work at it, generate fear… Come on, now…..you can do it. I want you to be very afraid of me.. .How'd you do?... You will probably find it difficult, if not impossible. Why? There's no reason for you to be afraid right now. There is no threat. Even an actor has to have a reason (motivation) before he can generate a feeling. Try as you will, it is almost impossible, arbitrarily, to choose a feeling that makes no sense in context.

Here's another. Right now, change your heart rate by 20%. That's right, I want you to increase your heart rate, right now, by 20%. Why are you looking at me like that? Is your heart pumping faster? 20%? No, huh? 30%? Not making it, huh? You have almost no voluntary control over your heart rate.

So, what do we have here? As much as you try, it is almost impossible to arbitrarily change involuntary bodily functions like your heart rate, pulse, temperature, etc. You don't have much more success changing your feeling. You have pretty good control over your thought process. You can change your thoughts to "green" for a short time, then it slips away as your mind thinks of new things. But deciding to raise your hand into the air is something you can definitely do at will. Barring any physical handicaps, you can move your body from one position to another at will.

- PHYSIOLOGIC Response—No control
- FEELING—a little control
- THINKING—pretty good control
- BEHAVIOR—almost total control

In our society, you are not judged by what you are feeling or thinking, but you are judged by what you are doing—your behavior. It's your behavior that you have almost total control over. Relationships are not ruined by what you are thinking, they are ruined by what you are doing. You don't end up in jail because you thought about hitting someone, you end up in jail because you hit someone. When it comes to your behavior,

Session 3: Anger Expression

You have a CHOICE.

The man at home had a choice. He could stay home and become involved in a super-duper argument or he could walk out of the house, take a personal time-out, and wait until he cooled down to return home. There's no guarantee what the outcome will be when he returns home, but you do know he avoided one fight, and perhaps, the issue is no longer an issue. Today, we are going to discuss another way of managing your anger— how to express yourself successfully - talk it out.

Stressbuster #3: Self-talk
Our Stressbuster today is self-talk which nicely parallels our primary topic of the day - language.

Language Counts
How we express our anger brings some predictable responses. We are very familiar with the negative responses. Let's see what we can do on our part to express our anger and more likely, elicit a positive, or at a minimum, a neutral response from the other person. (Someone may offer the phrase, "You can catch more flies with sugar than Vinegar.") Use it to lead into assertive language vs. aggressive language.)

The display of anger i.e. what we do when we are angry often involves aggressiveness- verbally and non-verbally. People generally act the way you expect them to act. So, when we act in an aggressive manner, what reaction do we generally get back from others? Defensiveness. And when people are defending themselves, we are not generally getting what we wanted in the first place.

How do people respond to us when we are generally getting what we came for? Cooperating. Doing what we say. Helping us in some way. For people to remain in this mode, our verbal and non-verbal communication is generally assertive. How do we get something to happen for us. We remain assertive rather than aggressive. Or, we behave "as if" we are angry but keep our emotions in control.

How do we do that?

Control your inner dialogue.

First, become aware of your own self-talk. What language you use in your head, everyday, all day, will largely determine how you act and react to others. All day long, everyday, you are experiencing pictures, images, in your head. Someone said, "Beware, what you think for you will become like that." As you were driving to clinic today, what types of things went through your head?

(You can anticipate a range of negative thoughts along the lines of "that jerk "referring ro another driver, or intrusive thoughts and rising anxiety as they approach the VA, "I

Session 3: Anger Expression

can't do this" "Why do I bother, it doesn't help anyway. Etc." Now is the time to ask anyone to read his or her card from the 1 CAN You won't know what they will read in advance, but with each card they read, you reinforce positive behavior, non-violent language. Praise the vet, whenever possible, for demonstrating appropriate behavior, and making an effort to learn new behaviors. Remember, by now they're angry responses are ingrained habits, and it will take a concerted effort on their part to learn new habits. That is what this group is all about.)

When using assertive language, we are expressing our thoughts, feelings, and beliefs in direct and appropriate ways i.e. Ways that respect the needs and desires of others as well as your personal needs and desires in ways that are not demeaning, cruel, or dominating toward others. Those who want to exert control over you often use manipulation to engage your feelings of guilt or shame.

When you begin to feel guilt or shame in a conversation, you can bet someone in that conversation is making an effort to exert control over you. You have the right to NOT respond to those feelings. You have the right to NOT respond to their language. Begin to act as you desire, rather than to react to every situation that's uncomfortable. Being uncomfortable won't kill you.

You may need to gain time to think about the situation. You may need to just cool off. What methods do we have on the Anger Control Plan that might work for you in this situation? *(Keep the anger control plan in full view, add more as the group comes up with new ideas. Keep enlarging the plan and refer to it each session.)*
We use repetition, and positive reinforcement throughout the series to foster new behaviors and a sense of mastery as the vets begin to recognize their physical cues for angry attacks. As they begin to recognize their belief systems set them up for responding in negative ways over and over again. As their self-awareness grows and they acknowledge their responses to old tapes, they can begin to write new scripts and express new behaviors. Encourage them this takes time, encourage them that they can live with the uncomfortable newness as they learn new behaviors. *Reinforce their humanness. They are not alone in this struggle. Managing themselves is doable.*

Situation: (Ask for personal situation from a group member.) You've thought about it and admittedly you're angry. How do you express it so you are successful, so you are satisfied with the outcome of the situation, at minimum so you can live with the outcome- peaceably, with yourself and others? I.e. your anger is reduced and thus you can move to problem solve the existing situations rather than to creating new ones.

Avoid putting the other person on the defensive...is respectful of the other person and yourself.

Avoid the blame game.
How?

Session 3: Anger Expression

- Avoid the word, "You." This is a BIG RED FLAG, when you hear yourself start a sentence with you.

The effect is to put the other person in a defensive mode, YOU usually conveys a blaming intent.

Instead use "I" statements. When you use an "I" statement you are talking for yourself, owning your own feelings, thoughts, and behaviors.

Avoid "woulda, coulda, shoulda" thinking and language.

Engage the other in mutual problem solving by asking, "What" or "How" questions e.g. what can we do about this? How can we figure this out?

Carol Tavris has written an interesting book, Anger: The Misunderstood Emotion, and much of the following information is taken from her book.

Express your anger to the right person—the target of your anger--without attacking the other person because this will only create a need for them to defend themselves. If your anger is rekindled, stop, and cool down again. The situation may be outside of your control, but your response is within your control.

You and your target must talk the same 'angry' language.
There must be no 'zinger' clause i.e. you receive no angry retaliation from your anger.

Writing a letter to the target, not sending it, is often a useful, therapeutic way to express your anger and to have no retaliation.

Here are some more RED FLAGS for you to begin to notice as you talk, or as you hear others express themselves.

- Avoid YOU statements
- Use "I" statements
- Address the problem NOT the person
- Avoid inflammatory and highly negative connotation words
- Avoid name-calling
- Avoid should, ought, could, would

Remember you have **CHOICES**

"Yes, but," remember that when another person is being verbally assaultive or sarcastic or belittling etc. they are baiting you and you can choose to not take the bait.

Give scenario of martial artist who does NOT focus on his opponents arms, because then he can get hit from the legs, etc, but he learns to focus past the aggressor i.e. He looks at the WHOLE PICTURE thus he can see what is happening. Just so, a person in an

argument or aggressive encounter can learn to see the BIG PICTURE and to respond to it instead of being caught up into a specific verbal response.

Shift your focus forward.
Example: When you wife says, "Well, if you loved me the way I love you, you would not do….." Rather than responding to her bait, the clue words are- IF YOU . . . Respond to her feeling. And say, I do love you. Or, When did you first begin to feel like I don't love you?

Another example: "If this family was really important to you, you would go with us to the Christmas dinner." Clue words that a guilt trip is coming, "If, you would" Again, response to her feeling; don't buy into the guilt trip. Say something to the effect, "Our family is important to me." Or" When did you first feel like this family is not important to me?"

When you hear the clue words, "If you..." Remember you can choose to respond, you do not have to react. You do not have to take the bait for guilt and shame. If you feel like you are being manipulated, you probably are. Stop. Ask questions, if needed. Stay with the facts. Avoid blaming, sulking, insulting.

As you begin to practice these new behaviors those around you may not know how to react to the 'new' you. Some may even act in ways that they know would have previously inflamed you. As you respond in a less aggressive and angry manner, they will modify their response. Some may avoid you. Others, as you hurt them less often through angry responses and retaliations, may want to spend more time with you. You will also be making decisions about them. Some people you tolerated before you may find increasingly obnoxious and you may choose to not spend as much time with them. As you become aware of sarcasm and manipulation, you may decide to spend your time with others who act in positive ways toward you rather than spending time with those who damage your own self-esteem. It is natural for these 'people transitions' to take place.

Keep your perspective.
Remember: Feeling problems are not solved intellectually.

The others' behavior may not change. Who is the only person you can change— YOURSELF. Whether they change or not, you've done all you can be expressing yourself appropriately.

RECOMMENDED READING
<u>You Can't Say That To Me</u> by Suzanne Eglin
<u>Woulda Coulda Shoulda</u> by Freeman and DeWolf
<u>Of Course, You're Angry</u> by Rosellinj and Worden

Session 3: Anger Expression

🗝 Controlling your self-talk is probably the single most important way to stop stress in its tracks.

Homework
During the next two weeks, continue practicing your deep breathing and meditation techniques. Now, notice what you tell yourself all day, everyday, in your head. That is your self-talk. When you notice negative self-talk, derogatory comments about yourself or others, change the self-talk language to a neutral or positive expression.

Session 4: How Your Thoughts Affect Your Behavior

OBJECTIVES:

- To identify the way your perceptions, values and social rules determine the way your anger is expressed.
- To explore the impact of power differential in determining the way your anger is expressed.
- To recognize and confront your belief systems which contribute to anger dyscontrol.

KEY QUESTIONS:

- How do my perceptions, beliefs, gender, and power influence my anger expression?
- What can I do to change my anger response?

HANDOUTS:

- Anger Summary Classes 1-3
- Cognitive Restructuring
- Stressbuster #4: Laughter

HOME WORK ASSIGNMENT:

- Continue to identify your personal physical response to anger feelings
- Observe actions of others in social situations and notice how they respond
- Become aware of and learn the following things about yourself:
    - Identify what social situations are potentially anger producing for you.
    - How your mood influences the intensity and duration of your anger
    - Learn how your mood and physical response changes as you observe communication styles across gender and power differentials
    - How you respond when someone enters your personal comfort space

Thought for the day: **When all else fails—Laugh.**

Session 4: flow Your Thoughts Affect Your Behavior

Outline

1. Review previous sessions.
    - Homework
    - Total behavior

2. Thoughts that affect your feelings
    - Use ‘I Can’ group discussion
    - Control theory
    - Perceptions: A-B-C

3. REBT
    - Irrational thinking
    - Cognitive distortions

Session 4: How Your Thoughts Affect Your Behavior

Pass around The I Can and have each vet pick one card. Each card will have an affirmation on it. Begin by reading the one you drew and relate (if you can) to the four needs of individuals as expressed by William Glasser i.e. Power, Love & Belonging, Freedom, and Fun. As you go around the room pick up affirmations that demonstrate each one of these needs. Also, note in your dialogue how this fits into our ability to make CHOICES in our lives about how we ACT vs. REACT when anger feelings are noticed Reinforce their ability to notice their angry feelings. Use positive feedback for these principles

In discussion one man said, "That's all very well and good BUT no matter what I say to someone I've been told that I come on to them in an aggressive manner and they get mad at me. Discuss the difference between aggressive and assertive behavior. Discuss cultural influence. Vet mentions that he has been taught to look people in the eye when he talks to them and that is what he knows to do (Cultural learned). Provide positive feedback for him recognizing what he has been taught, and reinforce cultural values. Ah,ha, what we PERCEIVE by our BELIEF system is what we ACT on. Tie this together and reinforce from previous session. Suggest they monitor their own and become aware of others body stances and non-verbals during the next week episode. Note: vet talking is pointing his finger to emphasize his language. Note: cultural aggressiveness of this nonverbal gesture.

With Yes, BUT... Build AWARENESS & KNOWLEDGE base prior to NEW BEHAVIORS. Encourage vet for his PERCEPTIVE ABILITY to NOTICE his own BEHAIVORS NOW he is beginning to build CHOICES into his BEHAVIORS and is LEARNING to ACT instead of REACT to others.
Initiate idea that veteran can CHOOSE to NOT Participate in an angry encounter. When vet says words to effect, "No matter what I do so-and so makes me.... Remind vet he can CHOOSE NOT TO PARTICIPATE
Refer to Glasser needs of Power, Love and Belonging, Freedom, and Fun to remind them they do belong to our society; they do have personal rights in our world

Imagine for a moment that you are at home and your son tells you to take out the trash.
What would you feel like? What would you do?
Imagine now that you are at work and your boss tells you to take out the trash. What would you feel like? What would you do?

Let's try another example. While driving to the VA today you stopped for gas and as you went to pull back out in traffic, a car came whizzing by out of nowhere and startled you. What would you feel like? What would you do?
Now, see that same scene again and see the car fly by and now notice the side of the car has in big letters HIGHWAY PATROL. What would you feel like? What would you do?

What has changed? Remember? We mentioned this a couple of weeks ago. The power structure. Amazingly, you were able to check your words or check your behavior when the power structure was not in your favor, and you did so almost instantaneously. You have amazing power and control.

Session 4: How Your Thoughts Affect Your Behavior

Since we learn how to express our anger, we also learn how to manage our anger. Here is a little food for thought about anger that was recently in our local paper: **"Sometimes when I'm angry I have the right to be angry, but that doesn't give me the right to be cruel."**

Our range of expression often goes from bottling it up on the one extreme to letting it Spew out on the other. Neither extreme is healthy. We are looking for ways to balance the teeter-totter.

Reacting brashly can ruin relationships or lead to violence with even worse results for others and us. We've talked about some ways to gain time to THINK **to** CALM YOURSELF… .breathe deeply and slowly in and out, walk away, count to 10 or 100 or 1000. Find humor in the situation, Laugh. These are the beginnings of our Anger Control Plan. Today, we are going to discuss another method of managing your anger- how to Talk It Out successfully.

Stessbuster *#4:* Laughter

This is a good place to use a Silly Slammer (a toy that laughs, and laughs) or other toy If you have a funny video, this is a good time to show a short clip. Some old Johnny Carson reruns esp. the slapstick visual comedy.

REBT Review

Last week we discussed how what you think about yourself and how you talk to yourself affect the way you feel and behave. We can feel bad about ourselves if we call ourselves bad names or tell ourselves how 'stupid' we are. You can talk yourself into being angry or behaving in angry ways by frightening yourself and using scary language. Remember that saying 'making a mountain out of a molehill'? Have you ever done that? You can create a catastrophe in your mind by doing so.

Albert Ellis developed a model for looking at how our thoughts and feelings interact with our behavior and called it, RET. His ideas have been through the years, but we still use many of his principles. A-B-C, it's as easy as **A-B-C.** Activating event-Belief system-Consequences. When something happens we don't like, we tend to say, "He made me so angry." Ellis tells us it's NOT the situation or event that made us angry, its our emotional response to what we tell ourselves about the event, or what we believe about it, your perception of what happened. Thus, we have control over what we think, even when we can't control what is happening. By controlling our thoughts, we gain emotional self-control

When our thoughts get us into irrational thinking then we have difficulties with our feelings. We want to learn to challenge our irrational beliefs.

Ellis says our beliefs that create problems for us are irrational beliefs such as.

I want what I want when I want it. It is terrible when things are not the way I want them to be.

Session 4: How Your Thoughts Affect Your Behavior

What happened to me is their fault and I can't do anything about it.

I must be treated with respect. I will not be told what to do. I must be in control at all times.

Let's look at some specific situations and see if these beliefs hold up.

Whenever we hear ourselves making all or nothing statements, negative self-talk.

They made me". . . This is a BIG RED FLAG. Question this .. . Who's "they"

Who controls your mouth? Your arm? Your leg? Remember, you are in control of your behavior.

Review handout. Cognitive Restructuring as you have time.

Session 5*:* Mental & Behavioral Skills

OBJECTJVES:

- To personalize the Anger Control Plan.
- To discuss methods to reduce anger arousal.
- To reinforce the power of practice.
- To encourage the exercise of Choice.

KEY QUESTIONS:

- What can I do to reduce my anger arousal?
- What beliefs will reduce anger triggers?
- Can I do this?

HANDOUTS:

Stressbuster *#5:* Progressive Muscle Relaxation

- Stressed Duck
- Personal Bill of Rights

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT:

- Schedule stress reduction techniques into your day.
- Take your personalized Anger Control Plan home, and use it this week. Make note of what works and what doesn't. Plan to report back to the group next session.

Thought for the Day: **MORE OF THE SAME GETS MORE OF THE SAME. WHAT I PRACTICE I BECOME.**

Session 5: Mental & Behavioral Skills

OUTLINE

I. Review previous sessions
- Anger Control Plan
- Anger Self-Monitor
- Usefulness of REBT

2. Control Theory
- Basic psychological needs
- Pictures in our heads
- Total behavior

3. Mental Skills
- Thought-stopping techniques
- Disputing irrational beliefs
- Response Rehearsal
- Rewriting scripts

4. Behavioral Skills
- Time-out
- Exercise
- Organize problem solvers
- Write

5. Other stress reduction techniques
- Humor
- Music

Session 5: Mental & Behavioral Skills

Stressbuster #5: Progressive Muscle Relaxation
There are many audiotapes, which include a progressive relaxation exercise. We have some the veterans can checkout for two-week periods between group sessions. I've included a short relaxation dialogue, which can be used in-group at the end of these session notes, or you can develop your own dialogue

Good morning, Our Stressbuster for today is progressive muscle relaxation. You may have seen this explained two different ways. One method is a passive mode where you relax your muscles without tightening them first. The second method is active progressive muscle relaxation, and the one we most often use in this group. This relaxation method is where **YOU** purposely tense the muscle prior to relaxing it ***Many of our veterans deal with the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and they may have their muscles tensed all the time. We find that if we tell them to 'relax' a muscle, they aren't able to do so. But everyone can tense a muscle just a little bit more than it is, then when they release that extra bit of tension, they can relate to the idea of relaxing a muscle.***
Let's begin... ***.(play audio tape or lead the group through the exercise.)***

Review previous sessions
We have introduced many ideas these past few weeks. Does anyone have any questions at this point? Or does anyone have something to add to our growing Anger Control Plan? I'll add Progressive muscle relaxation but does anyone have an example of something that has worked for him or her during the past two weeks?

Physiologic cues?
Self-monitor?
Language?
Belief System? Etc.

Mental Skills
Most of you had to drive to the VA today for this group session. How did the drive go for you? Any stress? Anyone get angry while driving this morning?

What were you telling yourself about the other driver this morning?

Session 5: Mental & Behavioral Skills

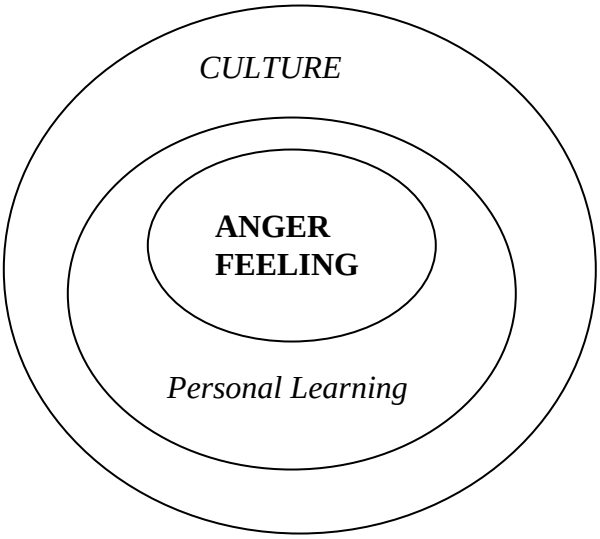
Let's take that same scenario. Imagine for a moment—You are driving to the VA this morning for your appt. Someone cuts in front of you in traffic. This time instead of telling yourself how bad that driver is. Rewrite your thinking, and what happens to your feeling if you realize you car was in his blind spot. Or, some ludicrous idea—he can't help himself, he's driving blind!! Or, he must really have something serious on his mind this morning to be driving so poorly. When you find yourself inflaming yourself with self-talk, STOP the talk. RETHINK. REFRAME. REWRITE.

We talked in an earlier session about 'red-flag' words like You should, If only when you become aware of these words in your vocabulary, place a Big STOP SIGN in your head, and RETHINK, REFRAME, REWRITE your self-talk..

Let's review for a moment what we discussed in our first session—why we use anger in our society?

We use anger because "it works" in our society. We sometimes get our way, other people fear us, and so we have a sense of power and control. We sometimes get people to help us. We like feeling that we've won. And, sometimes it is just an excuse to hide our unwillingness to do anything else which might help solve a problem. Now, what happens when our angry expressions don't work? People get physically and/or emotionally wounded, maybe killed. We break and destroy relationships with family and friends that leave us lonely and alienated from others. We may not get what we want from society and instead may be entangled in serious legal problems; even be sent to prison.

So, how does this relate to driving to group this morning? You have a picture in your head of how life was suppose to go for you this morning. And when that picture did not go exactly like you thought it should, you reacted. More than likely, you became angry. Our society has told you it is okay to become angry on the highway when something doesn't go your way. And what society tells you has become part of your Personal Anger Expression.
Remember; Culture, Personal Learning, and Feeling?



Personal Anger Expression

Session 5: Mental & Behavioral Skills

Today... Now... Begin to make CHOICES about what you are willing to become angry about? All is not black or white. Look for shades of gray in your life, then find shades of blue, green, yellow, red, purple. Use your brain. Evaluate. Is the driver in the red Buick so important to you that you'll go to jail for him? Identify what sets you off? On a scale of 1-10 with 1= trivial and 10= of life importance decide what is worth fighting about. Decide what is worth walking away from?

Control Theory-Glasser

A gentleman by the name of William Glasser talked about the 'pictures in our head' and how our pictures are used to satisfy our needs. He identifies four psychological needs:

- Love and Belonging
- Power
- Freedom, and
- Fun

There is a continual conflict for meeting these needs. If we only needed love and belonging, our family relationship would look a lot different. If we only needed freedom, our lives would probably be a shambles since we would have no sense of responsibility to others or ourselves The choices we make are based on our pictures in our heads of what will satisfy us or what will meet our needs. None of us has pictures of ourselves doing badly. The problem is that we can't satisfy the pictures that we have. To change a picture, we have to replace it with another picture that if not equally satisfying, is reasonably satisfying to us.

In most relationships even good ones, we are constantly trying to change someone to want what we want. Think how hard it is for you to throw away a favorite old sweater or to give up working on an old clunker of a car and you'll quickly see how resentful you become when someone tries to force you to change a picture,

We often try to deny we hold certain pictures because to admit to them is painful. Because to admit to them opens up wounds we would rather keep closed. Your picture album is the world you would like to live in. Your pictures are your perceptions of what your world is supposed to be like. When these perceptions are not met, you react, and often with anger.

When you were born, the only behaviors you had were physical ones like blinking, urinating, and swallowing. You were far from helpless, though. A baby knows he must learn to control his environment and he does this by the only behavior you were born with that has any direct effect on the world around you-anger. All your life you learn new complex behaviors, but to begin with you expressed anger by thrashing around, making loud noises, and seeing someone respond to your need for comfort. In the realm of evolution, probably those babies who lived were those who figured out quickly and effectively how to get the attention of an adult who would satisfy their need for comfort. You continue today, no matter how old you are, to have the capacity to learn new behaviors to meet your needs. It's not easy to change the pictures in your head.., our perceptions But, yes, it is doable.

Session 5: Mental & Behavioral Skills

Behavioral Skills
Many behavioral skills have been discussed and listed on our anger control plan. Let's see if we can come up with any new ones.

So far, our list looks something like this:

- Time-out
- Walking
- Exercise
- Writing
- Telephone a friend
- Music Clean house
- Laughter

Discuss, explore this area—add as many possible activities as possible,

Homework
This next week, pick out one or two items on these lists to try out in your life. Remember, these are new mental and behavioral skills so it is natural for you to feel a little bit uncomfortable. The feeling will change as you become more familiar with the technique; as it becomes yours.

Session 5:Mental & Behavioral Skills

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Get in a comfortable position. Take a few deep breaths. Inhale, deeply, slowly. Hold it for about a count of three, and then exhale fully, allowing yourself to relax. You may leave your eyes open or close them whichever is most comfortable for you. At home, I recommend you find a quiet, private, safe, comfortable place so you can close your eyes and let the concerns of the world disappear.

We'll begin with the top of your head and progress down your body to the souls of your feet. Take a deep breath. Be aware of how you feel. Hang onto any good feelings you notice. Now focus on the top of your head. Become aware of any tightness. Inhale slowly and deeply. If you are not aware of any tightness on your head or face, scrunch your eyes and forehead, create tightness in your face, and now release that tightness you created. And notice what that release feels like. Take a deep breath. Hold. Exhale slowly and fully. Allow any tightness or tension to leave your head, your eyes, let it flow out of your ears or nose or mouth.

Take a deep breath. Hold it for a moment. Focus on your face, neck. Notice any tension. If you are not aware of any tightness on your head or face, scrunch your eyes and forehead, create tightness in your face, and now release that tightness you created, And notice what that release feels like. Take a deep breath. Hold. Exhale. Let the tension flow out of your pores as you exhale slowly and fully.

Now focus on your shoulders and upper arms. Tighten the muscles in your shoulder and upper arm. Inhale and notice the tension you created there. Exhale slowly and deeply and allow tightness to flow right out of your body. Take a deep breath. Inhale slowly and fully. Exhale. Release any tension in your shoulder or upper arm.

Focus on your lower arms, wrists, and hands. Tense your hand. Inhale deeply and slowly. Notice this tension you created, Exhale, Release the tension you created. Take another deep breath. Hold. Exhale. Let the tenseness in your lower arms, wrists, and hands flow right out of your body as you exhale.

Continue this process down through the rest of the body)
As you begin to relax, focus on your torso, your chest.

Now focus on your buttocks, and hips...

Now focus on your legs...

Now focus on your ankles and feet...

Session 5: Mental & Behavioral Skills

Concentrate on any uncomfortable part of your body and as you breathe, allow your healing breath to travel exactly to the spot of discomfort. Take a deep breath. Allow your body to relax. Allow the healing Oxygen of the air to absorb any tension or pain you are aware of. As you scan your body from your head to your feet, notice any pain or discomfort. Take a deep breath. Allow your healing breath to travel to the place of discomfort and to absorb your pain, your tightness, and your discomfort Release as you exhale. Allow the discomfort to leave your body.

Take another breath. Allow your body to work for you. As you continue to relax, picture your body, comfortable in your private, safe place in the world. Be aware of how your body feels in this place and enjoy your time there.

Take another deep breath. Hold. Exhale.
Anytime you notice tension or discomfort in your body, allow the discomfort to leave your body when you exhale. Remember this peaceful, safe place and know that you can come back to it, anytime, anywhere. This feeling of relaxation is yours. Bring it with you when you open your eyes and come back to this place. Take one more deep breath, slowly stretch, and move, returning completely awakened to this time and place.

Session 6: Conflict Resolution

OBJECTIVES:

- To introduce communication and behavioral skills that facilitates successful conflict resolution.
- To introduce seven steps to fair conflict resolution.

KEY **QUESTIONS:**

- How do my perceptions influence how I view a possible anger-producing event?
- How can I prepare myself mentally and physically to manage a conflictual situation??

HANDOUTS:

- Stressbuster #6: Stretching
- Stress Triangle
- Seven Steps to Fair Conflict Resolution
- Five Basic Methods for Resolving Conflict

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT:

- Practice viewing situations from another's perspective.
- Initiate a change in your habitual response to anger-producing events.
- Identify a past anger-producing event and share with the group how you may have reached a more positive outcome by using some of the problem solving skills discussed.

Thought for the Day: **The secret of walking on water is knowing where the stones are.**

Session 6: Conflict Resolution

OUTLINE

I. Review previous sessions.
- Homework from last session

2. Negotiation
- Crucial elements
- Negotiation styles

3. Conflict resolution skills
- Address the conflict early
- Speak to the key person
- Expect some discomfort
- Focus on the desired outcome, not the problem
- Treat the person as a most important person
- Agree on a plan

4. Five basic methods for conflict resolution
- Denial or withdrawal
- Suppression or smoothing over
- Power or dominance
- Compromise or negotiation
- Collaboration or win-win

Session 6: Conflict Resolution

Review Previous Sessions
Review last week's homework
Ensure the growing Anger Control Plan is in plain view and add to it as patients describe their anger-producing events.

Stressbuster #6: Stretching
Describe the Stress Triangle and provide some stretching exercises.

Negotiation Elements
Whether we like it or not, we are all salesmen i.e., all of us have to negotiate with others to obtain essential needs of life—shelter, food, love and belonging. Along the way we come into contact with others who perceive their needs as different from ours, and what do we have—conflict. How successful we are at resolving these differences often determines our level of comfort in life. So, what do we need to know to negotiate successfully?

Information
You often have different information about a given situation than the other person. In order for conflict resolution to have a positive outcome, you must be willing to share information. In other words, be willing to talk about the problem if you expect someone to understand your point of view. The only way you can expect someone else to understand your point of view is to provide him or her with the material from which your outlook was developed. By sharing information, it is possible to educate rather than to argue.

⚷ Give up the idea that your view is the only view.

You are probably inclined to believe that your view is correct. This view may result in self-defeating behaviors. In order to be successful in a negotiation, you must be able to see the others viewpoint. There is often more than one possible solution to a problem. While taking a chemistry class at one time, the instructor reminded us that for any given problem, there were generally five different approaches that would get us to the same solution. Remembering this helps me consider another's point of view. Perhaps, a simpler way to say it is, "stay flexible."

Time
Let's look at time for a moment. H-A-L-T Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired. I picked up this tidbit from an AA booklet somewhere. In AA, they were addressing being at high risk for a relapse to drinking. In our situation, I believe the Hungry-Lonely-Tired put you at high risk for angry self — defeating behaviors. If at all possible, when negotiating you want to choose your time. When you are Hungry-Angry-Lonely-Tired is not the time to negotiate. You are too vulnerable to stress at those times.

Session 6: Conflict Resolution

Power

There are times when you can just gut yourself through a situation. Brute force will work in the short run. What's the cost? Relationships based on brute force don't tend to last for long. Generally, in our daily living we are interdependent upon others to get and keep getting needs met. If the only way you relate to people is on an aggressive, forceful playing field, you will soon find yourself an outsider, eliminated from play altogether. Lonely and without social support.

Negotiation Styles

Win-Lose

This is a one-way power style. We want to move toward a win-win situation, which includes collaboration instead of confrontation. When you are talking to someone who is focusing on a win-lose situation, you will see behaviors like this:

1. extreme initial positions
2. limited authority
3. emotional tactics
4. adversary concessions viewed as weakness
5. stingy in their concessions
6. ignore deadlines.

For this style to work for you make sure there is no continuing relationship with the adversary and that you care less about them because there is not going to be any mutually beneficial relationship here. This is pretty much an amoral position. It is not recommended.

Win-Win

When negotiating in this style, your focus shifts from defeating the adversary to defeating the problem. It is a style built on mutual trust and respect. You recognize that conflict is a natural part of life. This negotiation is a process for meeting mutual needs. I try to understand where you are coming from, and you try to understand where I'm coming from. The language sounds like this,

"I need your help, because...

"What I think I heard is…

"I hear you...

Imagine that the person you are negotiating with has a sign on their chest that says, MMFI, which means Make Me Feel Important. If you treat them in such a manner.... they are company. . . they are a VIP (Very Important Person), you will more likely speak to them in a respectful, trusting mainner. You will more likely achieve what you came to discuss,

Question Break

Have any of you used these styles in the past. Week. Were there any conflicts? How were they resolved? Did the people act the way you expected them to act? What if your expectations were to change? How do you think the situation might have been resolved? How would like for it to be resolved next time?

Session 6: Conflict Resolution

Conflict Resolution Skills

Timing

It is essential to learn when to argue. It is okay to **not** address a situation immediately. Give yourself permission to take a time-out, count to 10 or 100 or 1000. Use one of the many relaxation techniques we've discussed on the anger control plan. As you regain your composure, make a plan. Choose a time and place when you will not be interrupted so you can talk about your problem. The way you present your view of the situation can determine the receptiveness of the listener.

Attitude

There is a scene in the recent movie, Music of the Heart, where the kids are outside on the street and the teacher tells one of them to walk up to a stranger and ask directions to someplace. The student does this while .the others watch from across the street. He goes with a negative attitude and negative language. He gets a negative response from the stranger, and blames the stranger for the response. The teacher and student observers suggest the student stifle the attitude, clean up the language, and expect a positive response. On the second go around, the stranger responded in a more positive fashion. It is a good reminder:

People tend to behave the way you expect them to behave.

Treat them with disdain and you probably won't get what you want from them. It is best to avoid conversations with "You should" "you ought to", "you always", "you never". These words come across as accusations and often generate defensiveness. Treat them with respect and you will receive a more positive response. Remember, the goal is for the other person to feel like they want to be in agreement with you, not hostile toward you.

Example: Your spouse is late coming home from work and you are worried that be may have been involved in an accident during the drive home. He arrives home two hours later, seemingly unaware there is a problem. Your relief quickly turns to anger. You begin yelling, "You don't care that I worry about you. Can't you call and tell me you will be late coming home? What's wrong with you? You never care about us at home. You only care about yourself." When you use the "you should" "you never" "you anything" the bearer will respond defensively. A more effective way of stating your feelings and needs is to begin your statements with "I" such as "I feel hurt when you do not call and let me know that you will be late." Ask for what you want. "The next time you are going to be late coming home, please call me. Then, I can plan dinner accordingly and know that you are safe." This explains what you are feeling and why. Once you have made your wishes known, ask the listener to repeat back to you what requests you made. This assures that you were heard correctly. If not, clarify by restating your desires in a similar manner. This technique eliminates miscommunication and misunderstanding and allows problem solving without blaming or attacking each other.

Session 6: Conflict Resolution

According to Carol Tavris, anger is a learned pattern and as such, can be unlearned or broken. She suggests we drop the fantasy of rescuing or changing another's behavior and look at changing our behavior in the relationship. We can make decisions-CHOICES- regarding our own behavior. When you admit what you have been doing is not working, it frees you from trying to change the other person's behavior and provides energy for you to identify your patterns of behavior that may be improved upon. Change, whether positive or negative, is stressful. So, when breaking your old anger patterns, be kind to yourself, and recognize success of small steps. This makes the change less stressful and helps diffuse any anger response. Remember, Rome was not built in one day. We do one step at a time.

Practice now what you will do and say when confronted with a predictable anger-producing event. Your goal is to replace harmful, self-defeating anger habits including aggressive and abusive behaviors with behaviors that allow you to be aware of others needs as well as getting your own needs met.

🗝 More of the same gets more of the same. What I practice, I become.

In summary, here is a list of conflict resolution points to keep in mind.

Pick a time when you will be rested mentally and physically.
Pick a time when you will not be rushed to come to a resolution.
Pick a neutral place for all parties.
Be clear about your concerns.
Use "I" statements.
Stay problem-oriented.
Keep a calm demeanor.
Avoid name-calling.
Avoid "You should" language.
Avoid ultimatums.
Avoid blaming statements.

Above all: Monitor your stress level. If your anger quotient becomes too high, take a time-out. Excuse yourself to go the restroom. Take some deep breaths. Stretch. Reschedule the meeting.

Conflict Resolution Steps
Review the handout 'Seven Steps to Fair Conflict Resolution'. Discuss each item with the group members. If time permits, discuss the five basic methods for resolving conflict.

Homework
When we were discussing anger patterns, one of the things we mentioned is that anger responses develop into habits. Now that you have new information about ways to

moderate anger responses, it is time to practice changing your habitual response. Make a dedicated effort this coming week to change one of your habitual anger responses. If you routinely yell or curse at your wife or children because the garbage is not taken outside when you want it done, Visualize not yelling or cursing. Visualize an alternate response and try it out. Your family member will probably be quite surprised. That's okay. Change your response. Next session, we'll talk about how it went for you—and them.

Session 7: Forgiveness

OBJECTIVES:

- To introduce the concept of forgiveness.
- To identify 'letting go' behaviors.

KEY QUESTIONS:

- How does anger in the form of bitterness and resentment continue to influence my life?
- How can I defuse hurtful, bitter memories, thoughts, and/or feelings?
- What's holding me back from forgiving others or myself?

HANDOUTS:

- Stressbuster #7: Self-Massage
- Poem: Healing Through Forgiveness

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT:

- Use at least one 'letting go' behavior in the coming two weeks.
- Continue to practice stress reduction techniques.
- Use your anger control plan this week.

Thought for the day: **THERE IS NO HAPPINESS WITHOUT PEACE, AND NO PEACE WITHOUT FORGIVENESS.**

Session 7: Forgiveness

OUTLINE

1. Review from previous sessions
   - Basic human needs from Control Theory
   - Personal belief system and perception

2. Forgiveness
   - What it is
   - What it isn't

3. Discuss 'Letting Go' behaviors
   - Tell your story
   - Participate in self-help groups
   - Develop healing rituals
   - Find opportunities to help others

Session 7: Forgiveness

Review Previous Sessions

- Basic human needs
- Personal belief system and perception

Stress Buster #7: Self-Massage

'Intent' to Forgive
What's everyone's anger level today? On a 1-10 scale with l=none and 10=physically aggressive, where are you today?

The reason I want you to be aware of where your anger level is right now is because I'm introducing a concept that many people don't like to talk about—Forgiveness. I will not tell you to 'Forget and Forgive' or 'to just forget about it and go on' but I would like you to manage your internal mood enough to consider the topic.

Here is a poem that I found that gives us 'food for thought' about the notion-Forgiveness.

Healing Through Forgiveness

We think, act, and feel,
not on reality,
but on our perceptions
of reality.
What we hope to heal
are our perceptions
of our parents, loved ones,
and others.
We don't heal people.
We don't heal relationships.
We heal our perceptions
of our relationships.

We're not talking about them. We're talking about ourselves. Remember, when we talked earlier about the REBT model-How our thoughts affect our anger….remember we talked about

A+B=C

With B= our Belief system. What is your belief system about the concept of forgiveness?

(Plan on hearing then, respond with variations of the theme, No way am I going to forgive so-and...so for whatever the personal injury is)

Yes, those things did happen to you. Yes, it was horrible. Yes, it was unfair. Yes, it hurt a lot. You each have valid points. I can't change what happened to you then. Today, I'm asking you to consider a new idea. Just for today <u>imagine</u> that you have the INTENT

to Forgive. If you only look at the intent, what feelings come to mind about the event? How does intending to forgive influence your feelings about yourself as well as others? Imagine what your life would be like if you did not carry with you a bag of resentment, and bitter hate.

Example:
Twin sisters are deciding whether to go home to celebrate their mother's fiftieth birthday. Relationships in the family have not been easy. Their father is an alcoholic. He seldom speaks to the wife or children. He works hard, comes home, eats dinner, and sits in front of the TV until it is time to go to bed.

The mother however talks all the time. She has a hard time staying out of other people's business. Some would call her a nag. She is never openly cruel or violent, but she is opinionated. She is convinced the world would be a better place if only everyone would take her advice.

One sees the mother as being helpful when she gives advice. One sees the mother as a busybody when she gives advice. One daughter decides to go home. One daughter decides not to go home.

Who's right? Who's wrong? Neither. Forgiveness is a CHOICE. Their choices are based on their feelings, and there is neither right nor wrong feelings. Forgiveness is a shift from one perception to another.

Forgiveness

What it isn't

Before we go on any further, let's look at some things forgiveness is not. We've all heard the saying, "Just forget about it." This may mean denying the hurtful, harmful, wrongful act that happened in the first place. "I'm really not hurt. It just bothered me for a moment." Denying is not forgiveness. Denying only puts a temporary lid on the hurt that remains. Maybe, your mother or father hurt you. If you deny the pain that still remains, every time someone suggests being hurt by a mother or father, a little pang of hurt goes through your mind. If your father or mother harmed you, and you've put a lid on it, when I suggested it, a little pang came to the surface. Denying a wrong leaves it in place to hurt you again. Ultimately it just comes out in some other form.

Another saying, "Time heals all wounds." Time doesn't heal old past hurts, old past memories. Time just leaves the wound lodged inside your mind, and every once in a while something will occur, and you will ask yourself, "Why do I feel this way, Why do I react this way. It's the old wound that is still inside you coming to the surface one more time disguised in another situation, but the same painful, distressing feeling.

There are some other things we say to distance us from our pain, but they don't work for long either. Things like, "Don't worry about it, he didn't mean anything." Excusing is not forgiveness "He grew up bad, and just doesn't know any better." Justifying is not forgiveness. "I've been hurt, but I guess I'm just going to put up with it." Tolerating is

not forgiveness. The only way you'll ever be able to live without the pangs of hurt will be to confront your pain and acknowledge how much and how deeply you've been wounded. Have you ever seen a patient who was badly burned? The wound base must be cleaned with all debris removed, even scrubbed with a brush. It's painful-excruciating even, but that's what it takes for the wound to heal. Our emotions require the same. Feelings won't be fixed by time or intellect. It takes feeling to heal feeling.

Forgiveness is not approval of past hurtful, harmful behavior.

What it is

Forgiveness acknowledges that none of us are perfect all the time. We all fall short of our intentions, our responsibilities, our dreams, and our promises. We're not perfect beings.

Forgiveness is as much about forgiving ourselves as it is about forgiving others. It's about releasing ourselves from self-imposed prisons of guilt and shame.

Here's another story: A veteran who suffered from PTSD for many years told me of the guilt he had carried for thirty years since his friend had been killed in Vietnam. He recalled being at a firebase and during a mortar attack seeing his friend get hit and go flying through the air some distance from him. For some reason, he was not able to get to him. He never saw his friend again. He beat himself up routinely with a guilt stick for not being able to save his friend. He could not find his friend's name on The Wall and he was mad about that. He carried this seething resentment against the Govermnent for not getting his friend's name on The Wall. He seemed to know some information about his friend, so I encouraged him to try and find out what had happened to him. One day, the veteran came in and told me he had found his friend alive and well, living in Las Vegas, NV! They were reunited and remained in touch. Since then the vet has died. But, before his death, he had a shift in perception. The Wall was no longer a resented monument. The survivor guilt and shame no longer ate away at him. The constant strain and tension in his body had lessened. He was more at ease with himself. His sense of self-respect had increased. He no longer focused on this one aspect of his Vietnam tour. He developed a new eye for what he had seen, and done in Vietnam. What changed? His perception. This wasn't about forgiving someone else. It was about forgiving himself. That is at least as important as forgiving someone else.

Forgiving is a process. For many it is not a one time deal. One day you may feel like 'under no circumstances will you ever forgive so-and-so At another time, you may find that your feelings have changed, and being perpetually angry at so-and-so is not worth the energy expended You may decide that forgiving isn't about saying it was okay, but saying that you are okay. Take your time. It's all about having the power and freedom to make your own choice about what works for you. At any one moment you may decide to continue the process of forgiveness or you may to decide to hang onto the hurt, and anger that you are familiar with.

Session 7: Forgiveness

There may be some things that you think are simply unforgivable, and maybe they will so remain for you. If so, at least become aware why their act is unforgivable to you so you can find some peace in your decision.

Letting Go Behaviors

Telling your story

For those times when you decide to forgive, there are some letting go behaviors that may help you along the road. One healing ritual that is important is being able to tell your story to someone who will listen. They can't change it and they won't try, but they will listen to you. In the telling of your story, you begin to recognize the feelings you have tied to the events, and you can begin to make decisions about what, if anything, you can do about the event. Telling your story is a primary letting go behavior.

Self-help groups are an excellent opportunity for you to tell your story in an accepting environment. That is partly why we have various support groups available to you. These are usually small groups often or less who get together once or twice a month to offer mutual support and encouragement to each other. They are opportunities for you to remove the mask of sociability and to dare to let others see you, warts and all. You can discuss the subjects that are often verboten in casual company, but which truly affect the way you relate to yourself and others. You can try out new language, new feelings, and new behaviors in a safe, supportive environment. Remember,

🗝	You are not going to be judged in life by what you think and feel. You will be judged by your behavior; by what you do.

Perhaps, living well is the best revenge of all.

Healing Rituals

Funerals are a visible example of putting pain and grief to rest. When a friend or family member dies, it is not only their pain but also ours that needs to be laid to rest. Forgiveness is related to how we manage our pain and grief (emotional pain). Those who have died need to be set free, released from our pain. We need to let them die so their spirit can be at rest. We need to let them die so our spirit can be at rest. We get to keep the memories. We can let go of the pain, and guilt, and shame, and fear, and powerlessness, bitterness and resentment. How do we do this?

A fundamental way to manage pain and grief is through the healing rituals each society has developed from the type of funeral each has to the way we have to tell our story.

When someone dies, if we are fortunate enough to attend the funeral, it is often the beginning of our healing. The support of others at the funeral is helpful, the reminiscence and telling of stories is helpful. We may need to have additional healing rituals to help us through this process of letting go. Often, when someone dies, we react with anger toward him or her for having the gall to go and die on us when we needed them, or we get mad at God for allowing this death to occur, or we blame ourselves for not doing something to have stopped this, as if we are powerful enough to stop someone from dying!

Session 7: Forgiveness

What are some other rituals, which you have used, that helps you heal old wounds?

Develop healing rituals that are beneficial to you.
Go to the cemetery or a meaningful place with memories, alone, later and say goodbye.
Write a letter to the person who has died saying all you need to say. Later, burn the paper, scatter the ashes or bury them as you let the pain subside.
Put a letter or symbol in a balloon and let it go up into the clouds.

For our VN veteran friends, the VN Memorial, the 'Moving Wall" is a symbol of healing, a place for letting go of pain and bitterness, resentment.

Are any of these healing rituals activities that we can claim for our Anger Control Plan?

Helping others

One of the best ways to help you is often to reach out and help someone else. This distracts us from our own pain and enhances our self-respect. It is a gift we can give to another person.

Homework

A primary principle of forgiveness is perception. During the next couple of weeks, practice seeing a situation from another's view. Use that cliché, 'walk in another man's shoes' before you react to a situation. Notice how viewing a scene through the eyes of another changes your view which then alters your emotional response. Be prepared to tell us how your experience went next session.

Session 8: Making Choices

OBJECTIVES.

- To review previous key points.
- To review individual anger control plans.
- To answer questions.
- To complete patient satisfaction questionnaire[5]
- To complete ANGR checklist.
- To give out CHOICES medallion to group participants.

KEY QUESTIONS:

- What stress reduction techniques have I become comfortable with using?
- How can I continue to address my needs for anger management?

HANDOUTS:

- Stressbuster #8: Exercise
- 101 Stress Relievers
- CHOICES Medallion
- Summary Sessions 1-8

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT:

- Continue to work the problem.

Thought for the day: **THINK HEALTHY**

Session 8: Making Choices

OUTLINE

1. Review Key Points from previous sessions
    - Total Behavior
    - Perceptions and Personal belief systems
    - Mental and Behavioral Skills
    - Conflict Resolution

2. Review their individual anger control plans

3. Conduct a question and answer session

4. Concluding Remarks
    - ANGR Checklist
    - Patient satisfaction survey
    - CHOICES medallion

Session 8: Making Choices

Review Previous Sessions

Stressbuster #8: Exercise

Anger Control Plan
The Anger Control Plan that you have been adding to each session should be in plain view and by now it has a list that, at minimum, includes items like this:
Sample Plan

- Deep Breathing
- Self-talk
- Visualization
- Meditation
- Talk it out
- Time out
- Humor
- Pets
- Music
- Exercise
- Walk away
- Address the issue not the person
- Work the problem

This is our last time to add to our list. Does anyone have any other items to add? Any situations that have occurred the past couple of weeks that you want to discuss today?
The 101 Stress relievers handout has lots of good ideas to review and discuss.

Answer Questions
What has been most helpful for you? What has not been helpful? Are there any areas of discussion that you particularly wanted to talk about today that we have not discussed?

Closing Administrative Items
We still work for the government and nothing is done until the paperwork is completed. It is your chance to tell us what you think of this group. *The patient satisfaction survey may be anonymous but the ANGR checklist we need names on so we can compare this post-test to the pre-test data.*

Closing Remarks and Medallion Presentation
This has been a great group to be with. Thank you all for hanging in there with us, even when the discussion became agitating or uncomfortable for you. You have had the courage to try new things—to think in different ways, to act in different ways. Those are difficult and uncomfortable things to do. You have courage, personal control, and more power than you know. Don't let anyone take that away from you. As a closing token of your accomplishment we would like to present you with a medallion from this group. Can you imagine. . .one side reminds us we have CHOICES in life, and the other side reminds us there is always hope because it is A New Day. Good luck to each of you.

Session 8: Making Choices

Homework
Keep working the problem.

That's all folks!

Recommended Reading

Bennett, B. (1993). Breathing into life, recovering wholeness through body mind and breath. Center City, MN: Hazelden Educational Materials

Bilodeau, L., (1992). The anger workbook. Center City, MN: Hazelden Educational Materials

Channing L. Beta Co., Inc. (1998 ed). About Anger. [Brochure]. South Deerfield, MA: Author.

Ellis, A., Ph.D. & Powers, R. A., Ph.D., *(1975).* A new guide to rational living. No. Hollywood, Ca: Wilshire Book Company.

Ellis, A., Ph.D. & Tafrate, R.C., Ph.D. (1997). How to Control Your Anger Before It Controls You. Seacauus, N.J. Carol Publishing Group.

Flanigan, B., (1992). Forgiving the unforgivable. New York, N.Y.: Macmillan Publishing Company.

Freeman, A. Dr., & DeWolf, R., (1989). Woulda, Coulda, Shoulda: Overcoming regrets, mistakes, and missed opportunities. New York, N.Y., William Morrow and Company.

Glasser, W., M.D. (1984). Control Theory: A new explanation of how we control our lives. New York, N.Y.: Harper and Row.

Hafner, J.A., (1992). Anger; Rational-Emotive Therapy. (Rev. Ed.). Center City, MN: Hazelden Educational Materials.

Jakubowski, P. & Lange, A.J. (1978) The assertive option; your rights & responsibilities Champaign, Ill: Research Press Company.

Kassinove, H. Ph.D. *(1995* Ed.) Anger Disorders. Bristol, Pa: Taylor & Francis.

Kivel, P. (1992). Men's Work: How to Stop the violence that tears our lives apart. Center City, MN: Hazelden.

Meier, P. M.D. (1993). Don't let jerks get the best of you. Nashville, TN.: Thomas Nelson Publishers

Rosellini, G., & Worden, M. *(1985).* Of Course you're Angry. Center City, MN: Hazelden.

Tavris, C. (1982). Anger: The misunderstood emotion. New York, N.Y. Simon and Schuster.

Walters, J. P. (1981). ANGER: Yours and Mine and What to Do About it. (D. Kool & James E. Ruark, Eds.). Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan Publishing House..

Recommended Reading

Wholter, D.L., (1993). Freedom through forgiveness.
Whole Persons Associates (1998 Summer. Minneapolis, MN: Compcare Publishers.

Williams, R., M.D., & Williams, V., PH.D. (1993). Anger Kills. New York, NY., Harper Collins Publishers, Inc

References

Barris, B.P. , Ph.D. (1999). When Chicken Soup Isn't Enough. Author.

Barris, B.P. Ph.D. (1999). Understanding and Managing Anger. Paper presented during Anger Management seminar. Mountain View, CA: Mind Matters Seminars.

Biaggo, M.L. (1980a) Anger arousal and personality characteristics. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 39 (2), 305-315.

Biaggo, M.L. (1980b) Assessment of Anger arousal. Journal of Personality Assessment. 44 (3), 292-298.

Black, L & Novaco, R.W. (1993). Treatment of anger with developmentality handicapped man. Wells, R.A. & Gianett

Channing L. Beta Co., Inc. (1998 ed). About Anger. [Brochure]. South Deerfield, MA: Author.

References

Barris, B.P., Ph.D. (1999). When Chicken Soup Isn't Enough. Author.

Barris, B.P., Ph.D. (1999, October). Understanding and Managing Anger. Paper presented during Anger Management seminar. Mountain View, CA: Mind Matters Seminars.

Biaggio, M. L. (1980a). Anger arousal and personality characteristics Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 39(2), *305-315.*

Biaggio, M. *L.* (1980b). Assessment of anger arousal. Journal of Personality Assessment, 44 (3), 292-298.

Black, L & Novaco R. W. (1993). Treatment of anger with developmentally handicapped man. Wells, R. A. & Gianettj, V. J. (Eds.). Casebook of The Brief Psychotherapies. 143-157. New York: Plenum Press.

Bluin, Melissa. Anger Management 101. (1998, January 18). The Northwest Arkansas Living, pp Cl, E7.

Borcherdt, B. (1993). You can control your feelings: Twenty four guides to emotional well-being. Sarasota, FL: Professional Resource Press.

Borcherdt, B. (1989). Think straight, feel great. Sarasota, FL: Professional Resource Exchange, Inc.

Bowly, J. (1973). Attachment and loss. Basic Books, N.Y., p. 3 00-320.

Brandon, A. D., Deffenbacher, J. L., Hogg, J. A., Stark, R. S. & Story, D. A. (1987). Cognitive relaxation and social skills interventions in the treatment of general anger. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 34, (2), 173-176.

Channing L. Beta Co., Inc. (1998 ed). About Anger, [Brochure]. South Deerfield, MA: Author.

Chemtob, C.M., Novoco, R.W., Hamada, R.S., Gross, D.M. & Smith, G. (1997). Anger regulation deficits in combat related posttraumatic stress disorder. Journal of Traumatic Stress. 10, (1). 17-36.

Chemtob, R. S & Novaco, R W. (1997). Cognitive-behavioral treatment for severe anger in posttraumatic stress disorder. Clinical Journal of Consulting Psychology. *65* (1), 184-189.

Deffenbacher, J. L., Story, D.A., Stark, R.. S., Hogg, J. A. and Brandon, A.D. (1986). Cognitive-relaxation and social skills interventions in the treatment of general anger. Journal of Counseling Psychology,: 34, (2). 171-176.

References

Diodato, S. C., Frey, M.A. & Pancoast, B. P. (1986, December). News and Views: Group

counseling for anger and stress. Journal of Contemporary Social Work, 622-624

Ebberson, *E.*, Duncan, B., & Konecni, Bennett, B. (1993). Breathing into life, recovering wholeness through body, mind and breath. Center City, MN: Hazelden Educational Materials.

Ebbesen, E., Duncan, B. & Konecni, V. (1975). Effects of content of verbal aggression on future verbal aggression: A field experiment. Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 11, 192-204.

Efron, P. P., & Efron R. P. (1995). Letting go of anger. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, Inc.

Elgin, S.H. (1995). You can't say that to me: Stopping the pain of verbal abuse. New York, N.Y. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Ellis, A. (October,1976).Techniques of handling anger in marriage. Journal of Marriage and Family Counseling 2 (3). 305-315.

Ellis, A., Ph.D., & Powers, R. A., Ph.D. (1975). A new guide to rational living. Hollywood, Ca: Wilshire Book Company.

Flanigan, B. (1992). Forgiving the unforgivable. New York, N.Y.: Macmillan Publishing Co.

Freeman, A. Dr., & DeWolf, R. (1989). Woulda, Coulda, Shoulda: Overcoming regrets, mistakes and missed opportunities. New York, N.Y.: William Morrow and Company.

Glasser, W., M.D. (1984). Control Theory: A new explanation of how we control our lives. New York, N.Y.,; Harper and Row.

Hafner, J. A. (1992). Anger; Rational-Emotive Therapy. (Rev. Ed.). Center City, MN: Hazelden Educational Materials

Harris, B.Sc., Ph.D. & Rice, M.E., Ph.D. (1997). Risk Appraisal and Management of Violent Behavior Psychiatric Services Journal, 48 (9), 1168-1172.

Jakubowski, P. & Lange, A .J. (1978) The assertive option; Your rights & responsibilities. Champaign, Ill: Research Press Company.

Jakubowski P. & Lange, A. J. (1976). Responsible assertive behavior; Cognitive/behavioral procedures for trainers. Champaign, Ill: Research Press.

Johnson, S. (1989). From housewife to heretic. N.Y.: Doubleday.

Kassinove H. Ph.D. *(1995* Ed.) Anger Disorders. Bristol, Pa: Taylor & Francis.

References

Kivel, P. (1992). Mens work: How to stop the violence that tears our lives apart. Center City, MN: Hazelden.

Knowles, Malcolm S. (1995). Designs for adult learning. American Society for Training and Development.

Lai, J. Y.& Wolfgang, L. (1992). Gender, anger expression style, and opportunity for anger release determine cardiovascular reaction to and recovery from anger provocation. Psychosomatic Medicine, 54, 297-310.

Leviton, S.C. & Greenstone, J. L. (1997). Elements of mediation: Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.

Meichenbaum D., Ph.D. (1994). A Clinical Handbook/Practical Therapists Manual. Waterloo, Ontario, Canada: Institute Press.

Meier, P., M.D. (1993). Don't let jerks get the best of you. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Miller, P. & Sperry, L. L. (1987). The socialization of anger and aggression. Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, 33(1), 1-31.

Monohan, J. & Steadman, H. (Eds.). (1994).Violence and mental disorder: Developments in risk assessment: Anger as a risk factor for violence among the mentally disordered. Chicago & London. University of Chicago Press.

Nongard, R. K. & Nongard, P .S. (1995). In Control: Healthy Anger Expression. Tulsa, OK: Peach Tree Professional Education, Inc.

Novaco, R. W. (1996). Anger treatment and its special challenges; Center for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Clinical Quarterly, 6(3), *5* 7-60.

Novaco, R. W. (1994), Violence and Mental Disorder (Monahan, J. & Steadman, H.J. Eds). University or Chicago Press/Chicago and London. Pp. 21-59.

Novaco, R.W. (1993). Clinicians ought to view anger contextually. Behavior Change, 10(1), 208-218.

Novaco, R. W. (1977). A stress inoculator approach to anger management in the training of law enforcement officers. American Journal of Community Psychology, (53) 327-346.

Novaco, R.W. (1976 October). The functions and regulation of the arousal of anger. American Journal of Psychiatry 133 (10) 1124-1128.

O'Neill, H., *(1995).* Anger: The assessment and treatment of problematic anger, part 2. British Journal of Occupational Therapy, 58 (10), 427-31.

References

Oommen, K. M., Shear, Pilkones, P.A., Kolko, D. J., Thase, M.E. & Greeno, C.G. (1999). Anger attacks: Correlates and significance of an under recognized symptom. Journal of Clinical Psychology, 60 (9), 633-644.

Patrick, M .R., Clark, HW., Shopshire, M.S., Lewis, E.,W. & Sorensen D. J. (1994). Anger management and temper control: Critical components of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and substance abuse treatment. Journal of Psychoactive Drugs, 26(4) 401-407.

Rosellini, G. & Worden, M. (1990). Od Course You're Anxious. Center City, MN: Hazelden

Rosellini, G., & Worden, M. (1985). Of Course You're Angry. Center City, MN: Hazelden

Rosenberg, M. B. (1993). Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Compassion. Del Mar, CA; PuddleDancer Press

Rubin, J. (1986). The emotion of anger: Some conceptual and theoretical issues. Professional Psychology Research and Practice; 17 (2), 115-124.

Saarni, C. (1987). Cultural rules of emotional experience: A commentary on Miller and Sperry's study. Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, 33 (4), 535-541.

Schwarts A.E. (1993). Inquire within. Duluth, MN: Whole Persons Associates Inc.

Sharkin, B. S. (1988 April). The measurement and treatment of client anger in counseling. Journal of Counseling and Development, 66. 361-365.

Suinn, R.M. (1990). Anxiety management training: A behavior therapy. New York, NY Plenum Press.

Tavris, C. (1982). Anger: The misunderstood emotion. New York, N.Y: Simon and Schuster.

Tavris, C. (Speaker). (1989). Controlling Anger (Cassette Recordings No. 1, 2, 3, & 4). Boulder, Colorado: Career Track.

Walters, J. P. (198]). ANGER: Yours and Mine and What to Do About it. (D. Kool & James E. Ruark, Eds.). Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House.

Weeks, D. (1994). The Eight Essential Steps To Conflict Resolution. New York, N.Y.: Penguin Putnam Inc.

Wholter, D .L. (1993). Freedom through Forgiveness: Whole Persons Associates (1998 summer) Minneapolis, MN: Compare Publishers.

References

Williams, R. & Williams, V. (1993). Anger Kills. New York, NY.: Harper Collins Publishers, Inc.

Winters Communications, Inc. (1996). Dealing With Anger. [booklet]. Tampa, FL: Author.

Yankura, J. & Dryden, W. (1990). Doing RET: Albert Ellis in action: New York, N.Y.: Springer Publishing Company.

Other Resources

Childs Work, Childs Play
135 Dupont Street
P.O. Box 760
Plainview, NY 11803-0760

Courage to Change Catalog of books and tapes
P.O. Box 1268,
Newburgh, NY 12551
Phone #: 1-800-748-6273

Hazelden Educational Catalogue
Information and Educational Services,
15251 Pleasant Valley Road, P.O. Box 176.
Center City, MN. 1-800-328-9000.

New Harbinger, Self Help Catalog
Phone #: 1-800-748-6273

The Center for Recovery & Wellness Catalog
Videos, CD Roms, Books, Posters.
102 Hwy. 81 North, P.O. Box 9
Calhoun, KY 42327-0009
1-800-962-6662

The I Can: 101 cards of personal affirmation.
G.B.E. Publishers, Inc.
10900 N.E. 8th Street, Suite 900
Bellevue, Washington 98004
1-800-206-0724

Wellness Productions & Publishing Inc.,
Creative uses for Mental Health Facilitators and Educator (1998).
23945 Mercantile Road, Suite KK
Beachwood, Ohio 44122-5924
1-800-669-9208

References

Western Psychological Services catalogue
Creative Therapy Store.
2031 Wilshire Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90025-1251,
1-800-648-8857.
Fax; 310-478-7838.

Whole Persons Associates Catalog
210 West Michigan
Duluth MN 55802-1908
1-800-247-6789

Handouts

Anger Booklet

CHOICES medallion
Cognitive Restructuring
Emotional Umbrella
Five Basic Methods for Resolving Conflict
Healing Through Forgiveness
Hi and Lois cartoon
How do you really feel today?
Massage Techniques You Can Use at Home
Meditation
Personal Bill of Rights
Practicing Anger Management
Seven Steps to Fair Conflict Resolution

Stressbusters:
#1: Deep Breathing
#2: Meditation
#3: Self-talk
#4: Laughter
#5: Progressive Muscle Relaxation
#6: Stretching
#7: Self-Massage #8: Exercise
Stressed Duck
Stress Triangle
Summary of sessions 1-3
Summary of sessions 1-8
101 Stress relievers