

Week 18: Activity
ANGER INVENTORY

ANGER INVENTORY: Much of what we think and feel about anger can date back to our childhood experience of anger. We may have seen anger between adults expressed in frightening or unhealthy ways. We may have been punished if we expressed anger in our family. Or we may have had adults whose anger at someone else got directed at us. It can be a useful exercise to examine our experiences of anger as children in deciding how we understand our anger as adults. Write down what you remember about the following:

When my mom got angry she:

When my dad got angry he:

When _____ (fill in the name of another household member) got angry he/she:

When I got angry I...

As the result of my experiences while growing up, I may have made the following decision(s) about anger:

WEEK 18, HANDOUT A

COPING WITH AND EXPRESSING ANGER: THE FOUR R'S

Reappraise: Identify and express the feelings that *precede* anger. Anger is often a secondary emotion, erupting in the wake of other feelings, like frustration, resentment, humiliation or fear. Try to become aware of the underlying emotion and express that feeling instead of the anger. Use “I” statements and name the feeling. “I feel so frustrated and stuck right now.”

Respond: The goal is not to suppress (or stuff) anger, but to express it in non-aggressive, non-threatening ways. Blaming, accusations, threats and name-calling are aggressive responses. Calmly and assertively stating your thoughts and feelings about a situation, without blaming, is a far more powerful way to respond in conflict. Holding healthy boundaries and repeated assertion are ways of “responding” that are not aggressive. “I will not continue this conversation if the name-calling doesn’t stop.” (This is an important way to respond to children who are using “bad” words to provoke parents.)

Relax: Anger is a high-arousal state, so one of the most helpful things we can do is engage in an activity that lowers our blood pressure and heart rate, helps us breathe and think clearly. Yoga, stretching, running, practicing deep breathing, walking around the block, or meditation can all help calm the body and the mind. With more oxygen to the brain, we usually think more proactively and can be less reactive to situations that frustrate or hurt us in some way.

Relinquish your anger: If angry feelings about a particular person or situation are continuing to disturb you and none of the above proves helpful, try doing what may be the most courageous and difficult thing of all: let the anger go. If the anger is based on some old wound deep inside, letting go can start a healing process. Many things in the world need changing, but anger saps our energy and our motivation after a short spurt. While anger can “get us moving,” in the long run of change, our energy and heart need to be focused and present in the moment. Sometimes letting go of anger means just turning and walking away from a situation you cannot change or repair.

<p style="text-align: center;">Week 18: Handout B TYPES OF AGGRESSION</p>

Primary Physical Aggressors

- Individuals who use their personal and physical power, including violent behavior, to control their partners.

Self Defense

- When a person is trying to escape a violent incident, they may use physical force to escape the threat. Self-defense classes teach a person who has been a victim to be smart about how to use defensive force since often the attacker is more willing to use damaging or lethal force.

"Never-again" mode (or secondary aggression)

- After years of abuse, these individuals move into a survival mode of thinking "no one is ever going to hurt me again," and may use violence to decrease their chances for further victimization without a clear and present threat.

(Reference: Hamlett, N. (1998).)

Boundaries = Respect

(Crossing these boundaries might indicate anger or a desire to punish. These boundaries are important for every relationship, including parent and child. Do we agree as a society on these boundaries? Where might disagreements exist?)

It's not ok to hit me

It's not ok to lie to me

It's not ok to steal from me

It's not ok to destroy my property

It's not ok to put me in danger

It's not ok to yell, cuss, or call me names

It's not ok to hurt my feelings intentionally

It's not ok to touch me inappropriately