



Loosen the Grip of Anger

A Cognitive Behavioral Approach to Anger Management

 **Wales**
Counseling Center, PLLC

Sedrick W. Jackson, LCSW

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Introduction..... | 2 |
| Chapter 1: Understanding Cognitive Behavioral Therapy..... | 5 |
| Chapter 2: Discovering Where Anger Stems From in Every Person..... | 10 |
| Chapter 3: Identifying the Personal Beliefs and Attitudes that Lead to Anger..... | 21 |
| Chapter 4: How Cognitive Behavioral Approach (CBT) can help you manage your anger..... | 34 |
| Conclusion | 54 |

Introduction

A Little Bit About Human Emotions and How They Affect Us

“Emotion”, is just another word for feeling. A technical definition of emotion would be *a set of experiences that is subjective, defined primarily by its psycho-physiological reaction, bio-chemical reaction and overall mental state at a time.* We feel these emotions because of the physical environment around us, and because of certain events that take place which affect us.

While these feelings are vital to our survival and interpretation of our surroundings, it is important to note that an excess feeling of some of them can be very harmful. When certain negative emotions persist over long periods of time, they may have the effect of causing distress, dysfunction, deviance and danger to their social surroundings. These add up to a psychological abnormality. It is therefore a must to be a master of one’s emotions.

Anger: The Good Side and the Bad Side

Anger is the one emotion spoken about in detail here. This is because anger is one of the most dangerous emotions to your social surroundings. If you cannot control your anger, you may hurt someone you care very much about, and then regret it later. *Anger is the emotion that arises out of a perception that you have been wronged in some way.*

This perception, whether it is true or not, has the capacity to manifest into this negative feeling, where your mind tells you to seek revenge.

Anger is sometimes seen as a positive emotion, because it gives you motivation to achieve your goals. This boost in energy and focus can sometimes help you get done with tasks with more efficiency than when you are not angry. Unfortunately, an excess of this emotion can disturb the normal sequence of a person's life. This is because of the negative bodily reactions it has as well as the mental blocks it can create.

Being angry has the effect of increasing a person's blood pressure, among other physical reactions. Patients who have heart related issues should be in control of emotions which can cause them harm in such situations. Aggression makes it difficult for people to think straight. This may lead to them harming both themselves, as well as the people around them.

What You Can Do to Control Your Anger

Today, there are various different approaches to controlling your anger. While this remains true, the first step of controlling your anger is the hardest: accepting that you may require professional help. If you are suffering from a syndrome where you are perpetually angry, you do not realize how much you hurt the people you actually love without realizing it. Nobody is capable of changing your ways apart from you. The first step is acceptance. Shed your ego as much as possible. It is a daunting task, for your mind plays tricks on you to protect your ego.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

If you have completed the first step, then you have already come a long way in being the master of your emotions. Here, you will read about a specific technique used by many psychologists today, called Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). CBT is basically the process of changing behavior patterns of a person by simply helping the person understand the reasons behind the behavior. It incorporates a method of reasoning for you to heal yourself from a mental ailment. It works just as well with a chronic aggression syndrome.

CBT incorporates different approaches in psychology and uses our understanding of the human mind in therapy. This book helps you comprehend the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual reasoning behind feeling anger. The simple understanding of the process and reactions that the body is designed to undergo when it feels the emotion may be enough to be able to rise above it, rather than succumbing to it.

Advice to the Reader

It is more important to understand that not only can persistent anger lead to major physical and medical ailments, it may also cause severe damage to decision making, as it can cloud your judgment. Whether you have chosen to read this for the sake of someone important to you or for yourself, remember that it is only you who is capable of changing for the better, and no piece of writing can do it. This book should only be

used as a guideline by which it may facilitate the process you have already started by choosing to read it.

This book has many exercises for you to practice. These exercises are ways to let out the anger from your system in a safe way. Focusing your energy on something other than your social surrounding can also be done in many ways. One of the most commonly used ways is through a process called catharsis. This means venting through sports or different physical activity. Keep in mind that this book is simply pointing you in a more beneficial direction. If you feel that you can improvise certain techniques to suit your subjective needs, then that is a great thing. Go ahead with it.

Chapter 1: Understanding Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is a psycho-therapeutic process by which a person is made to rationalize in order to find out the reasons behind feeling a certain emotion, or suffering a psychological ailment. It is commonly used today for its broadness and incorporation of various psychological schools of thought. Proven to work in multiple scenarios, CBT is often used for people who may suffer from maladaptive behavior or dysfunctional emotions.

Mood Disorders and Issues in Treatment

There are many mood disorders that arise as a consequence of anger. They may go to the extent of becoming as severe as a major depressive disorder such as a bipolar disorder. The problem with the emotion anger is that it involves the ego. When the ego is hurt, rational reasoning may sometimes work out to be futile. Another problem is that anger is not the same as depression. When people face a psychopathological syndrome which involves depression, it is a matter of a lack of self confidence and past experience which may have led to a major depressive episode, but anger, on the other hand boost the importance of ego in a person's life.

Beck's theorem clearly propounds a self fulfilling prophecy wherein a certain experience leads to a certain behavior. A similar experience will therefore bring upon a similar reaction in all scenarios according to most people. Due to this conditioning, it is very hard to get a person out of the vicious cycle that involves emotional instability. When it is aggression, therefore, it is vital to keep in mind that it is an emotion which accelerates cognition rather than depresses it, and motivates you to retaliate to situations which bring about the perception of having been wronged.

Finally, another problem in treatment of a disorder is the fact that people are unable to accept the fact that they might have a disorder. Many of us would feel worse than we already do when another person categorizes a certain quality as a disorder and then suggests seeing a

psychiatrist. Even if a disorder is diagnosed, it could be very challenging for the person to categorize himself or herself as a person with a certain mental disorder.

Clinical Studies of Cognitive Behavioral Aggression Therapy

There have been many cases to prove the usefulness of CBT for aggression. Studies have shown that specific processes and designs of cognitive behavioral aggression therapy are helpful for people who suffer from such issues. Certain studies show that people who are suffering from such anger issues can be helped by these techniques when they are ordered correctly based on intervention phases which are specific to the patients themselves.

By this we can understand that a psychological or emotional problem a person faces is not a generic disorder due to the degree by which it affects someone. Instead it is specific, and therefore should be treated specifically as well. This book allows you to understand the concept of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and use it as a process of self healing. Always keep in mind the good that can come from it, and remember that your family and loved ones are appreciating the amount of effort you are taking to change yourself, in order to ensure their safety.

Thought and Feeling: The Harmony in the Human Body

There are multiple theories of emotions in psychology. While some theories believe that emotions are interpretations of physical responses

of the body in certain environmental scenarios, it is more commonly thought that people interpret certain situations and then based on their perception feel specific emotions.

Anger in this definition is an emotion that is essentially a survival based emotion. It is one of the basic emotions a human feels, and probably exists as part of our limbic system. In this animalistic part of the human brain, the emotion anger is designed to function in times of danger, where the fittest must kill their enemies in order to survive. This rush of emotion was meant to ensure our aggression to defeat our natural surroundings in order to survive. Evidently, in such a situation, anger helps stimulate hostile feelings, which are important for survival.

However, in a more cultured world today it is used as a tool for motivating people to maintain their pride and protect their loved ones from those who try to bring harm to them. Anger is therefore so deep seeded in the human psyche that it is very difficult to change a person who resorts to it without much thought. However, now that you know that anger is in all probability an animalistic function, you may start to understand exactly how dangerous it is, now that we are in a world where it is not a necessity.

CBT Basics for Self-Use

Do not be afraid of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy as it is a self healing process. It is easy to practice. A good way to start is to play out certain situations in your mind, instead of actually waiting for the situation to

present itself in reality. Take the example of someone accidentally tipping your coffee over. You can picture a scenario where you enter a Starbucks just before you go to work, and while you walk back to enjoy your morning latte, a person shoves you to get in front, and accidentally causes you to spill your coffee.

This scene could bring a lot of aggression to anyone. It is your responsibility however, since you are now rehabilitating yourself, to be the bigger person. What are the possible outcomes of this set up? It is most likely that you yell at the person. Perhaps you even insult him, insinuating retaliation from his side. Worst comes to worse, this could even end up in a physical fight. Now that you know that all of this can happen, you might wonder how it has helped you. Suppose you even win the fight at the coffee store, let us see what it has done to your day.

Your morning has been utterly ruined. Yes, because of another person, but it is now your life we are talking about. One in which that person is continuing with his life without a thought about your hectic and distressing morning. You could be late for work. You may not have a chance to get your morning dose of caffeine. You are in a foul mood for the rest of the day. You may even put this pent up anger on others at your workplace and perhaps at home later. When you consider all these consequences, that one insult appears as pointless. You might as well have simply accepted the other person's apology and moved on, irrespective of how much it would make you want to retaliate.

Chapter 2: Discovering Where Anger Stems From in Every Person

Many a time, you find yourself in retrospect, thinking that in the spur of the moment, there was no other way you could have reacted to a certain situation. Keeping your cool can only start with you first understanding that while people continue to call emotions ‘expressions of the heart’, they are irrevocably functions of the brain. Defense structures set up for the purpose of surviving in threatening situations: a function of our limbic brain system.

The limbic brain functions refer to considered actions of the “low road” of the human brain. Predetermined thought and action is what is considered as the “high road”. The high road of our brains is what determines our superego. The superego is responsible for taking into account what we consider moral and just. Our entire value system is controlled by the other part of the subconscious. According to Freud, human mind is made up of the id, ego and superego. The id is the part of us which strives toward attaining pleasure. Our hunger drives, sex drives and even the need to retaliate, all come from this part of the subconscious.

The ego is the mediator. Through rationality it acts as the executive power in a person’s mind. Depending upon the situation, it allows the body to react in a certain way, based on either the id or the superego’s intentions. What is important in all of this is the fact that the ego is our own decisive power. Though it is considered a part of our subconscious

mind, through practice, we can override the subconscious and convert our rational decisions into habits.

Identifying Sources of Anger and Unlearning Previous Behavior

Let us indulge in an activity to relieve stress and frustration. Using conditioning techniques, here we are supposed to gain prizes for every time we do not get angry, even though the situation seems as though it demands that you do. This activity, however, requires a good and strong will power. You have to force yourself to follow the rules; otherwise this technique will be a fruitless endeavor.

Operant conditioning techniques are based on learning behavior through positive and negative reinforcement based on sequence of events subsequent to a stimulus. We will avoid punishment for obvious reasons. Think of something you like very much. Take the example of chocolate. If you are fond of chocolate, then whenever a situation arises where you would have normally lost your cool and you did not, reward yourself with a chocolate. This is your positive reinforcement. For the sake of the reward you will slowly change your behavior. This process is easy if you are learning for the first time. Since we have to undergo the process of unlearning previous behavior patterns we must incorporate some negative reinforcements as well.

A negative reinforcement is something you like or need that you do not receive in the event that you lose your cool. If you get angry at someone or with something and react to them, prevent yourself from having

something you like. Suppose you enjoy a cup of tea in the evenings. Then disallow yourself from that 4 p.m. break that is so dear to you. As said before, this exercise takes a lot of self control and will power on your part.

Note to the Reader's Family

Though this is a self help book, it is integral to the reader's growth that you are supportive of the steps being taken to refrain from aggressive behavior. It is up to you to ensure that you are supportive and not oblivious to the active change that is taking place. Regardless of how little progress has been made, it is your duty to understand that the first step is always the slowest and hardest. Also understand that the reader is taking such actions only for your sake. If you are not supportive of this venture, and if you do not take an active role in this change as well, then the process becomes that much harder for the person trying to let go of habits that have been learnt over many years.

Understanding Normal Anger and How Unhealthy Anger is Different

Let us get back to our normal course. This section is about one of the categories of anger: normal anger. This kind of aggression is what is socially acceptable. It refers to using aggression or feeling anger in certain events where you are protecting somebody. Officers in the army use anger as a powerful tool to train forces to be more effective.

There is an old tale about a saint who was passing through a village. The saint was stopped by the townspeople and warned of a snake that would kill all those who pass by the road through which the saint was supposed to travel. Through divine power, the monk reformed the snake in order to keep the villagers safe. Years later when the same saint happened to return to the same village, he found that the snake has been badly beaten up and is being used as a toy by the children in the village. Again by way of his divination he asked the snake what the problem was, and found that since it was not aggressive any more, it was being hurt by others. Later the monk explained that he had trained it not to bite, but said that it was the fault of the snake not to hiss to keep danger at bay.

Using the same concept, it is vital that in situations where you are being taken advantage of, being hurt, or watching others being hurt, it is a good thing to become aggressive. This is again a function of our animalistic nature. Since human beings are essentially social animals, it is only normal that we are wired to protect others whom we care about. The trick to managing anger issues is to determine where we draw the line from normal anger to anger that is unhealthy for you and your society.

To sum up, we are allowed to react aggressively, just enough to scare, in the event of self defense, protection, when someone has been unjust and only a few other reasons. Be wary of using this to your advantage to aggress, because even these events have borders to normality. If you are on the field while playing soccer, and you are fouled, and the referee

simply ignores it, it is okay to get angry. In this same situation however, it is wrong on your part to hurt the person back if it was a mistake. Once again there is a discrepancy. If the foul was intentional, or if the referee is against you, then it is up to you to decide whether you wish to let it go, or decide to deal with the issue all by yourself.

Knowing What Unhealthy Anger Is

While we have gone through what 'normal anger' is, it is equally important to know what unhealthy anger is. Unhealthy anger refers to aggression which is not socially acceptable. Long periods of aggression, or prolonged anger, is very bad for your physical, emotional, spiritual and social health. Physical symptoms include high blood pressure and other cardiac problems. If you already have a predisposition to a cardiac disorder it makes your condition that much worse. Anger simply fuels your weakness since the bodily responses of anger is complimentary to a high blood pressure.

You may find that you are grinding your teeth or clenching your fists when you are angry. These reactions are subjective, meaning that they differ from person to person. However, it is true that these are also universal signals of anger, which means that it is embedded in our DNA. According to psychologist Paul Ekman, every human has a chain of bodily reactions to an emotion. The interesting part is that these reactions are universal, regardless of race, class, creed, age or sex.

A teenage boy from the Ghana will have the same bodily reaction and biochemical reaction as an old lady from Manhattan when they feel the universal emotion of anger. This reaction happens in one fifth of a second, however what is important to note is that since we all react the same, we can identify exactly what to do to prevent our emotional reactions from harming us.

Some other bodily reactions are flushing cheeks, feeling a prickly sensation under your skin, becoming numb due to the blood rush and even temperature changes in our bodies. Now the question arises that since it is an involuntary reaction, how can we control it? While many claim to be able to control their involuntary reactions through different practices such as meditation or martial art, we are not all cut out to becoming a sensei of some kind. Instead, we may simply prepare for situations so that our bodies will already know how to react in a given multitude of scenarios.

Incorporating martial arts or meditation is in fact a good idea, because while they may not help you control involuntary bodily actions, they will surely act as a means of catharsis (stress relief), understanding your own body and overall peace of mind. "Mind over matter" is our new motto. Perhaps watching some funny videos about people going into unnecessary rage is a good way of ridiculing our own problem. It also helps us see how fruitless it may be to get angry in certain situations. The Adam Sandler and Jack Nicholson movie called "Anger Management" is a good place to start. Undergoing therapy similar to

that would be much more tedious. The point is to learn the ability to laugh at our shortcomings.

Coping With Anger and Some Unhealthy Coping Strategies

Unfortunately, this section does not give us anything to jest about. Here we discuss the different ways in which people may end up substituting venting out at others. While refraining from lashing out is a good thing, the frustration could lead to alcohol or drug abuse. This is simply giving into one of the body's defense mechanisms. We all have different methods by which we cope with frustrating phases in our lives. Most of these structures are negative for us. Being aware of these makes it easier for us to realize which of our habits is and is not a defense mechanism.

Totally there are variations of eight basic defense mechanisms. The most predictable of reactions is denial. The first time you are told that you have an issue and may require professional help, you will deny it without much thought. Repression is another. This is quite a dangerous way of coping, where you keep everything bottled up inside you. Eventually this may cause you to have an emotional explosion because of your pent up rage. This may cause more harm to yourself and others around you when compared to regularly aggressing, and getting your emotions out of your system.

Another of these coping strategies is rationalization. This is what we are trying to incorporate in CBT. It refers to thinking out the entire process

in your mind and trying to reason as to why it is needed at all. If reason dictates that it is an unnecessary reaction, then it is best avoided. Be careful if you are a person who incorporates this mechanism while coping. Try to make sure you do not go overboard by becoming entirely passive in all situations.

Displacement is the worst defense structure for those in your surroundings. The proverbial boss fires man, man shouts at wife, wife beats kid and kid kicks dog is a raw explanation of what displacing your anger can achieve. Putting your anger from one person onto another or breaking things in the process of releasing stress is not the right way to manage difficult situations. You may end up hurting people you care about and later feel guilty about it.

This same displacement is what may cause binge drinking or an overdose of drugs. If you are a person who is short tempered, then it is up to you to realize that this vicious cycle will lead to you becoming a chronic alcoholic, solving absolutely nothing. While drinking may reduce your stress at a given time, it also removes inhibition, which means your expression of aggression will be far more extreme and violent. Also you may damage your liver, your kidneys, your stomach and your lungs if you resort to such measures.

Regression does not happen very often. It refers to a person going back to a previous stage in their developmental cycle. If you are a person who is told that you are acting childish and cranky simply because you are not getting a chance to express your anger, then it is likely that you have

resorted to this defense structure. Even this form of stress relief is quite dangerous.

Your condition can go to the extent of causing you dysfunction in your work environment or home. If you are encouraged when you have put on this façade, it could go to the extent of harming your finances, your capabilities and even any improvement in your anger issues. You will simply start to throw tantrums. Furthermore, your social life will deteriorate badly.

Reaction formation and projection are another two forms of these coping strategies that people have. Reaction formation implies that you are putting up a front where you appear to completely abhor violence. Unfortunately this does not change how you essentially feel or react. While you may seem to be the epitome of peace, it is likely that your violent outbursts will continue to occur. Projection on the other hand is blatant denial, where you keep telling yourself that another person is angry and you are not.

Sublimation is probably the only positive defense mechanism. This approach sees that you take out your frustration by channeling the pent up energy in something that is productive, such as your work or some form of physical activity, like body building. This process is otherwise what we call catharsis, and very good for you regarding the activities through which you release your stress.

Getting Rid of Unhealthy Coping Mechanisms

This exercise helps in destroying some of these coping strategies. Assuming that in your tempers you use foul language, we will try to make a difference. Pretend that you belong to a royal family of the olden times. Perhaps act like a duke or a duchess. Consider restricting this behavior to speech alone. It would be quite embarrassing to walk around in a gown. In this scenario, you are not allowed to use terms that are even slightly offensive while you speak. Whether it is normal speech or when you are shouting at someone, make sure you only use language that is acceptable by these new standards.

Make a list of the words of insult that you have a habit of using. You may take the help of a friend, so that you get an outsider's perspective. Now find replacements to these words that would be accepted even if they were used by a kindergarten teacher. Whenever you feel the need to express yourself using these terms, make it a point to maintain language within the limitations that you have set. Use only the words that fall under the replacements category. There is absolutely no harm in getting creative. Just try to avoid anything that is hurtful.

You may even integrate multiple exercises. Reward yourself every time you use a substitute word instead of saying something insulting or humiliating. Keep in mind that this is not a very easy thing to do. Even for those who do not have any temper issues will tell you that it very hard to maintain a cultured tongue at all times. Do not get frustrated if at any point you have an outburst and feel that all your therapy has

been destroyed in the matter of seconds. Simply keep the event in mind and be more prepared the next time.

Using Breathing Techniques to Cope With Anger

This is an age old technique to manage stressful situations. First developed in ancient India, different breathing exercises are used to maintain body balance in stressful times. Your body is designed to react in a manner where you take short and frequent breaths when you are angry. This is because your heart rate increases progressively.

Controlling your breathing and taking deep, long breaths can be effective in controlling your anger as well. Try to maintain a normal breathing or even a more passive breathing when you are in a rage.

Actively take up this challenge. It is quite effective.

Pace your breathing in accordance to what is normal, and if you are feeling aggressive, then slow it down beyond what is required. Your concentration shifts from the frustrating situation in front of you to controlling your breath. This is a technique that uses displacement in a healthy manner. After you are in control of your actions you may resolve the situation in front of you.

If this is becoming too difficult, then perhaps indulge in a different activity, say listening to or playing music. Once you are in rhythm, try and pace your breath with the beat of the song. Singing is an excellent way to release stress. It already requires perfect breathing and breath modulation so that you may get the timing of a song right. It is definitely

advisable to consider utilizing music that is not violent in nature. Trash metal may not exactly improve your mood.

If you have successfully got this far through of “Loosen the Grip of Anger”, then you will already start seeing results in your endeavor. Read and re-read so that you can continue practicing these basic exercises. They are helpful even if you do not suffer from a chronic anger syndrome. We are now ready to proceed to the next stage.

Chapter 3: Identifying the Personal Beliefs and Attitudes that Lead to Anger

There are a number of personal beliefs and attitudes that can lead to an individual having a negative approach towards life and which act as the source of the anger problems. These non-conscious beliefs, in most cases begin during childhood and adolescence and take a deep root in the years to come. Some of the common core beliefs and thoughts that lead to anger are:

- A feeling of mistrust or feeling exploited or abused by people.
- Verbal abuse by parents and guardians including shaming and criticizing the individual often in the presence of others.
- Controlling and invalidating the child
- Being vulnerable to being harmed by others

- Being emotionally deprived of mentoring, protection, care and concern
- Feeling or being made to believe that one is not worthy or good enough.
- Having witnessed abusive and strained relationships among parents.

In adults, the anger usually develops from the above or similar scenarios in life. It can also result from current life issues such as:

- Strained relationships
- Busy work schedules
- Stress
- Financial burdens
- Problems at work
- Unruly children
- Medical problems, etc.
- Feeling low and depressed

Cognitive behavioral theory suggests that it is not the event itself that distresses you; instead, it's the meaning you give to those scenarios. For instance, if you feel low, you might not feel like going to work and will justify not going for work saying that even if you do go, you might not be very active and just end up feeling worse. But you might not feel very content even while staying back at home. You might get constant thoughts about what your boss and colleagues might think about you

and believe that you are letting everyone down and are not an efficient employee, etc.

These negative thoughts will continue to bother you even in other situations even though in reality there may not be any reason to think negatively. Cognitive behavioral approach helps you identify and realize how your thought process works and encourages you to think differently instead.

If your parent did not express their love and concern towards you and just rewarded you for your academic success, you will obviously tend to feel pressured into getting good results in order to feel accepted and liked. Failure to get good grades will make you feel rejected and unwanted. This can be a good motivation to study well, but in case things do not work out as your planned or expected, it will affect your attitude towards life in general and negativism will begin to reflect in every aspect of life.

When you start to think negatively, you might start making self-judgments, make unconscious comparisons and also make false assumptions. These feelings are driven by some natural and hidden beliefs. Being unaware of our belief system makes us accept our first thoughts about someone or something and because we do not give it a deeper thought, we often end up being wrong. The idea here is to not let your belief system interpret the situation you are in or someone's behavior towards you.

If you want to master the technique of anger management you first need to be absolutely honest with yourself. If you are involved in an argument with someone, you must learn to take responsibility of your share of emotional reaction. Although people usually refuse to do so, it can be quite an empowering experience.

It is quite normal for us to experience failure in life every once in a while but if you feel very anxious or depressed about something you might interpret the causes of failure in a non-existent or exaggerated way. With a good understanding of the way you think about things, you will learn to stop considering yourself as a failure.

Ways to identify the effects of anger on your personality style

Anger and rage are common reasons for a number of personality disorders in young children and adults alike. In most cases the anger is linked to a difficult situation an individual and gone through or witnessed that has affected him or her adversely.

Very often anger results from jealousy and envy. If you feel jealous when you look at someone who you think is more successful than you, you will tend to have a bitter attitude towards them and might try to compete with them. The feeling of jealousy might result in anger when you are not able to achieve what you expected or were longing for. You might lose focus on the things that really matter in life and get overly obsessed with competing with others.

Selfishness is a common reason for anger in adults. Overly selfish behavior can make you insensitive towards others feelings. You will also refrain from expressing concern towards other people's problems and appear to be more conceited. Selfish people can eventually develop a strong conceited personality which can later take the shape of what is known as Narcissistic Personality Disorder. If selfishness is tackled during childhood, the chances of developing this disorder can be greatly subsided.

Selfishness among children can further give room for many other problems as the child grows. Selfishness can later take the form of possessiveness among teens and adults. Many couples face this as a common reason for strained relationships that even result in divorce. Spouses often feel overly possessive about their partners and show their selfishness often in the form of anger and rage when they feel neglected. This possessive nature with angry behavior gives room for rage and physical, mental and verbal abuse. Both partners end up feeling insecure in the relationship and are unable to carry out their normal responsibilities towards the marriage.

Inability to accomplish your goals might also trigger the feeling of anger and make you feel quite low and frustrated. In such situations you might take out your anger on your loved ones including your colleagues, friends, spouse or even your children. This situation calls for individuals to practice patience and either try to succeed again or move on in life.

If you have unresolved anger from childhood experiences, you must try and identify that problem and deal with it accordingly. It is very important to not let your past experiences hamper your present and future happiness. You obviously do not want those problems to manifest into some severe disorder later on in life. Anger and rage can hamper your progress in your workplace, family or academic career. As a parent you need to be particularly careful of controlling your temper as it can have adverse effects on the growth and personality development of your child.

Getting angry frequently and in many occasions without adequate reasons can also result in you jumping to conclusions and taking hasty decisions. You might judge a situation or a person too soon, failing to reach the desired solution or see things as it really is. It might be a better idea to control your temper and give a serious thought as to why a certain thing was said or done in a particular way. Taking hasty decisions can lead to failure and added disappointment.

If you are an individual with uncontrolled anger issues, it is also likely that you will suffer from severe mood disorders. This disorder can be commonly found in adults as well as children. You might experience sudden mood swings, feel irritated from time-to-time and also have a negative outlook towards everyone around you.

Individuals often vent out their anger on their family members at home and at subordinates at office. If you often get angry at others for not so important reasons, you might want to get to the root of the problem.

There is quite a possibility that on looking back, you may find that you could have avoided getting angry and in turn begin to feel guilty about it. If you decide to stay silent and do not acknowledge your fault it might also result in low self-esteem and later develop into uncontrolled anger problems.

At the same time, if you are at the receiving end of someone's anger, it might trigger anger in yourself as well, especially if you are aware that it is not your fault. You might begin to breed angry or negative thoughts about the person who expressed anger at you. It might make you feel suppressed or unwanted.

A very common behavioral and emotional disorder in children today is the oppositional defiant disorder (ODD). Children with this disorder behave in an undisciplined manner and get angry and defiant in most situations. This problem is very common in those children who have been bullied, adopted, or imitates angry parents or siblings. Parents who go through divorce are also likely to see symptoms of this disorder in their children sooner or later.

Arguing, getting angry, selfishness, annoying others deliberately, blaming others, spiteful behavior, etc. are all some symptoms demonstrated by children who have Oppositional Defiant Disorder. Unfortunately many of these symptoms go unnoticed by busy parents and inattentive teachers and peers. If the problem is not identified and treated in a timely way, it can pose serious consequences to the schools, families and society as a whole.

Physical manifestations of anger

Anger takes many forms like annoyance, irritation, and rage and every form is expressed differently depending on its intensity. Anger is expressed very commonly as physical and behavioral reactions. The way we react when we are angry is seen as a threat to our families and friends, our property, our identity, our self-image, and even ourselves. Once you identify the reasons for your anger, it is important for you to take a look back and try to manage this complicated and powerful emotion.

- **Physical reactions:** Getting angry can have a profound impact on your health. This is due to the fact that when you get angry, the testosterone production, arterial tension, and the heart rate increases and the stress hormone cortisol decrease. There is also increased stimulation in the left hemisphere of the brain. You may react to a certain situation that makes you angry by throwing an object at something or someone with the intention of causing damage.
- **Behavioral reactions:** These are reactions that we portray through our behavior that signals anger. Your facial expressions or tone of voice may easily depict that you are angry. You might also make known to others the reason of your anger. You might choose to talk to people who have hurt you and keep a low profile to let others know that you are still affected by the situation.

Refraining from expressing your anger and keeping it subdued within yourself for a long time can lead to many psychological problems. Individuals who choose not to confront their anger often suffer from health problems like depression, high blood pressure and hypertension. Very often such individuals will be hostile and cynical and have passive aggressive behavior.

Why you should take anger management seriously

While the experience of anger itself can be healthy for your development, mismanaged anger can have adverse effects on our personality and health. If you can manage your anger well, it can help you to make positive changes and also take a stand against injustice. If you react over aggressively instead, you will not be able to think rationally or make informed decisions. Intense anger has continued to be one of the main reasons of personal health, relationship and work problems. This can affect the overall quality of your life negatively.

Before the anger in you takes complete control of you, you need to make a conscious effort to manage your temper effectively. Do not ignore anger as a personal trait or something that is acquired genetically. You can use effective cognitive strategies to come out of anger.

- When you get angry for any reason whatsoever, try reasoning with yourself. Do this before the feeling of rage or intolerance begins. Ask yourself whether the matter is really that important or

will affect you in any way. Then ask yourself if you can justify your anger and find out remedial methods to handle that situation.

- Anger comes as a natural response and so you will have to make a conscious effort to talk yourself out of the feeling of anger. It might seem difficult at first but with time and practice it will make more sense and get easier to follow.
- You should also try and empathize in certain situations. For instance, if you come across someone who you find very annoying, try to come up with a logical reason as to why that person might be behaving the way he or she is. Put yourself in the other person's position and imagine how you would want to be treated.
- Distracting yourself in times when there is a trigger to anger is also an effective way to deal with a situation. Think about something else that will make you happy instead.
- If you are in a situation wherein you might possibly get very angry and have an outburst of anger, it can help to just walk away from the situation, even if you or others see it as a sign of surrendering. This can help you in cooling down and looking for a solution in a calm and composed manner. You can explain and tell the other person that you are walking away because you prefer discussing the problem when you are not as angry as you are at present.
- During a heated discussion, it might be very easy and tempting for you to delve into the past and talk about the bitter experiences you have had to make your point more clear. Although this might seem to be the best thing to do at that moment you must always try to focus on the present situation to help solve the problem.

- Before getting into a serious argument about something, try and assess whether the issue is really worth spending your time and energy on. Also consider if the issue is worth putting your relationship at stake.
- Instead of trying to win the argument, give priority to your relationship with the people involved. By doing so, you will automatically try to keep your voice and tone down and be respectful to the viewpoint of the other person as well.
- It is not possible to come to proper solution to an argument if you have made up your mind to not give the person involved another chance or to forgive him/her for their actions. If you want your anger to subside and save your relationship, you will have to learn to forgive. The urge to punish the individual will only make you more bitter and angry.
- When angry try dominating your thought by saying the word “stop”. This is particularly useful when you realize that there is no convincing reason to be angry in the given situation.
- Relaxation techniques can help come out of anger and anger provoking situations more effortlessly. These techniques comprise of deep and slow breathing exercises that help the mind and body relax. Try imagining a calming situation like beautiful scenery or a happy memory from the past. Practice this technique every day to make it a habit and remember it during circumstances that make you angry.
- Keep yourself busy with things, especially the things you like doing. This will help keep angry thoughts from developing in your mind. Listen to soothing music or engage yourself in a hobby.

- Eat healthy meals. Do not indulge in foods that can add to stress and sleep disorders like caffeine, oily food, etc. Cut down on alcohol and nicotine.
- Take part in physical activities like exercising or sports. This can be a fun way to take out your stress and relaxing your mind and body.
- Write down how you feel about the situation or a person and then tear and throw away the paper. Use this action as a symbol of not letting that thought affect you in anyway in future.
- Counting from one to ten helps some people calm down their angry feelings.
- If you constantly tend to expect that people are going to mistreat you, chances are that you will behave that way with them even when they don't. Instead, try giving your relationship a chance by building a feeling of trust and care for others.

Positive effects of changes in your life

Anger management can enable you to make life altering changes in your life. These changes can have a number of positive effects on the social, physiological and psychological aspects of your life.

- Making the right changes will empower you to recognize what triggers anger in you which will make you better equipped to control your emotions during situations that can make you feel frustrated or upset.

- It reforms your cognitive methods during upsetting and confrontational situations so that you will be able to calm down your anger and aggression effectively.
- You will achieve better communication and problem solving skills. This is owing to the fact that with your negative thoughts and false core beliefs out of the way, you can process your thought clearly and creatively.
- Managing stressful and challenging situations will be much easier and as a result you will appear to be more confident to others. This will also help people to trust you more.
- Proper anger management techniques can help lower the risk of many health problems that are linked to uncontrolled bouts of anger including sleep disorders, blood pressure, indigestion, etc.
- It can give you a second chance in repairing broken relationships.
- Those with a violent streak can learn ways to curb their anger in the initial stages itself, and control their physical actions.
- You will be better equipped to deal with the anger problems of your employer or loved ones. Being able to deal with an issue calmly and understanding the viewpoint of others without getting angry yourself can be made possible by adopting the necessary changes in your life.

Managing and controlling your anger can seem to be quite challenging and difficult but with the right mental and physical discipline you can receive many rewarding benefits.

Chapter 4: How Cognitive Behavioral Approach (CBT) can help you manage your anger

Anger can have a very negative impact on your life. It can strain relationships, hinder success, impair judgment and affect the way people see you. That is why it is very important to learn to manage your anger effectively. Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is a commonly used method of counseling for improving mental health. In this approach, a structured method is used to treat many mental disorders and basic stressful situations in life.

This approach is part of psychotherapy and allows you to be more aware of the negative or inaccurate thoughts that might be making a relatively normal situation as one that cannot be handled. The aim of this technique is to help you be better prepared to face your current life scenarios instead of your past problems. This method will enable you to break down an overwhelming situation or problem so that you can understand it better and resolve the issue.

Spotting typical anger triggers

The problem with most individuals is that they do not try to identify what makes them angry. In order to manage and control your anger, it is important to understand what actually triggers the anger in you. Anger is usually triggered by two main factors. Firstly, it could be a situation that could trigger the anger in you. Secondly, the trigger could be a person.

Situation: Let us take an example to get a better understanding of situational type of trigger. One of the most common triggers based on a situation is when you have to wait in a long queue. If you have to wait for a long time, you might start feeling frustrated or irritated. You will eventually start expressing your anger to people around you.

In this scenario, you must first try to identify what it is that is making you feel angry, which is waiting for a long time in a queue. Once you identify the trigger, you can handle the problem better. Find out if it is really worth the wait and if it is, then try and make the time more interesting by thinking about something pleasant or talking to your companion. The main idea here is to stop negative thoughts like blaming others for the situation you are in and reflecting on the ways to make the situation better.

Person: Anger can be triggered in you by some specific person or people. For instance, you might have a colleague or classmate whose mannerisms or talking style seems very annoying to you. You might not actually confront that person about what you feel about him or her but within yourself you feel tense or frustrated even at the sight of that individual. Just as you identified your trigger in the situational trigger scenario, you must identify your trigger in this situation as well. Obviously, here the trigger is the specific person you get annoyed with.

Try to understand what it is about the person that makes you angry. Maybe that person is good at something that you have tried but not succeeded at. Instead of being angry, you can try and work out your

relationship by being friendly and asking that person to help you out with some expert tips so you can get better at that activity too. When you take a deeper look at the situation you are in, you will probably realize that it is because of your inability to identify what triggers is what the real cause of your anger is.

In order to get a clear understanding of what triggers anger in your life, you can write down the situations or people that you tend to get most angry with and write down constructive ways in which the situation can be altered. In order to change the situation you might have to even make changes in your attitude. Lastly and very importantly you will have to identify why the situation or person makes you angry.

Some of the typical anger triggers are;

- Feeling of unfairness
- Name calling - directed towards you or someone close to you
- Finding out about something false said about you by someone
- Being yelled at
- Not being able to concentrate due to excessive background noise
- Being ignored by someone
- Being compared to someone, for example, a sibling or a co-worker
- Being laughed at, especially in the presence of other people
- Being accused wrongly
- Losing a game
- Witnessing a loved one being assaulted, etc.

When you become more aware of the triggers that make you angry, it will help you to anticipate your anger and also predict your response to the situation. Once you follow these steps, you will have covered a large chunk of the remedial process toward anger management.

Managing angry thoughts

Managing your angry thoughts effectively often begins by identifying when you actually get angry. Anger usually triggers some physical reactions in your body, such as:

- Increased heart beat
- Adrenaline rush
- Body temperature increases or reduces
- Tense shoulders
- Tightening of jaws
- Crying
- Knotting in the stomach
- Clenching of fists
- Shaky or feeling agitated
- Muscle tension
- Pupil dilation

These reactions may differ in intensity in different people and according to the situation. When you notice negative thoughts coupled with these reactions in your body, you need to realize that you will need to handle

the situation before it gets out of control and you have an emotional outburst.

Thoughts are generally of two kinds, helpful thoughts and unhelpful thoughts. It is these thoughts that determine how efficiently you handle a situation. A helpful thought is usually a positive or constructive thought aimed at bringing a resolution to your problem. An unhelpful thought is usually a spontaneous thought that arises in a given situation that is based on your inner core beliefs.

These thoughts are often considered to be an inner voice in your head that controls the way to think or feel about someone or something. If you start observing your thoughts you will see that most of the time the voice in your head very easily makes quite a few self-judgments. And most surprisingly, when you try to stop the voice it doesn't happen how much ever you try. It is these thoughts that combine memory and logic and interprets a situation and influences actions and decisions.

It can be helpful to write down the thoughts that come into your mind when someone or something makes you angry. Read what you have written after a few days. You will see that in most cases you will perceive the situation from a different viewpoint. This is because the lapsed time allows you to give the matter a deeper thought unlike the immediate thoughts that had a negative effect on the way you handled or might have handled the situation. By writing down and reading your thoughts later, you will be able to identify how and in what places your belief system is distorted.

If you set boundaries and expectations about how others should behave with you, you will find yourself constantly criticizing people of what they “are” doing and what they “should” be doing. This self-destructive attitude must be avoided as it will only make you more judgmental make you more annoyed with people when they do not meet your expectations. Instead respect the fact that everyone has the right to behave and do things the way they want to. Set realistic expectations in your mind regarding the person. If you find it necessary to express why the person should change something, put it in an appropriate manner.

The words that proceed out of your mouth also reflect your inner beliefs. You can observe the words you speak to spot unconscious beliefs that might be triggering an angry reaction to a given situation. For instance, let’s say you say to your friend that the heavy rains really annoyed you while on your way to work. This might suggest that the rains upset you but this is clearly not true. The reason for you to get upset would have been an underlying belief. You probably did not expect it to rain so did not prepare yourself for it by carrying an umbrella. This probably resulted in making you feel silly. But when you tell someone about it, you put the blame entirely on the fact that it rained and do not accept that you could have been prepared for it better.

Similarly you might say a lot of things that might appear to be true but the cause of emotion are really something else. It might be a difficult task to interpret and catch your own words and the assumptions behind them because your self-righteousness or ego might not let you catch

your own lie. In any case this is a critical step in making progress and so you must strive to achieve it.

Identifying and replacing unhelpful thoughts

It is important to differentiate between thoughts that can help you from unhelpful thoughts. Your way of thinking can have a great impact on your mood and stress levels. Thoughts may not be based on factual data and so they must be carefully assessed before your actions reflect your thoughts. Let us look at some ways to identify whether you are thinking of something in a way that is either unhelpful or unrealistic and look at how you can replace these unhelpful thoughts.

There are many common unhelpful thoughts that arise in an individual's mind.

- Predicting the future and expecting something negative to happen- This is a very common thought when you are worried about something. Instead of just waiting for the results, you start imagining what things will be like usually fear something might go wrong.
- Giving over-emphasis on the negative and filtering the positive points- Very often you might also pay too much attention to the negative elements and thereby do not enjoy the positive feelings. This attitude is very likely to develop a low self-confidence in you.
- Mind-reading, jumping to conclusions – Those who feel emotionally vulnerable are very likely to take things too personally

and be over-sensitive about something said. As a result, you are prone to make assumptions about why it was said in that particular way.

- Over generalizing – This is when you just assume that because one event did not go too well, all other events that you come across in future will also follow suit. For example if a neighborhood dog growls at you, you might generalize all dogs in the world as vicious.

Challenging these kinds of thoughts can enable you to improve your mood and also assist you in managing your angry feelings. The way to do this is to ask yourself some questions regarding the unhelpful thought.

- Ask yourself if there is anything that comes to your mind that contradicts your unhelpful thought.
- Try to identify the unhelpful thought from the list mentioned above.
- If your friend were in a similar situation, what advice would you have given him/her?
- Ask yourself if there is any benefit of thinking in that manner.
- Will you be thinking the same way after a certain period?
- Consider if there is an alternative way of handling the situation

Write down the answers to the above questions and points and come up with a rational approach to the problem. Take your time to resolve a problem. Hasty decisions are usually based on unhelpful thoughts. Understand that there are things that you just cannot control and so

there is no need for you to blame and get angry at yourself for something not working out the way you expected it to. If however, upon careful consideration you do realize that you could have done it better, take it positively and give it another try.

You can also consider confiding in a family member or a friend about the unhelpful thought you are facing. They might be able to understand your situation and help you overcome or cope with your problems.

Dealing with real feelings

Hunting down your real feelings about someone or something is very essential to understand what your core beliefs are. If you succeed in identifying the emotion you can easily see your specific beliefs about a given situation. For example, Jack has a stage performance but is very anxious about it. The feeling could be dismissed as Jack having stage fright or being afraid of rejection, but on further investigation the reason was not merely fear but also guilt.

Jack had a feeling that he was not as good as the other contestants and that the audience would not appreciate his performance. He also starts feeling annoyed with himself for not doing a better job preparing or regrets his decision to take part in the event. This gives us an idea of how Jack's inner beliefs and assumptions hamper his success.

Jack assumes that the audience will not be pleased with his performance, thereby ignoring the fact that the audiences have their own perceptions

and expectations. If he can determine in his mind that they may not be happy, he might as well have the confidence that his performance can receive positive responses. In Jack's case, the mind got worked up due to some false beliefs and assumptions and distracted him from the actual source of anxiety.

The best solution for Jack in the given situation would be to identify and let go of the false belief that was causing the problems. He can then focus on being himself and performing well on stage.

Changing angry behavior

Changing angry behavior is all about thy way you think and express yourself. Communicating the right way is very essential in going through a situation without getting angry or irritated. For instance, if your team member at work is regularly arriving late for work, it might not be right to use the word "you" excessively in your language as it might sound like an accusation.

Let us consider an example to imagine this situation. As a team leader, your role is to assign some specific tasks to every team member. One particular team member has been showing up late for a few days in a row, which has caused your overall work completion to be delayed.

You can deal with this issue by communicating to the team member in two ways. Firstly, your initial reaction would be (based on your thoughts) to say, "Why do you always come so late? It really upsets me when you

do. Due to your irresponsibility the entire team performance gets affected!” Instead of being angry at the person, you could speak in a gentler manner saying, “You have been coming late for work the past couple of days. Could you make sure you come on time from tomorrow? The team performance gets affected when even a single member does not complete the assignments in time.”

Changing angry behavior is about doing something differently to get better results without feeling agitated. This also includes putting your egos aside and making the right changes in your own behavior. Your changed thoughts will help you act and communicate better. Let us consider some strategies in cognitive restructuring that work towards changing your thought process.

- Refrain from using negative words like “always” and “never” when talking about others or even yourself. For example if you say things like, “I never get things right!” you are convincing yourself that the problem cannot be solved in any way and you also justify your anger.
- Use logic to differentiate between your positive and negative thoughts. When your mind is filled with negative thoughts, brush them aside with a logical explanation. This will help cool you down even when you think that your anger is justifiable in that situation.
- When you are angry, you might behave in a very demanding way. You will always want your way every time. Don't let your inner feelings like frustration, disappointment and feeling hurt turn into

anger. Be aware of your demanding nature and make a conscious effort to make changes.

Relaxation can be a very effective way of changing your angry mood. Find a way to relax your mind and body. As anger can affect your health, you need to take active measures to bring yourself out of this feeling. Giving your body and mind some peace and quiet can help calm you down and also help you sleep better. Consider indulging in some activity that you usually look forward to doing or something that you know helps you for certain. Make a list of all the things that can make you relax. Consider the following suggestions.

- Read a book
- Go for a walk or swim
- Watch a TV program you really like
- Go to a theater and watch a movie
- Engage yourself in some creative activity like a hobby
- Catch up with a relative or friend you haven't met in a long time or someone you enjoy spending time with.
- Take a long, relaxing, hot water bath. Light up some scented candles and read your favorite book or magazine to relax.
- You can also listen to a soothing piece of music while having a bath or otherwise.

Identify your individual interests and do those activities. It could be practically anything that does not exert your body and mind, making you more prone to angry thoughts. Once you identify the things that help

you relax, make it a habit to do those activities on a daily basis or as frequently as possible. This can help you get rid of your angry thoughts on the long run. If you get bored of doing the same thing repeatedly, try something else on your list of to-do things.

If none of the above seems to work, maybe you just need to take a break and let your anger cool down. Your anger could be a result of stress or responsibilities at home and at work. It could be that you are feeling quite drained out physically. An environmental change can be a good remedy for this situation. The change can be even in the form of doing things differently to help you feel better. For example, if you think you are bored of driving to work daily try taking the bus or train to work. In the same way find an alternative to every situation. This can help ease your anger and your daily activities will be less stressful.

Humor is also considered an effective way to deal with angry situations that can turn into arguments and lead to rage. When using humor as a way of changing your angry mood, make sure you do not use sarcastic humor that aims at hurting someone else's feelings or image. Also do not use it to laugh off your problems as this will not solve the real problem. Try to calm yourself down. Draw a picture that reflects your mood or the situation in a jovial way to stop feeling angry.

Unresolved issues in life can be a cause of the angry thoughts that keep emerging in your mind, changing the way you feel and behave with others on a daily basis. It can even result in irregular sleep patterns and

other health problems. You will need to deal with these issues at the earliest to discourage angry thoughts.

- Begin by identifying what the problem really is
- Note down possible remedies to those problems
- Choose the appropriate solution
- Make an action plan (decide how you should go about it)
- Execute the plan
- Review the results

On reviewing the outcome, do not be disappointed if you were not able to achieve the desired results. Examine what went wrong and consider alternate solutions to the problem. Take advice from someone else if required. It might also be possible to combine a few solutions together to come up with a foolproof plan.

Smoking, drug use, caffeine and alcohol can also impact your physical and mental health and affect the way you think. This implies that they might hinder self-control over your behaviors and so prove unhelpful in your efforts to deal with your anger problems. Some individuals drink alcohol so that they can avoid thinking about their problems. This usually is quite disadvantageous and is most likely to make things worse. If you are dealing with a severe anger issue, it is very important for you to avoid all possible triggers of angry thoughts.

Forgiveness is an essential part of anger management. It is quite normal for individuals to keep bitterness in their inner feelings about a

particular incident or person. In many cases, the unforgiving nature is often towards their own selves. This occurs when you know you are guilty of something like being the cause of harm in someone's life. It is also possible that you are taking responsibility for something you haven't really done. In any case it is important that you identify your reason for not forgiving. This process can be quick if you put your mind into it. Just make sure you release the feelings of resentment and anger that is within you.

There are 3 distinct stages in changing angry or aggressive behavior:

1. Making a commitment to change and becoming motivated towards that commitment:
2. Implementing cognitive strategies to implement that change
3. Maintaining the change for a long period.

Out of the above 3 stages, the maintenance stage is the most challenging one. It might be easy to learn skills to manage your angry thoughts but it can be very difficult for individuals to stay focused on maintaining the change. You can consider managing anger as a process that goes on throughout your lifetime. The success of your anger management program will largely depend on how well you maintain your changes.

Prevention is also considered as one of the best approaches to anger management. If you know how destructive your anger can be towards various aspects in your life, you should try to completely avoid or prevent

situations that you think will infuriate you. Anger prevention is the process of identifying triggers to anger and then going on to dissolve and even do away with the patterns in the mind that lead to those triggers.

Using assertiveness to avoid anger

Assertiveness is often confused with the term “aggressive”. If you communicate with a person aggressively, you are trying to compel the other person to do something by force. Aggressiveness is usually driven by a feeling of dominating others and angry behavior. Assertiveness implies communicating what you want or feel in a firm and appropriate manner. This type of communication is not driven by anger.

Assertiveness may not come to most individuals in a natural way. Especially those who are dealing with anger issues. Some shy away from being assertive due to a fear that they will not be liked by other people and because they feel they will be displeasing others by using assertiveness to communicate. Such a reaction is quite normal in those with passive behavior. If you are a person with passive behavior, you will usually agree to whatever others decide to do. For example if you are a member of a team at work, you will let the group make all the decisions just to avoid conflict.

This might not appear as a problem to you at first. In reality, what you are actually doing is making others feel that your viewpoint or feelings are not very important. This will result in others taking advantage of you or make them disregard you even in future. This can create internal

conflict in you and further lead to feeling of being victimized, resentment, stress, desire to take revenge, seething anger. Although there is a possibility of some unpleasantness involved when you choose to be assertive, you might end up jeopardizing a relationship if you are not assertive.

You may have to learn and practice this method of communication to avoid angry situations and to avoid confrontation. Assertiveness again is important to changing angry behavior by avoiding the “you” statements and being more polite while putting your message across to another person. Such statements will not strain relationships and make clear to the other person what you are trying to say.

In order to make sure that you communicate in an assertive way

1. Make sure that you are firm in whatever you communicate but avoid being angry or rude. You must always make eye contact while making an assertive statement. Your conversation should be direct and honest at the same time.
2. Keep your tone and voice gentle. You can let others know that you do not appreciate a certain behavior without having to shout. Of course your voice should probably be stern but you definitely should not be yelling.
3. Your body language must also be in sync with your tone of voice. Avoid pointing fingers or using abrupt gestures to make your point clear. At the same time do not stand slouched or be fidgety.

Instead stand or sit straight and look confident about what you are talking about.

4. Use I statements in these scenarios to take responsibility for what you are communicating.
5. Be ready to listen and recognize the point of view of others. Give the other individual enough time to express his/her views. Continue making eye contact even when you are listening to someone else's viewpoint.

When dealing with an angry thought, express your feelings using I statements. For example, "I feel frustrated and angry about what happened". Also make known how you want the problem to be solved. The above pointers will enable you to cope with your anger problems. When you express yourself appropriately, you will know you have done a good job when you see that the person or people listening to you feel valued and respect you in return.

On the other hand if you come across to them as passive or aggressive they might take your communication as something negative and self-righteous and might feel angry or vengeful towards you. There is a possibility that you might not see positive results from the person you are talking to but you need to understand that the other person has their own way of looking at things and have a right to feel the way they do.

It is also very important to take criticism positively. This is very difficult for most people to do because they often consider criticism as an insult.

Negative insult and criticism are two very different concepts. While a negative statement might be made with the intention of hurting someone, criticism is a chance to correct mistakes.

You must learn to take criticism in a positive way. Think of it as a chance to understand what others think about you or something that you did. If there is scope for improvement and someone lets you know about it, it can be helpful in getting better at that particular task. When someone criticizes you, don't get angry. Instead use assertiveness to get over that angry feeling.

For example, let's say your friend expresses his dislike for the way you have dressed up that particular day. Instead of responding rudely by saying, "You're so conceited, you don't exactly wear the best clothes yourself!" or feel depressed and admit to being a terrible dresser, you can do the following:

- Take it as a criticism that you can use to your benefit.
- Ask your friend why he did not like the shirt
- Ask your friend if another color would have been better.

If you are the one making the criticism, make sure that you do not sound negative. Criticism should always be followed by an alternative solution or an assertive remark. For example in the above scenario, the friend who is criticizing can say at the end of the conversation, what he/she thinks would be a better choice of clothing on the friend. Whichever side

of the conversation you are in, you should be able to accept or offer criticism in an assertive way.

Relapses in anger management

A final challenge in overcoming anger is facing situations wherein you might relapse into your previous habits of being angry, belligerent and aggressive. This might not happen during or soon after you have learnt cognitive methods for managing anger. As days pass by, you might encounter a situation where you might be at a risk of presenting aggressive behavior once again. There is a possibility that you may not realize that you are heading towards events that can lead you to becoming aggressive again.

In such times, if you do not have the skills required to cope with situation, you are likely to behave aggressively. If you find yourself in a similar situation you must remember not to give up on what you have started. It might be very tempting in that situation to give up and lose all faith in the Cognitive Behavioral Approach and to forget about all the knowledge and techniques you have learned about dealing with anger. Feelings of disappointment, confusion, anxiety, frustration and anger are common while going through a relapse.

The first thing to do after you have been through a relapse is to carefully examine the incident that caused the relapse. Identify what went wrong. It could be that you did not execute your techniques correctly or that the plan was not adequate to cope with avoiding the relapse. Using this

information you will be able to handle that and any occurrence or relapses in future. If you experience relapse again due to some completely new reason, you can add that to your list of anger triggers and find ways to cope with it.

Anticipating future lapses and trying to come up with solutions will help you to avoid the relapse from happening in reality. In order to ensure that you live a life free from anger and angry thoughts, you will need to dedicate ample time to become aware of your inner beliefs, personal dialogues and understand how they affect your personality and ways to alter those beliefs. If you expect results to show up in just one day or a short period of time, you are most probably not going to achieve success.

Conclusion

Now we have been through an entire course on anger management and loosening the grip it has on people. The Cognitive Behavior Therapy approach is specifically designed to incorporate multiple schools of psychological thought in order to treat mental illness or instability of emotions of any kind. Following these few tips has benefited many people; and may be useful to you as well. Using them might enable you to deal perfectly well with anger, angry people and even understanding your own body well enough to take control of emotion.

Dealing with Anger

Before we are able to deal with anger, we need to know what is happening to us when our body is reacting to a certain stimulus. Comprehending anger is the only way we will be able to master it. The easiest way is to prepare multiple solutions for multiple scenarios and your preferred and prepared reaction will come out instead of your aggression. However, it may be unlikely that you can consider all possible situations where you may get angry.

Another solution might be to check for bodily signs. If you find that you are standing with clenched fists and grinding your teeth, then you may want to practice one of those breathing exercises. Try to make breathing a conscious act. Though it is near impossible to do this all the time; practice as much as you can so that it simply becomes habit. Through your breath you can control many bodily reactions. Checking for other symptoms showing your anger will also soon become habit. This way you will be fully aware of the emotion that is sweeping over you. Pair this with the prepared scenarios and yours are already much ahead of your previous self.

Letting Anger Evaporate

Releasing anger is next to understanding it. Whenever you feel that you are being overpowered by your anger, then you must have a healthy way of releasing that stress. Some people make the mistake of resorting to unhealthy habits such as binge eating or drinking. This eventually

harms you and makes your problem worse than it already is. This is why we have been through sections explaining the different defense mechanisms people use in order to cope with stressful situations. You also know how harmful some of these coping mechanisms and what is a better procedure of stress release.

Breathing techniques are very helpful. They keep your body in control through an easy process. Catharsis, or stress release by way of using your energy in some form of physical activity. Perhaps you may enroll in some martial arts class or join the gym. This exercise does not mean that whenever you feel angry you should work out. Instead it involves regular physical activity so that none of your anger gets pent up at any point.

Get creative. It is an excellent idea to join some music classes. Singing or learning an instrument is an excellent medium through which you can release stress. Consider indulging in your hobbies more often than you do. If you like painting, then consider allocating more time during your week to paint. In this manner of projection, your emotion is being put to good use, rather than harming you and people around you.

Dealing with Angry People

If you are a friend or family member of someone who suffers from chronic anger, then you are in a situation where you have to continually manage situations, and at the same time try to change the person's personality. Unfortunately it is quite difficult to convince someone that they have a problem and should seek professional help. Denial is the

most predictable human reaction. Through a slow process, however, you may succeed in convincing them that a self help book may help.

Self help is probably the best kind of therapy. It is difficult for most of us to accept that a problem of ours exists and that we need a psychiatrist. Through some basic exercises and applying thought before action, anger can easily be controlled by a person. There are a lot of myths that whatever personality you are born with is what you stay with. The truth is that genetics only proves to affect us to the extent that we let it. If we choose to learn from our environment and through rational thought then there is nothing to stop us.

If you are someone who already has a predisposition to anger and are dealing with angry people at the same time, then you now have a few tricks up your sleeve. It is now your responsibility to help that person out with the issues they have, just as you were able to help yourself.

Understand that there are many people who may have a similar issue. Once again, using techniques that we have earlier discussed, prepare for a situation where you are confronted by someone who is angry. List out some possible reactions and choose whichever is the most acceptable.

Perhaps you can act it out with your family. When the situation does arrive, you may find yourself simply apologizing for nothing wrong on your part and letting it go. You will realize that it is a major improvement from the near past. The feeling of being the bigger person is quite rewarding.

Taking Time Out for Aggression

If you feel that your emotions are getting the better of you. Do not make the mistake of ignoring it. Consider keeping specific time out during the week where you dedicate your time to your emotions. Do not encroach on this alone time at all. Release stress in whichever way is most comfortable for you. You may incorporate multiple methods if you wish. In fact, it may be far more effective if you do.