



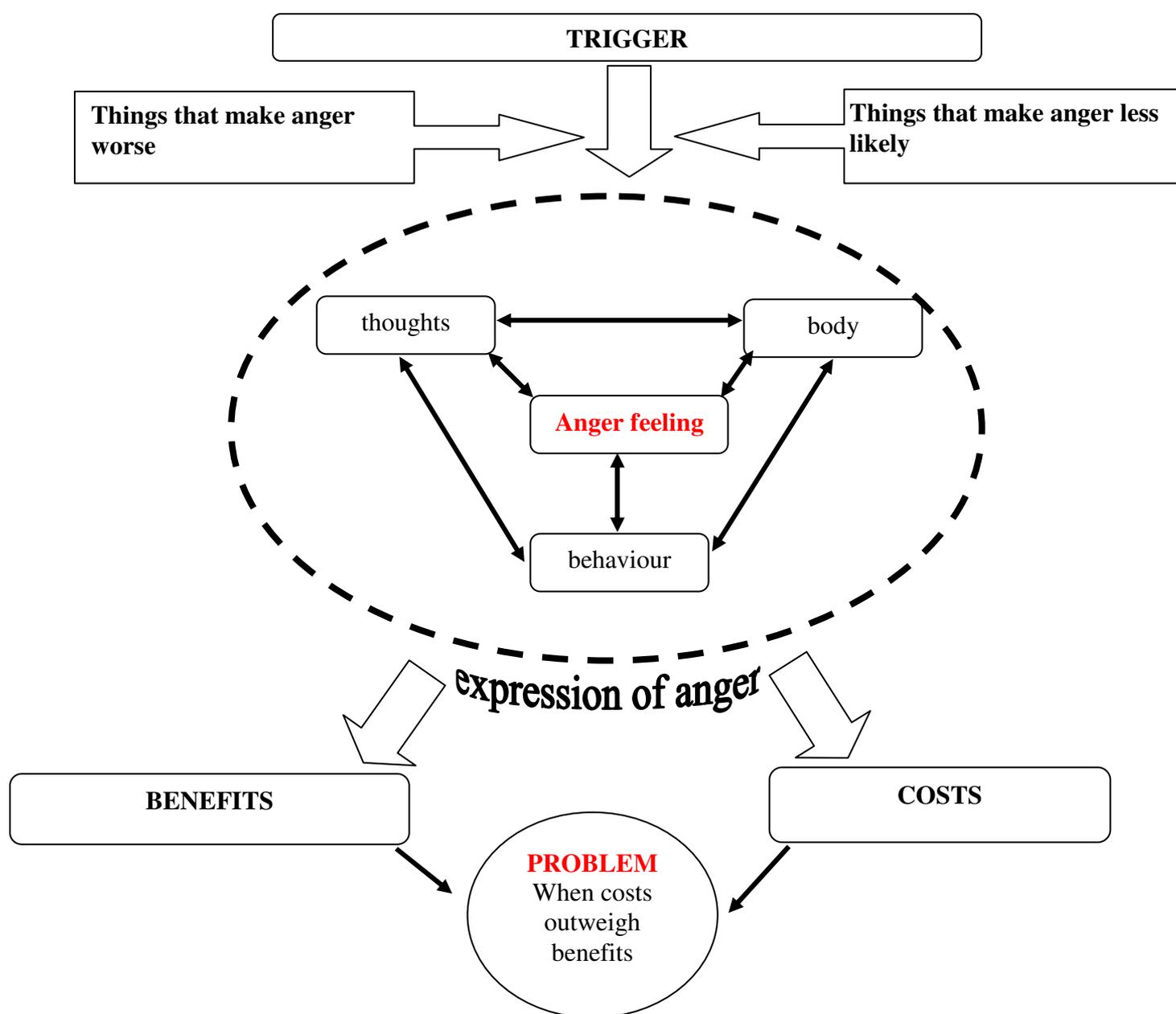
NHS Newcastle and North Tyneside Community Health

Anger Management Course Workbook

2. Quick Control

Where are we so far?

We are now in week 2 of the course and it might help to think back to the picture we drew up last week to help understand anger. Anger can be understood by considering the effects it has on your body, thinking and what you do. Anger is usually set off by hassles, frustrations, a sense of unfairness or feeling abused. There are times when anger can be helpful, but often getting angry can cause problems. Only you can tell if anger is a problem for you, but usually if the costs of anger are greater than the benefits of anger, it is a problem.



Recognising when you get angry

Being able to recognise when you get angry is the first step in getting control of your anger. Often the easiest way to do this is to be able to notice the bodily sensations linked with your anger. Noticing the early warning signs to your anger will help you keep control in a situation.

Bodily sensations

Remember, anger is a physical emotion and when you get angry your body responds. The sort of bodily sensations that you can look out for include feeling tense, sweating, breathing faster etc. These sensations are a reaction to stress and the technical name for this is the “fight-flight response”. This is something that is very ancient and goes back to when we were cavemen, facing life-threatening stresses such as attacks by large animals. The fight-flight response is very useful for life-threatening events because it alerts us to a threat and puts our minds and bodies on the alert. Chemicals (e.g. adrenalin) are released into our bloodstreams and our body changes to cope with the possibility of fighting or running.

Fight – flight

There are a number of physical reactions when our body goes into fight-flight including:

<i>Breathing increases</i>	to get more oxygen into the blood and blood into the muscles needed to fight / run.
<i>Pupils dilate</i>	to let in more light and improve your vision.
<i>Vigilance improves</i>	so you focus on the source of danger. This will make you feel keyed up and easily startled.
<i>Sweating</i>	this cools you down and makes you more slippery so you are less easy to grab.
<i>Stomach churning</i>	because your body is concentrating on being able to fight or run and not on digesting your last meal.

These changes all make you ready to fight or run. However, these days we do not live in caves and most times there is not really a life-threatening situation. Unfortunately, our bodies have not caught up with

us and we still get the physical reaction. If you frequently get angry or stressed the effect on your body can affect your long term health:

- ◆ Immune system
- ◆ Gastrointestinal problems (irritable bowel syndrome, ulcers)
- ◆ Blood pressure problems

Early warning signs

Although it may sometimes feel like it, you will not usually go from calm to angry in one quick step. There are usually some warning signs that you are becoming angry. These include:

- ◆ Feeling tense
- ◆ Losing your sense of humour
- ◆ Voice getting louder
- ◆ Breathing getting quicker
- ◆ “sizing up” another person
- ◆ seeing red / white/ black/ mist
- ◆ feeling very angry very quickly

Remember, all of these signs can be understood as a result of our body mistakenly thinking that it needs to prepare to fight or run.

Exercise 1: noticing when you get angry

Think back to the most recent time you got very angry and try to answer the following:

2. My early warning signs of anger (tick all that apply and add any others)

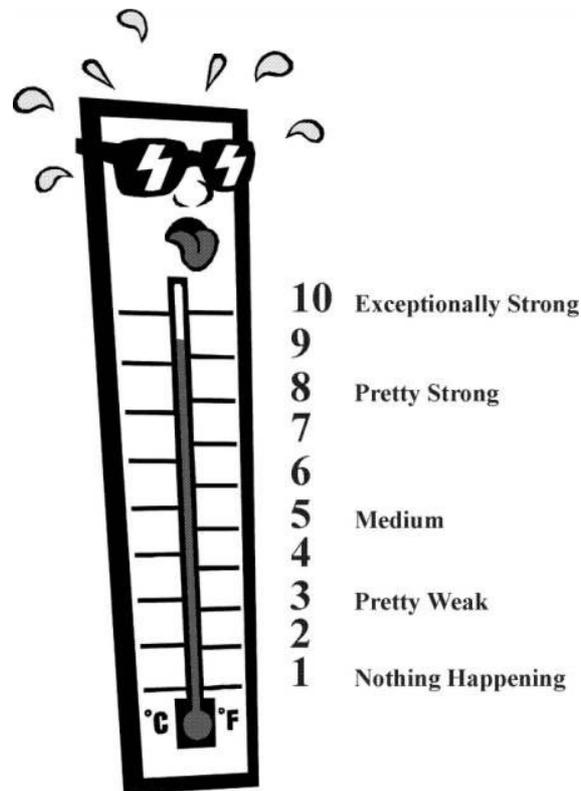
- tensing fists, muscles stiffening, jaws clenching
- Losing my sense of humour
- My voice getting louder
- My breathing gets faster
- I find myself “sizing up” another person
- I see red/white/black/mist

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Anger thermometer

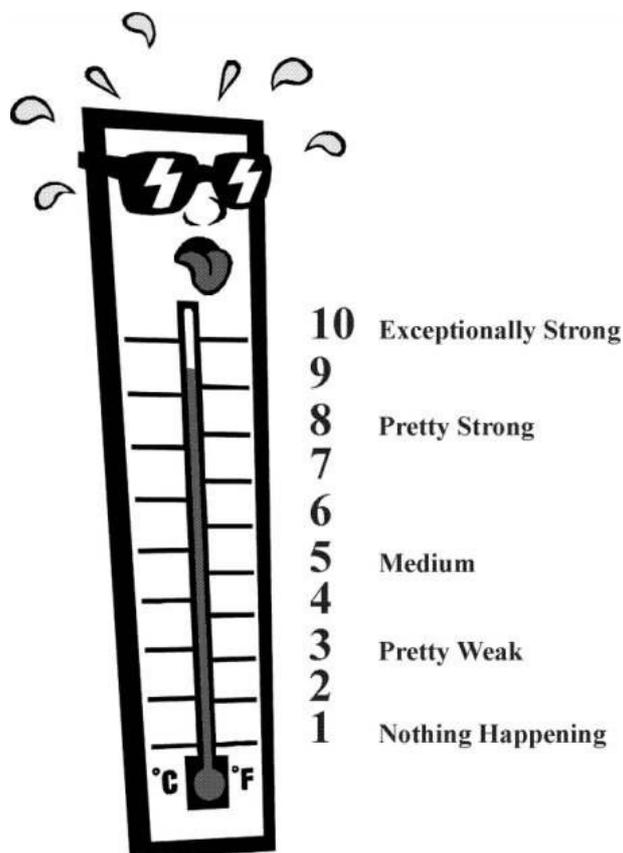
Using an anger thermometer can be a useful way of measuring your anger. Consider the following:



When your feelings change you go up and down on the thermometer. It is not possible to get from 0° to 100° without going through all the other temperatures. It is the same with anger, anger is not an all or nothing emotion, you move up the scale on the way to the top. When thinking about anger control you will need to do something before you get “too hot” and go too far up the thermometer. You can use your own words to make the thermometer make most sense for you.

Exercise 2: anger thermometer

Look at the thermometer below and rate how you feel right now. Listen to our imaginary scenes and rate how you would feel at each point.



Right now

Scenario 1

Scenario 2

Scenario 3

Scenario 4

Calm the Emotional Brain: Take SToC & Act

STOP, THINK of the Consequences & the ACT

The aim of this section is to learn to buy yourself some time so that you can act thoughtfully rather than react without thinking.

Time out

This sounds simple but can be difficult to do when it comes down to it. The idea is that you need time to think about what you are going to do to stop yourself getting angry. Think about a basket ball game, where if things are not going well the coach can call time out. The game then stops and the coach can spend a few moments with the team thinking about ways to improve their game. Ways in which you might buy yourself some time include:

- Walk away
- Count to ten
- Distract yourself
- Keep quiet / bite your tongue

Not all of these ways will work for you, different ways work for different people. Remember, the key to using time out successfully is to use it early enough, when your anger is below 5 or 6 on the thermometer.

Breathing

Breathing techniques are a bit like relaxation but are quicker to do. This is essentially a quick way to calm your body. When you get stressed your breathing can quicken and become shallow, increasing the bodily effects of stress. Correcting your breathing can sort out your arousal levels quickly and can be a way of switching off the “fight-flight” reaction.

When you are starting out with this it can be easier to lie down. Choose somewhere where you won't be disturbed and where you feel comfortable. Take a slow normal breath (not a deep breath) and think "1" to yourself. As you breathe out, think "*relax*"; breathe in again and think "2", breathe out and think "*relax*". Keep doing this up to 10. When you reach 10, reverse and start back down to 1. Try to put all else out of your mind. It may help to see the numbers and the word 'relax' in your mind's eye. If you feel dizzy, stop - something is not right.

For this to be a helpful strategy you will need to practise until you feel confident enough to try it when you feel yourself getting angry.

Diaphragmatic breathing

Place one hand on your chest and the other over your belly button. As you breathe in, the hand on your stomach should be pushed out while the hand on your chest should not move. As you breathe out, your stomach should pull in. Your chest should not move.

To help, breathe in through your nose, purse your lips and breathe out slowly through your mouth. If you are a chest breather, you may find this difficult at first. If you can't get the hang of this, lie on your back on the floor and practise as it is easier to do in this position.

Put these two exercises together and do them twice a day. Once you get good at them, practise when you are at work, sitting on the bus, watching TV etc. The aim is to be able to do this no matter where you are. No one will notice you doing them.

Breathing Retraining

Take a breath in and think "**1**"

Breathe out and think "**relax**"

Take a breath in and think "**2**"

Breathe out and think "**relax**"

Repeat up to **10** and then back down to **1**

Concentrate only on breathing and on the number and "**relax**" in the minds eye.

Use slow normal breathing (10-12 breaths per minute).
Breathe in through nose. Purse your lips and breathe out slowly through mouth.

Use the diaphragm - as you breathe in, your stomach should push out while your chest should not move.

As you breathe out, your stomach should pull in. Your chest should not move when you breathe out.

Practise twice a day in different places.

Progressive Muscular Relaxation (PMR)

Anger fills you with energy and tenses the muscles. PMR teaches you to manage this by:

teaching you how to relax the muscles
teaching you how to control your breathing

These two skills will teach you how to control your body. The easiest way to learn it is by using a tape/CD. You will get a CD in Class 2. It is yours to keep. PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING BEFORE USING THE CD.

PMR divides into three parts:

Part 1) Deep Relaxation

Part 2) Rapid Relaxation

Part 3) Prevention

PART 1: Learning Deep Relaxation

Deep relaxation is the form most favoured by experts. You will need a CD player.

One word of warning. If you have any problems such as a back injury and are concerned that PMR might make it worse, ask your GP for advice.

What is it?

PMR teaches you how to relax your body and mind. You first become aware of the way anger affects your body (*'I didn't realise that my shoulders were up at my ears all day'*). Once you become aware of this, you then use the CD to get rid of it. Once you get good at it, you will feel anger creep into your body at a much earlier stage, so you will be able to

nip it in the bud.

Like all skills, PMR takes time to pick up. You should expect that it will take a few weeks to even start to feel relaxed when you play the CD. Bear in mind that you are learning something that might be new to you or you might be out of practice with, so be patient.

Where should you play the CD?

Play it in a room where you can get some peace and quiet and where you can be warm and comfy. Try different rooms to see which is best for you.

DON'T play the CD while driving your car, for obvious reasons.

Should you sit or lie down?

Suit yourself. The best places may be the bed or the settee. You may prefer the floor. If you have a comfy chair (recliners are very good), you could use this. If you are prone to falling asleep during relaxation it may be best to sit up rather than lie down.

When should you play your CD?

Many people find it hard to find time for PMR. You must work at this. Perhaps start at aiming to do PMR 4-7 times a week.

What will happen when you play the CD?

You will hear a voice. You will tense and relax various muscles as instructed. The idea is that you become aware of the difference between tension and relaxation in your muscles.

The CD will then lead you to slow your breathing to a steady pace.

Toward the end of the CD, you will move onto ways to relax your mind. After the CD stops talking, you may want to just stay where you are to enjoy the relaxed feeling.

Please note that this is not a hypnotic tape so don't worry about going into a trance. You will be in complete control.

IF YOU EXPERIENCE ANY PECULIAR SENSATIONS WHICH MAKE YOU FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE, THEN STOP USING THE CD IMMEDIATELY & CONSULT A HEALTH PROFESSIONAL

9 tips to help you relax

1. Get as comfy as you can before you start. Take off your shoes and wear loose clothes. Make sure the room is warm. If you can, take the phone off the hook. Make sure no one in the house comes in the room while you play the CD. If they want to join in from the start then that is fine.
2. At first, you should play the CD when you are feeling fairly calm. You will be able to concentrate better. This will let you pick up the skill more quickly.
3. When you go to play the CD, you may think of all the other things you should be doing instead. This is a common experience when learning relaxation. Simply return your attention to the voice on the CD. You may have to do this several times.
4. As with learning any skill, practice makes perfect. So play the tape each day. Try to use it at the same time. Let relaxation come naturally. Don't try to rush it. When the feeling comes, enjoy it.
5. Use your Breathing Retraining skills to boost the relaxation. Practise slowing down your breathing to about 10-12 breaths per minute at various times of the day (use the seconds hand on your watch). This will help you keep your body calm right across the day.
6. PMR can leave you feeling nicely drowsy. Some people fall asleep. If you are one of them, don't worry, but bear in mind that you are learning a skill. So you will get more out of it if you can stay awake. If you need to be alert after using the tape, e.g. driving, make sure that you feel fully on the ball before setting off.
7. You may find that when you tense your muscles, you hold your breath. Don't worry, most people do this at the start. Try to keep the muscle tensing and breathing control separate.
8. Keep a diary. This helps you see if you are making progress. There are diaries at the end of this handout. Fill them in after each time you play the tape.
9. Keep playing your CD until you can relax well. At this point, you should switch to Rapid on track 2 of the CD.

PART 2 : Learning Rapid Relaxation

This lets you fine-tune your new skills. The idea is the same as before, except that now you can learn to relax more quickly. It is simply a quick version of what you have just learned. The same rules apply - play the Rapid track at the same time each day. As before, don't expect to pick it up at once. So don't be put off when it doesn't work first time.

If you want to play both tracks of your CD each day then go ahead - you can't get enough relaxation. However the whole aim of PMR is, of course, to teach you a way to control your anger. You should aim to reduce the amount you use your CD and eventually be able to relax without it. So your final job is:

PART 3: Prevention

.As you will be more alert to anger building up, you can nip it in the bud before it gets the chance to get a grip of you.

You do not have to run through all the parts of the CD. Stick to the bits you find best for you. This could be breathing control, relaxing your shoulders, etc. If you are with others, do the exercises, no one will notice.

In summary, you should:

- Start with Deep Relaxation / keep a diary.
- Play the CD every day until you learn to relax.
- Move to Rapid Relaxation.
- Play the CD every day until you can relax quickly.
- Prevent anger building up by nipping it in the bud.

Exercise

Always consult your GP if you are unsure about your fitness or general health.

As well as helping you to manage your anger there are proven health benefits to regular exercise. Exercise can help with:

- Blood pressure
- Weight
- General health
- Fitness
- Sleep
- Social life

Exercise is useful for using up the energy you get from being stressed (the fight-flight response). You should try to do 30 minutes exercise a day. Choose something that you enjoy, you do not necessarily have to put on the lycra and head down the gym! Simply going for regular walks can help. Remember to keep to moderate exercise and not get yourself keyed up by doing lots of vigorous exercise. Also you should make sure that you allow time at the end of your exercising to wind down. This is especially important if you exercise in the evening.

Avoid explosive exercise such as boxing, martial arts, rowing etc. This type of exercise usually feels good in the short term – letting off steam. However in the medium term it increases a person's physical arousal and in turn increases the chances of becoming angry more easily.

Humour

- ♦ Recent research has shown that humour and laughing can have positive benefits for emotional and physical health. Humour can be helpful for dealing with anger difficulties. It is not easy to use humour, when you feel angry, however finding the funny side of a situation or gently laughing at yourself for expecting too much from someone else will help. **Avoid**: ridiculing (taking the Mick), mocking, being cynical (seeing the worst in others), sneering or being sarcastic because this is disrespectful and can make the situation worse.

Summary

This week we have looked at the Anger Thermometer and you have thought about what your early warning signs are – these are often physical feelings such as your heart racing, tense muscles or seeing red. We have discussed how it is important that you notice these early warning signs of your anger, so you can do something before it goes too far.

We have looked at some ways of calming your anger:

1. Time out
2. Breathing
3. Relaxation
4. Exercise

Thinking for next week

This week you have been given a lot of information about ways to control your anger. To get the most of this information it would help you to do some thinking before the next class. You might like to begin by re-reading this workbook and thinking again about the exercises we covered this week.

Try out the techniques we have described, including:

1. looking out for early warning signs of your anger
2. taking time out when you feel yourself getting angry
3. practicing your breathing retraining techniques
4. using the relaxation CD regularly
5. building some exercise into your life

The ideas and strategies described in this workbook are based on high quality research. These strategies are tried and tested. They are unlikely to work first time so you need to persevere, practise and plan.

These ideas are probably not new to you and they are not the only way to stop or reduce your anger. You may already be doing other things that help. The key is, if it stops or reduces your anger then do it again!