



UNIT-1

What is Anger?

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Recognize how anger affects your body, your mind, and your behaviour.
- ✓ Use the five-step method to break old patterns and replace them with a model for assertive anger.

Unit 1

What is Anger?

About Anger

Anger is a universal experience; we all get angry from time to time. This course is not about teaching you to never become angry, or to hide your anger. It really is about managing your anger.

You don't have to be a psychologist to know that managing our anger is something we need to do well. The goal of anger management is to reduce your emotional feelings and the physiological arousal that anger provokes. You can't get rid of, or avoid, things or people who anger you, but you can learn to control what you do about it.

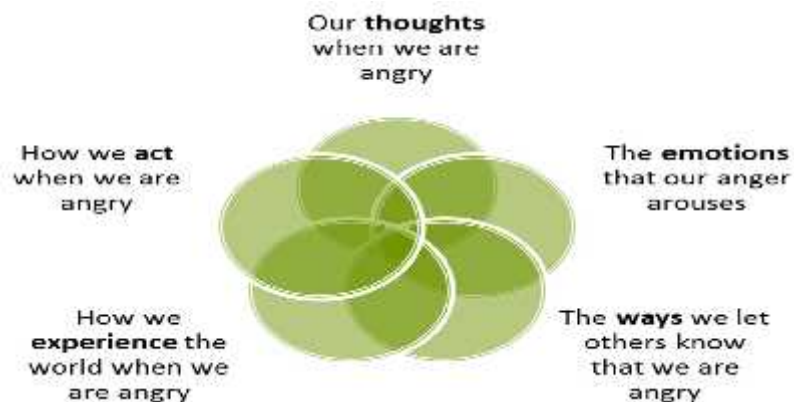
What we really want to do is to have a new type of relationship with our emotions; a relationship where we manage them rather than letting them manage us.

The most instinctive way to express anger is to respond aggressively. It is a natural way to respond to a threat, and it inspires powerful feelings and behaviors which help us fight back and defend ourselves if we are under attack. A certain amount of anger, then, is necessary for survival. In addition, **sometimes we resist saying what needs to be said** because we do not want to upset the status quo. However, without some degree of conflict, there may be no change or growth whatsoever, and that isn't good either.

Self-awareness is a key element for managing your own anger. The use of anger management skills presupposes that you know when you are angry and recognize that anger as a cue that something is wrong. Expressing your anger in an assertive, but not aggressive, way is safe and healthy.

The Five Dimensions of Anger

To understand and develop the skills associated with anger management, think of anger as five interrelated dimensions, all operating simultaneously.



For example, what you think when you are angry influences how you feel, how you feel when you are angry influences how you communicate, how you communicate affects how you think, and how you think affects how you behave.

Test Your Knowledge

Think of your own anger.

Can you identify the things that you normally think, feel, say, and do when you are angry?

How does the world look to you when you are angry?

The Costs of Anger

In addition to its cost to your relationships, **anger can also be bad for your health**. Think of a garden hose. Let's say you have two sizes: a $\frac{1}{4}$ inch and a $\frac{1}{2}$ inch hose. If you hook the $\frac{1}{2}$ inch hose up to the outside water faucet, you get a stream of water. However, if you hook up the $\frac{1}{4}$ inch hose, you get a

much stronger stream of water because the pressure has been raised. When we get angry, our blood vessels constrict and it's just like we switched from a ½ inch to a ¼ inch hose.

It's clear that **we need an outlet for anger**. Some of us keep our anger locked up inside us and deal with it by not thinking about it. Other people tend to explode when they are angry. Neither outlet is very constructive, so we want to find other ways to deal with this powerful emotion.

At least in part, **our anger is learned**. We've learned how to cope with our frustrations and our hurts this way, and it has worked, at some level. In some cases, we've learned that being angry and aggressive is not appropriate, and we've learned that expressing anxiety or depression are more acceptable. Either way, we're not managing our anger or channeling it in a healthy way. Sometimes we learn angry reactions, too. If our families are disruptive, chaotic, rude, or troubled, we can have a difficult time learning how to communicate our emotions.

We used to say that letting our anger out was a good idea. This is no longer considered safe, however. When people act out in anger, they can actually escalate anger and aggression, and are not doing anything to resolve the situation. Consider the costs and pay-offs to anger, and then learn strategies to handle your anger well.

What Are Your Anger Pay-Offs?

Could there really be a payoff to anger? Yes! There is usually some sort of pay-off for us: people do what we ask them to do, our tension is released, and for a brief moment we feel better, or we feel we've gotten revenge. One thing you should try to do is figure out what your pay-off is.

Payoffs are hidden reasons why we keep doing things that are damaging or unhelpful. If you often use anger to try to resolve situations, there may be a payoff behind your response. This worksheet is to help you to identify these payoffs and how to change them for the better. Below are some of the hidden reasons, or payoffs, why people don't change. There may be others.

1. **Feeling Powerful**
The quick hit of adrenaline that comes from blame, violence or hurting others. Wanting to have power over another person.
2. **Self-pity** Indulging in feeling sorry for yourself.
Feeling like you are the victim. If I am the victim, I have a right to retaliate.
3. **Self-righteousness** Needing to be 'right'.
Feeling that it is a weakness to admit you are wrong.
4. **Scared of being vulnerable/ insecure** Not admitting that you are sad, afraid or helpless - so you get angry instead.

Generally, people hold onto negative payoffs because they are missing a positive quality, feeling or experience. For instance, if you have a payoff of needing to feel powerful, what you may really need is a sense of personal confidence. As an example, if people are laughing at you may choose to feel powerful by throwing a punch. However, if you were personally confident enough, you would ignore the comment or laugh it off.

Exercise

Step 1: Identify which payoff you use most.

Think back to a recent angry moment you have had, with the idea of payoffs in mind. Reflect upon why you felt the anger and what the main payoff was. There may be more than one payoff. However, choose the first one that comes to mind.

Step 2: What is the antidote to your payoff?

Now you have identified your payoff, look for the positive quality, feeling or experience that you are really wanting. An example has been given, but you might like to add your own.

FEELING POWERFUL:

Are you really looking for personal confidence? Or

SELF PITY: Are you seeking love? Or

SELF RIGHTEOUS: Are you looking for a sense of self-esteem?

Or

INSECURE: Are you really needing to feel safe?

Or

Step 3: Finding ways to feel better about yourself

What can you do to create the positive quality, feeling or experience that does not require the angry payoff? Make sure it is achievable and realistic.

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Pay-Off List

Test Your Knowledge

For each anger pay-off below, do a mental inventory of relationships and situations in your life, such as anger with your family, friends, or co-workers; anger when driving; or anger at inanimate objects. See if that pay-off is in any way influencing or reinforcing your anger. If it is, write an example in the space provided.

Reduce stress

Hide emotional pain

Get attention

Punish and get revenge

Change the behavior of others/get people to do what you want
