



UNIT-2

The Anger Process

Learning Outcomes

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

- ✓ Use an anger log to identify hot buttons and triggers.
- ✓ Control his/her own emotions when faced with other peoples' anger.

Unit 2

The Anger Process

What is the Process?

Anger is a two-step process:



First there is the **pain**. It might be emotional, like a feeling of loneliness, loss, or rejection. Or it might be physical, like a headache or a pain in your stomach. This is the fuel of anger. It's like a can of gasoline sitting there.

The second part of anger is the **trigger**, the match that sets the can of gasoline on fire.

Then there is the **anger itself**, which has three parts. (Remember the dimensions of anger that we referred to earlier.) Our **physical reactions** might include:

- Our heart beats faster
- Our pupils dilate
- We breathe faster
- Our face may redden
- Our legs might turn to jelly

All of this is because our body is preparing for fight or flight. Our **emotional reactions**, in addition to the anger, may include:

- Tears
- Sadness
- Pain
- Loneliness
- Depression

These emotional and physical reactions influence our **behaviour** when we are angry (both how we act and how we express our anger). This might involve:

- Swearing
- Yelling/speaking loudly
- Talking faster
- Smashing things
- Calling people names

This, of course, affects the remaining dimension: the way that we experience the world and the treatment that we receive from others.

Understanding Trigger Thoughts

Part of managing your anger is identifying what makes you angry and managing the root of the problem. Generally, there are two categories of things that make us angry: hot buttons and triggers.

- **Hot buttons** are things that are true about ourselves that we may feel ashamed of or try to pretend do not exist.
- **Triggers** are experiences that can remind us of (or have us relive) grief or traumas from the past.

Personal Hot Buttons

Do you know things about you that are true but you would prefer to avoid? When people make comments about things that we are ashamed of or that we try to deny, we say that they are “pushing our buttons.”

- “When did you become a race car driver?” (criticizing our driving)
- “Are you sure you should be eating that?” (criticizing our diet)
- “You don’t belong here.” (insulting our membership in a group or workplace)
- “Why don’t you learn to speak the language?” (insulting our command of the local language)

Depending on how well we have accepted our own shortcomings, and how we respond to people’s comments, you may have more or fewer hot buttons at different times of your life. A lazy Saturday afternoon that is interrupted by someone saying “You never do anything around the house,” can push a lazy button and a guilt button. You may start thinking, “Should I be cleaning that bathroom right now?”, or, “I knew I should have vacuumed before I sat down!”

Feeling bad about our bodies is a common hot button. You might secretly think, “I am too fat/skinny/pale/dark/ugly.” A comment from someone else can set us off.

Triggers

Have you ever had an experience that reminded you so powerfully of something else that you could remember everything about the original event? When people have survived a traumatic event, a small

thing can bring a memory flooding back. These triggers can be a smell, sound, emotion, gesture, or even a single word.

If you ask someone what they had for lunch last Tuesday, they may struggle to remember. However, in North America, asking someone what they were doing on 9/11 brings a barrage of memories, just as the assassination of John F. Kennedy did for the generation before. On a more pleasant note, if you hear the first line of a poem that you had to memorize in school and then find yourself reciting the entire verse, you have also just responded to a trigger.

Triggers are a powerful reminder when it comes to anger. A trigger can bring a memory of an argument or conflict flooding back, and all the physical effects (such as an increase in your heart rate, flushed face, or tense muscles) also recur. Even if you are not in the midst of the conflict, but observe it, the trigger can stimulate your memory.

Being aware of your triggers and how you behave when they occur are important steps in learning healthier behaviors.

Using an Anger Log

Using the Anger Log

An effective way to explore what your own triggers and hot buttons are, as well as your reactions, is to keep an anger log. Keeping an anger log will help you to become more aware of the number of times that you become angry, as well as what your reactions are. If you consciously commit to raising your emotional intelligence about anger, you will find that your reactions become more constructive. You can then focus on moving ahead rather than being stuck in a pattern of repeating unhealthy behaviors.

There are different terms for an anger log; some try to put a positive spin on it and call it something different. However, we are looking at managing anger as a positive development in your life, so calling it an anger log keeps it real and helps you to focus.

Each anger event gets a separate entry in your log. When you get really comfortable using the anger log, you can memorize it and use it to work through tough situations. For example, if something happens on your way to the bus and you would normally record it, you will find yourself going through the steps in the log quite naturally.

In order to remember the steps easily, you can use the acronym **SEFAC**, which stands for:

- Story
- Examine beliefs
- Feelings
- Actions
- Challenge

Anger Log Example

Date _____

Story

Describe what happened in less than three lines. If you write more than three lines, you will focus on the situation or the other person and actually become angrier.

Examine Beliefs

What beliefs, distorted thinking patterns, and judgments contributed to this situation?

Feelings

What feelings were you experiencing at the time? We know that you were angry, of course, but how would you describe it? What was the intensity like on a scale of 1-10, where 1 is not angry at all, and 10 is when you flew off the handle and had the scariest reaction you can imagine having?

Actions

What did you do about it? Here you can write more than three lines; develop your emotional intelligence as you expand your library of anger response options. This will also give you a concrete record of how you apply anger management techniques.

Challenge

This is a fun way to work through your anger. Challenge your own assumptions about the event. Look at the judgments that you are making. Talk out what happened, the actions you took (or will take if you cannot act immediately), and the healthiest way to resolve the problem.

Template

Date	
Story	
Beliefs	
Feelings	
Actions	
Challenge	

Considering Our Anger

Test your Knowledge

Let's get some practice using the anger log. To start, think of any incidents during the past week where you were angry. Now, choose the three most memorable instances, and complete an anger log for each of them.

Event One	
Date	
Story	
Beliefs	
Feelings	
Actions	
Challenge	

Event Two	
Date	
Story	
Beliefs	
Feelings	

Actions	
Challenge	

Event Three	
Date	
Story	
Beliefs	
Feelings	
Actions	
Challenge	