

ANGER MANAGEMENT AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

A. UNDERSTANDING and MANAGING ANGER

Anger is a natural and powerful emotion that everyone feels from time to time.

Psychological Causes: frustration, hurt, humiliation, embarrassment, shame, annoyance, disappointment, harassment, threats, and loss

Physical reactions: adrenaline rush, muscular tension, and elevations in heart rate/blood pressure

In reality, anger is a **natural emotion** that we feel whenever our needs are threatened or frustrated in some way. This emotion can activate either helpful (“upside”) or harmful (“downside”) **responses**.

Upside of Anger	Downside of Anger
Can motivate you to: Reach goals Solve problems Handle emergencies	Health problems: high blood pressure, heart disease, headaches, stomach disorders, weight problems, skin disorders Causes you to be distracted , thus you are more likely to have accidents or just perform poorly on important tasks Interpersonal and group conflicts Violence and criminal behavior

Although we are often unable to predict or control our feelings, we **CAN** control how we act upon our feelings. **Therefore, a key to managing anger typically pivots on the realization that anger signals that our needs are being threatened, blocked, or frustrated in some way.** In the context of relationships, we manage our anger best when we focus **less** on attempting to change others, and **more** on attempting to **change ourselves**. That is, the first step of anger management involves our ability to **assert ourselves in direct, responsible, and non-aggressive ways** in order to meet our needs.

Some initial steps for MANAGING ANGER:

1. Recognize the multiple ways your anger surfaces: i.e., associated feelings, thoughts, behaviors, and physical reactions
2. Identify the causes (or triggers) by answering the question, “Why am I so angry?”
3. Decide what to do to address the cause(s) by taking active steps to meet your own needs (i.e., act on the question: **“What can I do to make sure my needs are being met?”**)

The Do's of Anger	The Don'ts of Anger
<p>Calm down by saying relaxing statements to yourself. Take care of yourself (e.g., good sleeping and eating habits, exercise, meditation, etc.).</p> <p>Be assertive, but not aggressive, express yourself clearly and firmly without insulting or threatening the other person.</p> <p>Seek consultation from experts who can help you resolve the conflict (i.e. counselors, clergy, etc.).</p> <p>Stay sober and stay in control.</p> <p>Use humor to cool yourself down.</p> <p>Walk away from a potentially violent situation.</p>	<p>Don't take things personally, when someone insults you they are really expressing how they feel about themselves to some degree.</p> <p>Don't get personal by using insults or name-calling or making accusations. Don't avoid the conflicts you are responsible for.</p> <p>Don't feel like you have to solve all conflicts by yourself.</p> <p>Don't get drunk or high.</p> <p>Don't humiliate others with jokes or sarcasm.</p> <p>Don't get involved in other people's conflicts.</p>

B. CONFLICT RESOLUTION SKILLS

Empathy is the antidote to conflict. **Empathy is taking another person's psychological perspective with the goal of understanding their experience.** It's like walking in someone else's shoes. Most people who are angry desperately want to be understood. Thus, you need to understand what the other person is angry about first before you respond. You communicate your understanding through your body language and paraphrasing (repeating the essence of what they said in a brief concise statement).

Examples of paraphrase starters:

- *Let me see if I've got it right...*
- *Sounds like.....*
- *I think I hear you saying...*
- *So, in other words.....*

HERE IS AN EFFECTIVE FORMAT FOR ENHANCING EMPATHY, DISSOLVING ANGER, AND RESOLVING CONFLICTS:

1. **Both people agree** to have a discussion that includes the following ground rules:
 - No interrupting
 - No name-calling
 - Work to **resolve** the conflict (**not** to win the argument)
2. The **first person** tells his/her side of the story using “**I-Messages**” and focusing on:
 - How he/she feels (i.e., “I feel...”)
 - What specifically happened from his/her point of view (i.e., “I noticed that...”)
 - What s/he wants (i.e., “I need...”)
3. The **second person restates** what the problem was for the first person and asks questions for clarity and understanding.
4. The **second person** tells his/ her side of the story using “**I-Messages**” and focusing on:
 - How he/she feels (i.e., “I feel...”)
 - What specifically happened from his/her point of view (i.e., “I noticed that...”)
 - What s/he wants and/or needs (i.e., “I need...”)
5. The **first person restates** what the problem was for the second person and asks questions for clarity and understanding.
6. **Both** people suggest some **possible solutions**.
7. **Both agree** on a **reasonable solution** that can be developed into a **specific plan**.
8. **Implement** the agreed upon plan with the goal of satisfying the following **criteria**:
 - It is balanced and fair
 - It is specific
 - It is realistic
 - It solves the problem

If you have any questions or need private confidential consultation, then please contact a professional staff member at University Counseling Services by calling 973-761-9500, or by visiting our offices located on the 2nd floor of Mooney Hall.