

SESSION 5:

Cognitive Restructuring

In this session, you will learn about the A-B-C-D Model as a form of cognitive restructuring. You will also learn about thought stopping, an alternative to the A-B-C-D Model.

I. The A-B-C-D Model

The A-B-C-D Model (see next page) is consistent with the way some people conceptualize anger management treatment. In this model, “A” stands for an activating event. The activating event is the “event” or red-flag event. “B” represents our beliefs about the activating event. It is not the events themselves that produce feelings such as anger; it is our interpretations and beliefs about the events. “C” stands for the emotional consequences. These are the feelings experienced as a result of interpretations and beliefs concerning the event. “D” stands for dispute. This part of the model involves identifying any irrational beliefs and disputing them with more rational or realistic ways of looking at the activating event. The idea is to replace self-statements that lead to, or escalate, anger with ideas that allow you to have a more realistic and accurate interpretation of the event.

- What does each of the letters of the A-B-C-D Model stand for?

- List some of your irrational beliefs.

- How might you dispute these beliefs?

A-B-C-D MODEL*

A = Activating Situation or Event

B = Belief System

What you tell yourself about the event (your self-talk)
Your beliefs and expectations of others

C = Consequence

How you feel about the event based on your self-talk

D = Dispute

Examine your beliefs and expectations
Are they unrealistic or irrational?

*Based on the work of Albert Ellis, 1979, and Albert Ellis and R.A. Harper, 1975.

II. Thought stopping

A second approach to controlling our anger is called “thought stopping.” Thought stopping is an alternative to the A-B-C-D Model. In this approach, you simply tell yourself through a series of self-commands to *stop* thinking the thoughts that are making you angry. For example, you might tell yourself, “I need to stop thinking these thoughts. I will only get into trouble if I keep thinking this way,” or “Don’t buy into this situation,” or “Don’t go there.” In other words, instead of trying to dispute your thoughts and beliefs as outlined in the A-B-C-D Model above, the goal is to stop your current pattern of angry thoughts before they lead to an escalation of anger and a loss of control.

- What are some other examples of thought-stopping statements you can use when you become angry?

III. Monitoring Anger for the Week

1) What was the highest number you reached on the anger meter during the past week?

2) What was the event that triggered your anger?

3) What cues were associated with the anger-provoking event?

Physical cues _____

Behavioral cues _____

Emotional cues _____

Cognitive cues _____

4) What strategies did you use to avoid reaching 10 on the anger meter?

- For each day of the upcoming week, monitor and record the highest number you reach on the anger meter.

____ M ____ T ____ W ____ Th ____ F ____ Sat ____ Sun

SESSIONS 9 & 10:

Anger and the Family

In these two sessions, you will learn how anger and other emotions were expressed in your family. This involves analyzing how past family interactions affect current thoughts, feelings, and behavior.

I. Anger and the Family

For many of us, the interactions we had with our parents have strongly influenced our behaviors, thoughts, feelings, and attitudes as adults. With regard to anger and its expression, these feelings and behaviors were usually modeled for us by our parents or parental figures. The following series of questions concerns the interactions you had with your parents and the families that you grew up in. Discussing family issues can sometimes bring up uncomfortable feelings. Be sure to discuss these feelings with the group leader or your counselor.

- Describe your family. Did you live with both parents? Did you have any brothers and sisters? Where did you grow up?

- How was anger expressed in your family while you were growing up? How did your father express anger? How did your mother express anger? Were you ever threatened with physical violence? Was your father abusive to your mother or you?

ANGER MANAGEMENT *for Substance Abuse and Mental Health Clients*

- How were other emotions, such as happiness and sadness, expressed in your family? Was emotional expression limited to feelings of anger and frustration, or were many different kinds of emotions expressed?

- How were you disciplined and by whom? Was physical punishment involved (e.g., being hit with hands, belts, switches, or other objects)? How did you respond to this discipline?

- What role did you take in your family? For example, were you the hero, the rescuer, the victim, the clown, the scapegoat, etc.?

- What messages did you receive about your father and men in general? What messages did you receive about your mother and women in general?

- What feelings, thoughts, and behaviors carry over into your relationships today? What purpose do these behaviors serve today? What would happen if you gave up these behaviors?

II. Monitoring Anger for the Week

- 1) What was the highest number you reached on the anger meter during the past week?

- 2) What was the event that triggered your anger?

- 3) What cues were associated with the anger-provoking event?

Physical cues _____

Behavioral cues _____

Emotional cues _____

Cognitive cues _____

- 4) What strategies did you use to avoid reaching 10 on the anger meter?

- For each day of the upcoming week, monitor and record the highest number you reach on the anger meter.

____ M ____ T ____ W ____ Th ____ F ____ Sat ____ Sun