

# SESSION 1:

## *Overview of Anger Management Treatment*

In this first session, you will get a general overview of the anger management treatment. This includes the purpose of the group, group rules, definitions of anger and aggression, myths about anger, anger as a habitual response, and the introduction of the anger meter used to monitor anger.

### **I. Purpose of the Group**

- 1) Learn to manage anger effectively.
- 2) Stop violence or the threat of violence.
- 3) Develop self-control over thoughts and actions.
- 4) Receive support from others.

### **II. Group Rules**

- 1) *Group Safety:* No violence or threats of violence toward staff or other group members are permitted. It is very important that you view the group as a safe place to share your experiences and feelings without threats or fear of physical harm.
- 2) *Confidentiality:* Group members should not discuss outside of the group what other members say. (The group leader should determine the limits of the laws or rules pertaining to confidentiality in his or her State.)
- 3) *Homework Assignments:* Brief homework assignments will be given each week. Doing the homework assignments will improve your anger management skills and allow you to get the most from the group experience.
- 4) *Absences and Cancellations:* You should call or notify the group leader in advance if you cannot attend a group session. Because of the amount of material presented in each session, you may not miss more than 3 of the 12 sessions.

If you miss more than three sessions, you may continue attending the weekly sessions, but you will not receive a certificate of completion.

- 5) *Timeouts:* The group leader reserves the right to call a timeout at any time. Eventually, you will learn to call a timeout yourself if you feel that you may be losing control because your anger is escalating.

### III. Definitions

In the most general sense, anger is a feeling or emotion that ranges from mild irritation to intense fury and rage. Many people often confuse anger with aggression. Aggression is behavior that is intended to cause harm or injury to another person or damage to property. Hostility, on the other hand, refers to a set of attitudes and judgments that motivate aggressive behaviors.

- Before you learned these definitions, did you ever confuse anger with aggression? Please explain how.

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### IV. When Does Anger Become a Problem?

Anger becomes a problem when it is felt too intensely, is felt too frequently, or is expressed inappropriately. Feeling anger too intensely or frequently places extreme physical strain on the body.

- List some ways anger may be affecting you physically.

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### V. Payoffs and Consequences

The inappropriate expression of anger initially has apparent payoffs (e.g., releasing tension, controlling people). In the long-term, however, these payoffs lead to negative consequences. That is why they are called “apparent” payoffs; the long-term negative consequences far outweigh the short-term gains.

- List some payoffs to using anger that you are familiar with.

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- List the negative consequences that you have experienced as a result of expressing your anger inappropriately.

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## VI. Myths About Anger

*Myth #1: Anger Is Inherited.* One misconception or myth about anger is that the way people express anger is inherited and cannot be changed. Evidence from research studies, however, indicates that people are not born with set and specific ways of expressing anger. Rather, these studies show that the expression of anger is learned behavior and that more appropriate ways of expressing anger can also be learned.

*Myth #2: Anger Automatically Leads to Aggression.* A related myth involves the misconception that the only effective way to express anger is through aggression. There are other more constructive and assertive ways, however, to express anger. Effective anger management involves controlling the escalation of anger by learning assertiveness skills, changing negative and hostile “self-talk,” challenging irrational beliefs, and employing a variety of behavioral strategies. These skills, techniques, and strategies will be discussed in later sessions.

*Myth #3: You Must Be Aggressive To Get What You Want.* Many people confuse assertiveness with aggression. The goal of aggression is to dominate, intimidate, harm, or injure another person—to win at any cost. Conversely, the goal of assertiveness is to express feelings of anger in a way that is respectful of other people. Expressing yourself in an assertive manner does not blame or threaten other people and minimizes the chance of emotional harm. You will learn about the *topic of assertiveness skills in more detail in sessions 7 and 8.*

*Myth #4: Venting Anger Is Always Desirable.* For many years, there was a popular belief that the aggressive expression of anger, such as screaming or beating on pillows, was therapeutic and healthy. Research studies have found, however, that people who vent their anger aggressively simply get better at being angry. In other words, venting anger in an aggressive manner reinforces aggressive behavior.

- Before our discussion, did you believe any of these myths about anger to be true?

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## VII. Anger Is a Habit

Anger can become a routine, familiar, and predictable response to a variety of situations. When anger is displayed frequently and aggressively, it can become a maladaptive habit. A habit, by definition, means performing behaviors automatically, over and over again, without thinking. The frequent and aggressive expression of anger can be viewed as a maladaptive habit because it results in negative consequences.

- Has anger become a habit for you? How?

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- In what ways has it been maladaptive?

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## VIII. Breaking the Anger Habit

You can break the anger habit by becoming aware of the events and circumstances that trigger your anger and the negative consequences that result from it. In addition, you need to develop a set of strategies to effectively manage your anger. You will learn more about strategies to manage anger in session 3.

- List some anger control strategies that you might know or that you may have used in the past.

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## IX. Anger Meter

A simple way to monitor your anger is to use a 1 to 10 scale called the anger meter. A score of 1 on the anger meter represents a complete lack of anger or a total state of calm, whereas 10 represents an angry and explosive loss of control that leads to negative consequences.

- 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

- Be prepared to report the highest level of anger you reached during the week in next week's group.

**Anger Meter**

- Explosion
- Violence
- Loss of Control
- Negative Consequences
- You Lose!

**10**

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9

8

7

6

5

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3

2

1

- You have a choice!
- Use your anger control plan to avoid reaching 10!

# SESSION 2:

## *Events and Cues*

In this session, you begin to learn how to analyze an episode of anger. This involves learning how to identify events and cues that indicate an escalation of anger.

### **I. Events That Trigger Anger**

When you get angry, it is because you have encountered an event in your life that has provoked your anger. Many times, specific events touch on sensitive areas. These sensitive areas or “red flags” usually refer to long-standing issues that can easily lead to anger. In addition to events that you experience in the here and now, you may also recall an event from your past that made you angry. Just thinking about these past events may make you angry now. Here are examples of events or issues that can trigger anger:

Long waits to see your doctor

Traffic congestion

Crowded buses

A friend joking about a sensitive topic

A friend not paying back money owed to you

Being wrongly accused

Having to clean up someone else’s mess

Having an untidy roommate

Having a neighbor who plays the stereo too loud

Being placed on hold for long periods of time while on the telephone

Being given wrong directions

Rumors being spread about your relapse that are not true

Having money or property stolen from you.

- What are some of the general events and situations that trigger anger for you?

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- What are some of the red-flag events and situations that trigger anger for you?

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## II. Cues to Anger: Four Cue Categories

A second important way to monitor anger is to identify the cues that occur in response to the anger-provoking event. These cues serve as warning signs that you have become angry and that your anger is escalating. Cues can be broken down into four cue categories: physical, behavioral, emotional, and cognitive (or thought) cues. After each category, list the cues that you have noticed when you get angry.

- 1) *Physical Cues* (how your body responds; e.g., with an increased heart rate, tightness in the chest, feeling hot or flushed)

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- 2) *Behavioral Cues* (what you do; e.g., clench your fists, raise your voice, stare at others)

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- 3) *Emotional Cues* (other feelings that may occur along with anger; e.g., fear, hurt, jealousy, disrespect)

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- 4) *Cognitive Cues* (what you think about in response to the event; e.g., hostile self-talk, images of aggression and revenge)

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### III. Check-In Procedure: Monitoring Anger for the Week

In this session, you began to learn to monitor your anger and to identify anger-provoking events and situations. In each weekly session, there will be a Check-In Procedure to follow up on the homework assignment from the previous week and to report the highest level of anger reached on the anger meter during the past week. You will also be asked to identify the event that triggered your anger, the cues that were associated with your anger, and the strategies you used to manage your anger in response to the event. You will be using the following format to check in at the beginning of each session:

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

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

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- 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?

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- 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

**Events, Cues, and Strategies Identified During the Check-In Procedure**

EVENT →	CUES →	STRATEGIES