

EXPRESSING ANGER

GOALS:

- To examine various anger styles and their effectiveness.
- To take an initial step towards a satisfactory expression of anger.

RATIONALE:

The expression of anger can take on various forms. It can be like a bomb, affecting anyone who happens to be close by, or it can be held inside, smothered and driven underground. We develop a personal style of anger that is shaped by our culture, family and past experiences. In this lesson participants have the opportunity to examine their style and its effectiveness. They can begin to take the next step towards change should they find their style is not effective and possibly harmful to themselves and others.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

Flipchart, markers, pencils, copies of the story *It's A Bright Sunny Morning* and *What Is Your Anger Style* worksheet.

METHOD:

Warm up: **It's A Bright Sunny Morning**

Distribute a copy of *It's A Bright Sunny Morning* to each participant and read it aloud or ask for a volunteer from the group.

Exercise 1: **Analyzing the Story**

List the characters in the story on the flipchart and ask participants:

- How did each character express their anger?
- How do you think it affects those around them?

The following is a summary of some of the points you may wish to discuss.

Example:

Characters	Anger Expressed	Effect on Others
Steve	Outburst, reacts to mildly frustrating events	Seen as angry person, hard to please, may avoid him
Alice	Inwardly, against self	Seen as a helpless victim
Bob	Passive, revenge	Compliant, may sense resistance, but can't pin him down
Lucy	Through her stomach	Doesn't get angry
Marty	Communicates feelings	Know he is angry, aware of his limits to what he will tolerate

Encourage participants to discuss how effective each style is, and how harmful the styles are to self and others.

Exercise 2: What is Your Anger Style?

Distribute a copy of ***What is Your Anger Style*** to each participant and tell them to complete it. Inform them that the results do not need to be shared.

Review interpretation of the ***What is Your Anger Style*** quiz. Ask participants if they have a clear idea of what their predominant style is.

Exercise 3: A Small Step to Change

Ask participants to think back to a time when they became angry and felt dissatisfied with the way they handled the situation. Using the insight, as well as results from the anger style quiz, encourage the group to look at alternate methods of expressing anger.

You may wish to use the following ideas on role-playing or imagery to assist participants in changing their behaviour.

Role-playing

Divide participants into triads. Give each person the opportunity to role-play a situation demonstrating their usual way of expressing anger. Ask the two other group members to help the individual find ways of expressing their anger more effectively.

Imagery

Ask participants to actively imagine a situation where they become angry. Ask them to think about how this is affecting them and those around them.

Ask participants to then imagine expressing their feelings in a way that they would prefer. Encourage them to review this imagery a number of times and practise in real life as the opportunity arises.

Share the following quote by Dr. Robert Meier with the group.

"... don't be angry with yourself if you don't see radical change overnight; self-improvement is not a final destination, it's a lifelong journey".

REFERENCES:

Meier, Dr. Robert. Anger!, ***Influence***. December 1984/January 1985.

Allen, Carroll. Temper!, ***Chatelaine***. October 1981.

It's A Bright Sunny Morning

It's a bright sunny morning in Anytown. Steve slams his front door, goes down the porch steps in two strides, screeches the car down the driveway with a roar of the engine, leaving an acrid wake of burning rubber fumes. His mind, too, is in overdrive. "God damn toast was cold! Why can't she learn to make the toast after I've had my orange juice? Why can't those rotten kids keep that lousy dog out from under my feet?"

At the first stoplight, the car ahead hesitates on the green. Steve leans on his horn. "God damn idiot shouldn't be allowed on the road!" Steve vrooms down the parkway, switching lanes recklessly. His horn is busy. "Stupid frigging drivers!"

In another part of town Alice, Steve's secretary, boards the bus and settles behind an outspread newspaper. As she pretends to read, her chin is trembling and she blinks back tears. "Why didn't I make time to get Roy's suit from the cleaners yesterday? He was so furious that he had to wear his brown one to the sales meeting. I really must try harder! And Laurie's gym shoe - if I had tidied the newspapers last night, I would have found the shoe and she wouldn't have gone off to school so upset.

Steve screeches into the parking space beside an auto-transport truck loaded with new cars. He bursts through the office door; it's 8:32 a.m. "I thought I told you people those cars were to be on their way to the suburban lots by 8:30" he yells, flinging his coat at the rack. "Are you all so bloody incompetent that I have to drive the f---ing truck myself? I'm sick to death of being surrounded by a bunch of blithering fools! Now get that f---ing truck rolling!"

As he slams into his office, the glass in the door quivers and threatens to shatter. Bob, the truck driver, melts out to the lot. He manoeuvres the truck onto the highway. At the first diner, he pulls in for a cup of coffee. "Who the hell does he think he is? Let the stupid S.O.B stew! I'll deliver when I feel like it."

Alice, who had just taken off her coat as Steve stormed in, scuttles into the washroom where she begins to cry soundlessly. "Why can't I ever do anything right?"

In her office cubicle, Lucy, the bookkeeper, doubles over suddenly. Her knuckles clutching the desk are white; a fine sweat gathers on her blanched face as she reaches into a drawer for her stomach pills. Later that night, Lucy's ulcer haemorrhages, and she is rushed to the hospital by ambulance.

Marty, the office manager, flushed and breathing heavily, strides into Steve's office and shuts the door firmly. Marty's voice is loud but controlled. "O.K. Steve, this is it! I've told you before I hate your filthy temper tantrums! I'm sick and tired of being bullied and insulted! I can go to work for any dealer in this city tomorrow! You can take your damn job and stuff it! I quit - as of now - today - this minute!" The glass shivers as Marty storms out.

WHAT IS YOUR ANGER STYLE?

	Very true	Some-what true	Not true at all
1. I'm a pretty stubborn person.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. When I disagree or have differences with people, I tend to be silent in their presence, to be late or forget appointments with them, and to put off doing work for them.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I have ulcers, high blood pressure, tension headaches, or some other stress-related problem.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. When things go wrong at work or at home, I usually feel that it's my fault.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. When tension and aggravation reach too high a level, I tend to take out my frustrations on myself.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. When people rub me the wrong way with their inconsiderate or obnoxious habits, I keep my resentment to myself.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Cigarette smoke in my face or loud music in the next room may really annoy me, but I try to keep my feelings to myself and leave well enough alone.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I enjoy really telling people off when they deserve it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. When frustrations build up, I tend to lose my temper and fly off the handle.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. After a really trying day at work, I get frustrations out by throwing darts, jogging, or some other activity.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Whenever people get me really angry, I can get over it by briefly imagining either getting revenge or striking back at them.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. If someone does something to make me furious, it gives me added energy to get my work done.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. When an immovable roadblock has been placed in front of a favourite project of mine, I find a new pursuit to turn my frustrated energies toward.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. If a store changes its advertised sales price or a mechanic fails to do a job as promised, I can be insistent and persistent without losing my temper.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

15. If I've been treated unfairly at work, I can usually express my gripes in a straight-forward manner to the appropriate person without getting bent out of shape.

INTERPRETATION:

Eight different styles of anger are represented in the 15 statements. Some are more effective than others.

Very true responses indicate your anger style. If none are marked, refer to *somewhat true* responses.

Withholding. This style (statements 1 & 2) definitely lets others know how you feel, but it tends to provoke anger in return, thus creating a vicious cycle. It is self-defeating because you waste your own time and energy.

Somatizing (or body expression). This style (statement 3) takes its toll on our bodies. Some physical manifestations are tension, ulcers, high blood pressure, headaches and depression, to name a few.

Turning against yourself. This style (indicated in statements 4 & 5) involves avoiding confrontation with those who frustrate you. You express your anger by directing it inward.

Passivity. The passive style (statements 6 & 7), while viewed by some people as a virtue, is really a kind of over-inhibition that thwarts your own self-interest.

Exploding. This aggressive style (statements 8 & 9) is too direct. It usually causes more harm than good, except among very understanding and forgiving people.

Displacing or Redirecting. Taking out your anger on something rather than somebody (statement 10) or expressing it in your imagination (statement 11) is more effective and less destructive than the previous styles mentioned.

Channelling your energies. This style (statements 12 & 13) is one of the most productive and least disruptive methods you can use.

Assertiveness. This style (statements 14 & 15) is perhaps the best mode of all, when the situation allows it. It means facing someone directly with your request, complaint, or grievances, showing forth-rightness but not attacking or criticizing the other person.