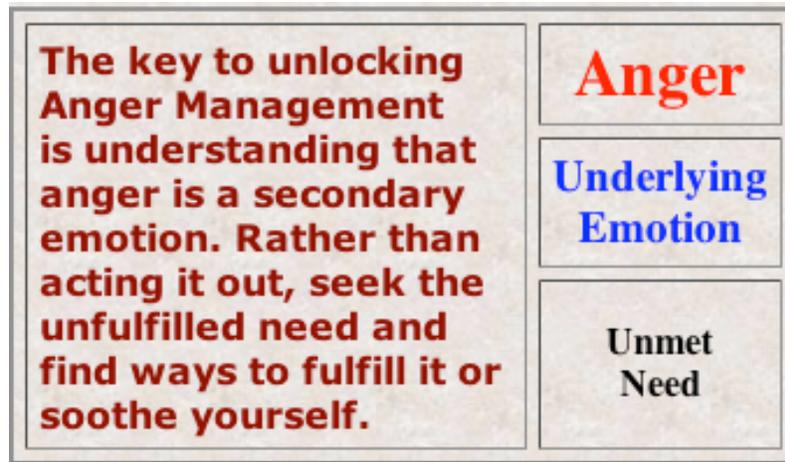


Anger Management

“Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; you are the one who gets burned.” (Buddha)



“Anger is a natural human response to threat. Anger prepares the body to physically incapacitate an enemy and defend one's own body, family, and boundaries. Anger is like fire, a powerful force--and when it gets out of control, powerfully destructive. The physiological effects of anger are rarely needed in modern society, and we face a public health epidemic of anger gone wrong. Whether violent emotional outbursts or soul-destroying resentments, unmanaged anger destroys relationships, families, and individual health. In the workplace, it causes inefficiency, time lost to sickness and disciplinary problems, and industrial accidents. Most angry responses come from learned habits; the anger management process helps to replace habits of anger with conscious processes that lead to emotional growth, better communication, less stress, and the useful expression of anger. Anger management skills are best learned in an anger management class environment where, unlike reading a book by oneself or sitting in a therapist's office, one can interact and re-socialize with peers, suffering from the same struggle to manage their anger.

My anger management classes use a model of anger management that is the only one approved by the California Department of Corrections. I teach weekly and intensive weekend anger management classes using this model that has four primary facets: learning effective communications skills, developing emotional intelligence, managing stress, and understanding the anger process.”

John Elder, MA

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Certified Group Process Facilitator
Certified Victims of Domestic Violence Advocate

Anger Log

Date: _____

1. Describe the event that triggered your anger & how you responded:

2. Give a synonym for your anger level (furious, annoyed, enraged, etc.), and rate your anger on a scale of 1 – 10.

3. What were the first symptoms of your anger—how did you first notice you were angry? Thoughts/judgments: Body sensations:

4. What were the primary emotions that you felt?

5. What were your unmet emotional needs?

6. What factors made you more prone to anger in this situation?

7. What beliefs led you to the anger path in this situation?

8. What cognitive distortions did you experience?

9. What anger management steps did you apply? What would you like to do next time?

10. What amends do you need to make? To yourself? To others?

Using the Anger Management Log Effectively

- **Date**

Writing the date of the event on your anger log will allow you to track your progress with managing anger over time. Sometimes it can get discouraging when change seems to be coming too slow. But going back and reviewing old logs may show you that you have improved your anger management skills.

- **Describe the event that triggered your anger & how you responded:**

Notice that there isn't much space for this? This is not accidental! It's easy to put a lot of energy into excuses and blame. The purpose of this log is to examine what went wrong so that you can manage your anger better in the future. Just write down enough to remind you of what happened.

- **Give a synonym for your anger (furious, annoyed, enraged, etc.) and rate your anger on a scale of 1 - 10.**

How angry were you? It can be helpful to chart your anger levels on a graph--doing so keeps you conscious and more focused on anger management. There are many possibilities: graph each event, graph the highest/average level for a given day/week/month, or graph the total of your anger levels for each selected time period.

Listing synonyms helps you think of your anger more descriptively. It's an exercise in emotional intelligence. By noticing the synonyms you use the most frequently, you will learn about your anger style in more depth. Then, you will be able to design more effective anger management strategies for yourself.

- **What were the first symptoms of your anger--how did you first notice that you were angry?**

Since anger activates the body and that activation process can reduce conscious control of our anger response, it's very important to notice the onset of anger as early as possible. The sooner you notice that you're getting angry, the sooner you can begin managing your anger. Thus, knowing your early symptoms of anger is a key to anger management.

- **Thoughts**

What thoughts were you having as you got angry? Rigid thinking can predispose an individual to anger. Is there a pattern in your thinking that leads to anger?

- **Judgments**

Rarely do we get angry without judging that the other person has done "wrong." Did you form any judgments? How did those judgments distort your understanding of the other person?

- **Body Sensations**

What physical cues did you notice as you got angry? A knot in your stomach? A headache? Tension? A feeling of heat? Everybody has different cues. It's important to know what your physical cues are so that you can manage your anger before it gets out of control.

- **What were the primary emotions that you felt?**

Anger is a secondary emotion. Beneath anger lie the primary emotions that trigger it. What was hiding underneath your anger? Learning to identify your primary emotions helps strengthen your emotional intelligence. It also allows you to more clearly communicate how you feel with others. This is a great anger management technique, one that can disarm a fight before it gets started.

- **What were your unmet emotional needs?**

Negative primary emotions result from unmet emotional needs. If you let the emotions progress to anger and then act the anger out, it is unlikely that you will get your emotional needs met. But, if you identify your emotional needs, you can work directly to fulfill them--or to soothe yourself if they cannot be immediately gratified. By identifying your emotional needs you develop strong emotional intelligence and prepare yourself for more powerful anger management next time those needs arise.

- **What factors made you more prone to anger in this situation?**

Sometimes we get angry because we're hungry or tired. Other times, a repetitive situation sets us off. If other factors contributed to your anger, it's a good idea to know about them. Maybe next time you can deal with them and stay calm.

- **What beliefs led you to the anger path in this situation?**

How did your assumptions and interpretations of the situation contribute to your anger? What beliefs was your anger based on? An important step in anger management is noticing beliefs that can lead to justifying anger and challenging them.

- **What cognitive distortions did you experience?**

Take a look at the [Cognitive Distortions Worksheet](#) for a list and explanation of cognitive distortions. Often, our twisted, distorted thinking leads us into anger when we rational thinking could have helped us to stay calm. Identifying your cognitive distortions is an important anger management skill, along with catching "stinking thinking" and redirecting your thoughts into a healthy process.

- **What anger management steps did you apply?**

Keep track of how you practiced anger management. How effective were you? Did it work well, or do you need to try a different approach next time?

- **What would you like to do next time?**

Plan for future anger management. How could you have improved your handling of this situation? What could lead to a better outcome?

- **What amends do you need to make?**

Frequently, our anger harms others, as well as ourselves. What can you do to help heal the situation?

- **To yourself?**

Your anger damages you. What do you need to do to help yourself heal?

- **To others?**

What do you need to do to help others who were either the targets of your anger, or who witnessed it, feel better? Are there relationships that you need to mend? Damage to repair?

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