

FOREWORD

BY Ron Potter-Efron

The workbook you are about to begin is the most thorough, well-researched and interesting workbook on anger that I have ever encountered. It is full of thoughtful mini-essays about the nature of anger. These are paired with practical exercises that translate these essays into useful approaches which will help the reader better handle anger-provoking situations. Also included are open-ended opportunities for readers to describe their actual feelings and experiences when angry.

This workbook is divided into twelve Modules. The first, "Getting Started," introduces anger (and anger problems). What is anger? How do people typically deal with their anger? What's the difference between healthy and unhealthy anger? All these questions are answered carefully, with an eye to the reality that anger is a complex topic and that no two people's anger are exactly alike.

Dr. Pfeiffer then tackles the latest research on the angry brain. He describes what happens inside our brains when we become upset and how the newer parts of our brain can help us control our more primitive reactions. He also summarizes the most exciting topic of brain study, namely how we can consciously change its internal structure by strongly and repeatedly focusing upon what we want to do and how we want to think. This type of change is essential if you have been angry so long that your anger has become an automatic habit.

The third module is entitled "Anger Awareness." I suggest you take a peek at his use of the iceberg analogy on page ___ to see how you can make use of your imagination and creativity to help you better understand and handle your anger. Then comes "Calming Techniques," including a wide range of exercises such as diaphragmatic breathing, body relaxation and meditation. Any one of these techniques is useful. Taken together, someone with significant anxiety issues (which easily trigger anger flare-ups) can learn how to feel much more calm and peaceful inside.

Module Five describes how shame, often hidden from conscious awareness, may be the single greatest cause of a person's excessive anger. Shame can make people call themselves names, become paranoid, and attack others in a total rage. These shameful rages are quite dangerous. They often lead to physical aggression, murder and suicide. Fortunately, Dr. Pfeiffer presents ways to become more aware of one's hidden shame as well as ways to lessen that feeling.

Modules Six and Seven cover the essential anger management topics of altering dysfunctional thinking and learning how to be less critical and more accepting of others. Included here is material on empathy, basically the ability to put yourself into another person's shoes. I believe that people who try anger management techniques without developing empathy will eventually fall back to their old critical patterns. Only when we really take the time to enter into another person's world can we truly lay aside negative judgments about that other person.

Modules Eight and Nine deal with conflict management and assertiveness training. These skill-focused chapters, along with the last unit entitled "Practical Solutions" are full of specific ways you the reader can share your feelings, ask for what you want, and protect your interests, while staying in control of your behavior at the same time. Module Ten describes stress reduction techniques. Dr. Pfeiffer suggests several different ways to lessen one's stress that range from redirecting attention and gaining social support to learning how to accept your anxiety instead of fighting it and practicing gratitude.

Finally, Module Eleven is about "Mindfulness." Although mindful awareness has been increasing in Western society over the last couple decades, this area has only recently been suggested as a way to help people with anger problems. Dr. Pfeiffer quickly but carefully describes what mindfulness is, how it can help with anger, and how to get started practicing mindfulness meditation techniques.

A word about the author: Rich Pfeiffer is one of the founders of NAMA, the National Anger Management Association. As such he is a leader in the field and in particular a leader in ensuring that people who call themselves anger management specialists and counselors actually know what they are doing. He comes to anger management from a somewhat unusual direction in that one of his advanced degrees is in the field of divinity. Perhaps that is why he is very good at combining standard behaviorally and/or psychologically oriented interventions with more spiritually-focused ideas.

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MODULE 1

Getting Started and the Anger Log

Anger Quotes

Anger deprives a sage of his wisdom, a prophet of his vision. (Talmud)

He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty. (Proverbs)

Be angry but do not sin, do not let the sun go down on your anger. (Ephesians)

An angry man opens his mouth and shuts his eyes. (Cato)

No man can think clearly when his fists are clenched (George Jean Nathan)

Anger is a momentary madness, so control your passion or it will control you (Horace)

The fly cannot be driven away by getting angry at it. (Nigerian Proverb)

Anger can be an expensive luxury (Italian Proverb)

Anger is quieted by a gentle word just as fire is quenched by water (Camus)

People who fly into a rage always make a bad landing (Will Rogers)

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)

Getting Started

You have a lot to cover in this Workbook. You're going to have some fun, but you're also going to have to work pretty hard. You can achieve several things: you can learn to reduce levels of anger especially in provocative situations, you can learn some effective techniques in order to halt escalation and to resolve conflicts, and you can develop an Anger Management Life Practice for your continued growth in the future. There will be some homework to do, and you will begin practicing what you've learned in real situations. Most of your time will be spent learning new ways to respond when you begin to feel angry and then practicing them. There's a lot for you to do. So roll up your sleeves and let's get started.

Clarifying Expectations

Take a little time here at the beginning of your work to think about some of the things you're hoping to get out of doing this Workbook. There are no right or wrong answers to this - please try not to leave out anything, even if you think it might be unreasonable. If they're your ideas, they are valuable.

It's natural to come to the Workbook feeling either hopeful or hopeless. Anger Management problems develop over a long period of time, and you may have been angry for many years. Your problem is unlikely to disappear over night. What you will do in a later Module is work to develop realistic and manageable short-term goals that may or may not be symptom-related.

You may frequently find yourself setting unrealistic goals and standards for yourself. This tendency to be hard on yourself may appear as you set overly ambitious goals for change and growth in this Workbook. Change and growth are not about *'all or nothing,'* there is such a thing as *some* change and *some* growth and it is a process that takes *some* time. It is important to remind yourself frequently of this tendency to be hard on yourself and remind yourself that the recovery process is one that will begin with this Workbook but will continue long after it is completed.

List Four Overall Goals you have for completing this Workbook:

1.
2.
3.
4.

What is Anger?

According to the *State Trait Anger Expression Index-2*, an assessment scale which evaluates the intensity of a person's anger as an emotional state at a particular time, *Anger* is a "psychobiological emotional state consisting of feelings varying in intensity from mild irritation or annoyance to intense fury and rage, accompanied by activation of neuroendocrine processes and arousal of the autonomic nervous system". Let's break down this technical definition of anger.

- Anger is a psychobiological emotional state – it is a temporary feeling having to do with both the mind/body and brain
- Anger consists of feelings varying in intensity from mild irritation or annoyance (let's rate that a 1) to intense fury and rage (let's rate that a 10) - it has degrees of less intensity and more intensity
- Anger is accompanied by activation of neuroendocrine processes – it includes the release of brain chemicals into the body to get it ready for 'fight', 'flight', or 'freeze'. These brain chemicals mostly consist of adrenalin and cortisol and are often experienced in the body as stress or tension as your heart beats faster, blood flows more quickly through your body, and your muscles get tense
- Anger includes the arousal of the autonomic nervous system – which means that the nervous system as well as adrenalin and cortisol signal all the organs of the body to get ready to react to the perceived threat. Anger is essentially about not getting your needs met.

Anger is multi-faceted

- Degrees of anger – We will use a scale of 1-10 (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10) to label the increasing degrees and intensity of anger feelings.
- Complexity of Brain and mind/body – The human brain and mind/body is extremely complex as we will discuss further in Module 2 Primitive and Evolved Brain.
- 3 Part Process - (stimulus, pre-state, appraisal) We first want to consider the stimulus to anger. This can be called the anger situation or trigger to the emotional arousal. We also want to consider the pre-state or the temporary mind state you are in at the moment of the anger situation whether it is calm, anxious, or chaotic. For example, if you have just had an argument with your boss before leaving work and someone cuts you off on the drive home, you would likely have a different reaction than if you were in a calm state of well-being. Finally there is the appraisal or your interpretation or thinking about the situation.

- Creative or Destructive – Anger can be creative or destructive. It can be a life giving force or energy that can propel us to fix unfair aspects of life, or it can be used to punish, hurt or get revenge in some destructive way.
- Beliefs about anger are significant – We all have some basic beliefs about anger, for example – “*anger is bad*” or “*it is unhealthy to be angry*”. Beliefs about anger impact trigger thoughts, which influence feelings, which in turn influence behaviors.

3 Basic Ways of Dealing with Anger

There are three main methods of dealing with anger:

- Stuffing – You frequently swallow your anger or simply don’t allow yourself to experience anger. The problem with this is that the anger may build toward resentment or explosion.
- Escalating – You let your anger out, not holding anything in. You dump your feelings onto whoever is around you at the moment. The problem with this is those around you must deal with the residual effects of your anger.
- Managing – You express your anger in a socially appropriate and healthy way. This is what this workbook is all about.

3 Types of Responses to Anger Triggers

- Emotional responses - Feelings we experience in conflict range from anger and fear to despair and confusion.
- Cognitive responses - Our ideas and thoughts about conflict such as the “inner voice” or internal observations we have.
- Physical responses - Include such responses as heightened stress, bodily tension, increased perspiration, shallow or accelerated breathing, nausea, and rapid heartbeat. Stress and anxiety management techniques are needed.

10 Characteristics of People with Anger Problems

- Low frustration tolerance - You do not tolerate even the most minor frustrations well. You are easily irritated. You have a short fuse. Some people with low frustration tolerance fume quietly, some explode verbally, and some resort to physical violence when provoked.
- Judgmental and critical reactions – You can feel and react quite judgmentally and critically at times. You can be very competitive and may try to win at all costs in a conflict or debate. You may be adversarial and don’t easily recognize the importance of other people’s needs, feelings or opinions. You believe strongly that you know the way things are and expect other to agree.

- Perfectionism - You can feel like what you accomplish is never quite good enough. You can put off actions or projects waiting to get them just right. Or there are aspects of your life where you feel you must give more than 100 percent or else you will be mediocre or worthless. If so, rather than working toward success over time, you may sometimes try to be perfect. You may also expect others not to make mistakes.
- All or Nothing Thinking – This is the basis of dysfunctional thinking which leads to anger problems. It sets you up from the start to fail. And it is actually a childlike way to move through life. You see things in black or white categories, either right or wrong, which is what we are taught in childhood. But adult reality is not so clear cut...there are a lot of gray areas especially when it comes to relationships and lifestyle differences.
- Possessiveness - Possessive behavior is a sign that you lack trust or are somewhat insecure. When you act possessively you are sending a clear message that you do not trust the other person and that you are handling that mistrust by being controlling.
- Poor communication – You may have trouble staying focused on what someone is saying and it may be difficult for you to listen carefully. You may not believe that communicating with others is effective or you've given up on discussing things. Or, you may simply be a quiet person and have never developed your communication skills.
- Punitive behavior – You may often feel like punishing others for various reasons. You have a belief that people 'should' do things the right way and if they don't, they 'should' be punished. You may also have been punished quite frequently as you were growing up.
- Addictive Personality – You may have a tendency toward substance dependence, or once you 'start' it is difficult to 'stop'. This may include gambling, food, pornography, exercise, work, and even relationships. This often implies impulsive behavior and difficulty in delaying gratification.
- Use Anger as a Way to Feel More Powerful – You automatically use the defense of your self-identity (ego) by becoming angry to avoid feeling vulnerable or 'small'. You cannot feel angry and 'small' at the same time; so you find yourself automatically feeling anger when you are challenged in some way.

Consequences of Maladaptive Anger and Stress

Physical Health:

- Weakened immune system
- Inhibited GI system; reduced nutrient absorption
- Reduced, dysregulated reproductive hormones
- Increased vulnerabilities in cardio vascular system
- Disturbed nervous system

Mental Health:

- Lowered mood; increased pessimism
- Increased anxiety and irritability
- Increased learned helplessness (especially if no escape)
- Very complex mind/body dynamics

Social and Interpersonal:

- Disrupted relationships which cause isolation

Behavioral:

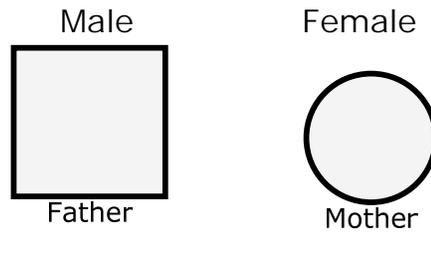
- Involvement with the criminal justice system

Record below what comes to your mind about any of the above consequences you may have had or are now experiencing:

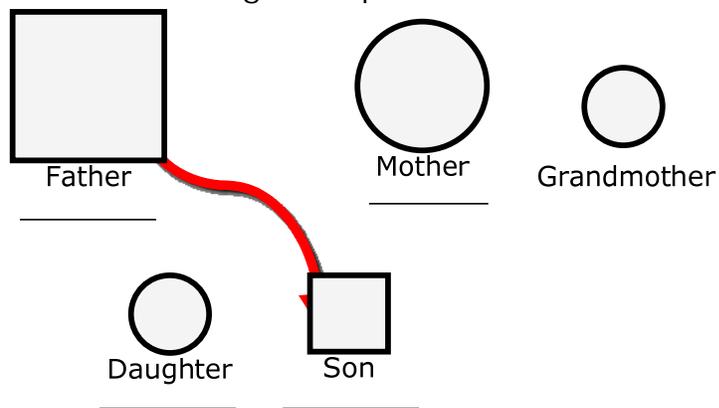
Notes:

Family of Origin Anger Diagram

When constructing a family of origin anger diagram, it is usually helpful to begin with yourself. Draw the appropriate gender symbol and make the outline darker than the others. Each person in your family will have a gender symbol with their name written below it.



Other Information may include age, and health issues including mental health problems. Also indicate any anger, drug or alcohol problems. Next, you will draw line between people who displayed high levels of anger toward each other as in following example:



(Example: Father angry with Son)

Create you own family of origin anger diagram:

Questions to consider about your *Family of Origin Anger Diagram*

Write down your answers in the notes below:

1. What stressors do you see as having had impact on your family? How did the family react to these stressors?
2. How do you see the flow (direction) of anger in your family? Where did the anxiety go? If you were to show a video of the anger in your family what would you see?
3. What forms of reactivity would we see? Would we see evidence of relationship cutoffs? Distancing? Conflict?
4. What symptoms developed in your family?
5. What else comes to mind about your experience growing up in your family?

Notes:

For more information about family diagrams, we recommend:
McGoldrick, Monica, Shellenberger, Sylvia and Gerson, Randy. Genograms:
Assessment and Intervention. New York: W. W. Norton & Company; 2nd Updated
edition (January 1999).

Healthy vs. Unhealthy Anger

Healthy Anger - is appropriate to the situation and is not used to punish, hurt, "get back at", intimidate, control or manipulate the other person. It is verbally expressed, discussed and let go. Healthy anger is not stuffed down or ignored. When anger is expressed in a way that allows us to express our feelings and opinions calmly, or when anger is expressed in a socially appropriate way that helps us to change unfair situations or to solve problems, it is healthy.

Example of healthy anger:

Using words to express our feelings like, "Your statement makes me angry because..." or "I feel angry when you..."

Unhealthy Anger - is an expression with the intent of punishing, hurting, "getting back at", or something destructive. This kind of anger is often experienced with great intensity and may include screaming and yelling, physical expressions of anger, violence or threats of violence, sulking, manipulation, emotional blackmail, passive-aggressive behavior (saying yes but acting "no"), or the "silent treatment". Anger that is "held in" until one needs to explode is unhealthy anger.

Example of unhealthy anger:

Putting someone down or being verbally abusive, fighting, hitting/kicking, punishing, or being destructive to self or other in some way.

What is Anger Management?

Anger Management is a process in which a person is open, honest, and direct, and mobilizes in a positive direction. The focus is on the specific behavior that triggered the anger and on the present (here and now). Managing anger effectively results in an increased energy level, effective communication skills, strengthened relationships, improved physical & mental health, and improved self-esteem.

The Anger Log

The Anger Log is an indispensable tool for awareness of anger feelings and responses, self-observation, and monitoring your progress. Use the Anger Log on the following page to record situations when you feel angry each day. You can make copies of the Anger Log here or the one found in the Appendix. The practice of using the Anger Log is a starting point for learning how to apply effective anger management skills, concepts and techniques.

ANGER LOG

<u>DATE/TIME</u>	<u>SITUATION</u>	<u>TRIGGER THOUGHTS</u>	<u>EMOTIONAL AROUSAL</u> <u>Scale: 1-10</u>	<u>AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR</u> <u>Scale: 1-10</u>

Anger Log Instructions

Fill out the Anger Log columns as indicated below:

Date/Time – when did the situation happen?

Example: “Nov. 14th around 8:00 am”

Situation – describe the situation that triggered your anger

Example: “I was driving to work and the person in the passing lane pulled in front of me ...cutting me off”

Emotional Arousal (1-10) – rate the degree of the angry feeling? If you felt some frustration or mild annoyance you might rate it a 1 or 2. If you were enraged you might rate it 9 or 10.

Example: “8...I was very angry”

Aggressive Behavior (1-10) - rate your angry reaction (action)? If you kept the angry feelings inside and did nothing you might rate it 1 or 2. If you broke some piece of property you might rate it 7-8. If you hit and hurt someone you would rate it a 9 or 10.

Example: “7...I caught up to him and flipped him the bird”

Trigger Thoughts – what thoughts did you have at the moment your anger was triggered? This can be tricky because we are often not consciously aware of having thoughts regarding our *feelings*. For example, if someone steps on your foot you might think that he did it ‘on purpose’. Or you might think that he is old and unsteady and I should have tried to avoid him. The trigger thoughts have great impact on the intensity of your anger feelings. They often reflect past experiences and are *interpretations* of the situation that sometimes can be rather distorted.

Example: “He only cares about himself”, “He is totally selfish”

It can't be emphasize enough how helpful it will be for you to keep a record of your anger situations. Notice any patterns to your situations, for example, what kinds of situations do you tend to feel intense anger but keep it inside? Alternatively, in what kinds of situations do you ‘blow up.’? The patterns will give you clues to what *issues* tend to be problems for you. Once you have identified your problem areas, you can begin to resolve them.

Homework:

Anger Log- Fill in your Anger Log for any anger situations this week.