ANGER MANAGEMENT

WORKBOOK and CURRICULUM

Evidence-based and Clinically Proven Practices

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GROWTH PUBLISHING
FOREWORD by
Ron Potter-Efron, Ph.D

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 35 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.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Anyone who attempts to put together a body of knowledge in the field of anger management stands on the shoulders of giants. I am certainly no exception and feel privileged to acknowledge the many people with whom this Workbook and Curriculum owes great gratitude and debt.

First and foremost is my wife and partner Anita Bohensky who steadfastly and closely stands next to me on these broad shoulders. I am thankful for her unwavering encouragement, her superior intellectual insights, and her expert editing without which I would be unable to publish at all.

I want to thank the NAMA Distinguished Diplomates including Charles Spielberger, Ron and Pat Potter-Efron, Matthew McKay, Harriet Lerner, William Fleeman, Jerry Deffenbacher, Ray DiGiuseppe, Chip Tafrate, Howard Kassinove, and Eric Dahlen, all of whom have advanced the evolution of anger management in so many ways.

I would also like to recognize Ken Wilber and Clint Fuhs of the Integral Institute for providing me with an intellectual framework from which to understand human reality and how significantly anger management practices fit into its evolution and development.

Finally, I would like to express gratitude to Andrew Cohen who has greatly contributed to my present spirituality.

Rich Pfeiffer
Tucson, Arizona
January, 2012
CONTENTS

MODULE 1 .............................................................................................................................................................................1
Getting Started and the Anger Log
Anger Quotes, Getting Started, Clarifying Expectations
What is Anger?
Anger is Multi-faceted
3 Basic Ways of Dealing with Anger
3 Types of Responses to Anger Triggers
10 Characteristics of People with Anger Problems
Consequences of Maladaptive Anger and Stress
Family of Origin Anger Diagram
Healthy vs. Unhealthy Anger
What is Anger Management?
Anger Log

MODULE 2 ...........................................................................................................................................................................12
Primitive and Evolved Brain
Human Development and Evolution of the Brain
The 2% Difference
The Human Brain
Primitive Brain, Reptilian brain, Mammalian brain
The Primitive Brain in Anger Management
Brain Research
Shadow Material and the Primitive Brain
The Primitive Brain is Automatic
The Evolved Brain is known as the Neocortex, Left Hemisphere, Right Hemisphere
The Evolved Brain and Anger Management
Neuroplasticity
The Seven (7) Conditions
The Big Question

MODULE 3 ...........................................................................................................................................................................27
Anger Awareness
Awareness
Lines of Development
Levels of Awareness
Self-awareness
Awareness Creates Choice
Body Awareness… Anger as a “signal-cue”
Special Place Visualization
Awareness of the Body
Awareness of Body Expression
Awareness of Anger Triggers
Emotional Intelligence (EI)

MODULE 4 ...........................................................................................................................................................................40
Calming Techniques
Ok-ness is a Calm Body/Mind
The Autonomic Nervous System
Activating the Parasympathetic Nervous System
Diaphragmatic Breathing
More Breathing Techniques
Body Relaxation
Meditation
Focus on Positive Feelings
Focus on Sounds
Other Calming Down Suggestions
MODULE 5 ...........................................................................................................................................................................53

Shame and Shadow Material
The Shame Problem
Shame as an Inevitable Human Experience
Healthy and Unhealthy Shame
The Unhealthy Shame-Anger Cycle
Healing the Unhealthy Shame-Anger Cycle
Shadow Material
Projecting Your Shadow Material
Destructiveness and Shadow Material
The 3-2-1 Shadow Material Process

MODULE 6 ...........................................................................................................................................................................65

Dysfunctional Thinking
What is Dysfunction Thinking?
Dysfunctional Thoughts
Dysfunctional Thinking Personality Types
Adjusting Dysfunctional Thinking
Restructuring Dysfunctional Thoughts
Working with a Dysfunctional Thought

MODULE 7 ...........................................................................................................................................................................78

Judgment and Criticalness
Recognizing Your Judgmental and Critical Reactions
A Non-Judgmental Perspective
Acceptance
Stereotyping is an obstacle to Acceptance
Self Compassion
Empathic Understanding
Self awareness
Self responsibility
Self vs. Other

MODULE 8 ...........................................................................................................................................................................92

Assertive Communication
Three Basic Types of Communication
Assertive Rights
Confronting Your Obstacles for Being Assertive
Criticism as Manipulation
Assertive Approaches for Dealing with Criticism
Slowing It Down
Stating Your Position
Active Listening
Compromise
Saying NO and Sharing Negative Feelings

MODULE 9.......................................................................................................................................................................106

Conflict Resolution
Why does Conflict Occur?
Conflict Resolution Styles
Basic 10 Step Conflict Resolution Method
Before Working Through a Conflict

MODULE 10.....................................................................................................................................................................116

Stress and Anxiety Management
What is Stress and Anxiety
Early Signs of Stress and Anxiety
Practices for Managing Your Stress and Anxiety
Don’t Fight Stress and Anxiety
Coping Statements
Letting Go
MODULE 11 .......................................................................................................................................................................131

Mindfulness
The Purposefulness of Being Mindful
The Need for Intention
What is Mindfulness Meditation?
How Does Mindfulness Help?
Mindfulness Meditation Enhances Brain Structure
Mindfulness in Anger Management
Mindfulness Pauses
Anger: Reactive
Anger: Non-Reactive
Expressing Anger Mindfully
Essential Elements of Mindfulness

MODULE 12 .......................................................................................................................................................................142

Practical Solutions
Developing an Anger Management Life Practice
STOP and Remember the Consequences
Take a “Time Out”
Ask the “Big Question”
Respond rather than React
Communicate Assertively
Check Expectations
Recognize and Manage Stress and Anxiety
Check for Dysfunctional Thinking
Focus on the Positive
Coping is Better than Blaming
6 Major Coping Skills
Develop Empathy and Compassion
Develop a Practice of Laughter
Develop a Breathing Practice
Relapse Strategies
A New Beginning

APPENDIX .........................................................................................................................................................................155

REFERENCES ...................................................................................................................................................................159

ABOUT THE AUTHOR ......................................................................................................................................................161
INTRODUCTION

Why do some humans want to evolve, to grow, and develop? Why is it that various people are motivated to go beyond their own limits? Why do we, at times, experience an urge to develop ourselves not just for our own sake but also for something greater?

This urge can be called the evolutionary impulse and I believe that it is none other than the energy and intelligence that propelled the birth of the entire universe and is animating our minds and bodies in this very moment. It is the same impulse that may have caused you to get this workbook and most certainly the reason for me to put it together. It is not just a fleeting thought or feeling. It is something way bigger. For me and a growing number of others, the evolutionary impulse is a vast power that is moving the whole universe’s evolutionary developmental process forward, and has been doing so since the very beginning of time.

The Anger Management Workbook and Curriculum comes out of an evolutionary and developmental viewpoint. Everyone can grow, learn new ways of responding to situations, and develop a more satisfying and fulfilling worldview. You will come to see how the Primitive Brain and Evolved Brain fit into improving your anger management skills, concepts, techniques, and practices. We can actually participate in our own brain’s evolution simply by practicing new responses to events and circumstances.

The Workbook and Curriculum is organized into twelve modules and is designed to be used on its own by individuals or with a guide, teacher, or mental health professional in a class, group, or individually. It is structured to complete one module per session/week. You need to make a commitment in advance to set aside time for the entire twelve modules. Stick with it and discuss any dissatisfaction with a trusted friend instead of dropping out. Because the Workbook and Curriculum's focus is on developing an anger management life practice, and each new component relies to some extent on what has previously been learned, we suggest you do the modules in sequence, although this is not absolutely necessary.

We will talk a lot about the Anger Log in this Workbook and Curriculum. A big part of the Anger Log will be recording the anger situations that arise for you. By recording and analyzing your anger situations you will become more aware of how you respond or react to the situations that trigger your feelings of frustration, irritation, annoyance, low and high levels of anger, and perhaps even rage. If
your reactions to these emotions do not seem to help you get what you really need then something is not working well. This becomes an opportunity for you to grow, develop, and evolve in this realm of your life. Perhaps it is, in fact, the evolutionary impulse that has brought you to this moment and you will be doing this not only for yourself but for something much greater. Your effort in finding more effective ways of responding to your anger situations is actually required for the evolution of the entire universe.

The following are four particular areas of personal growth and development on which we would suggest you intentionally focus:

*Presence* is your ability to be fully awake and alive to what’s occurring in the moment right now without distraction. A critical skill for developing effective anger management, presence is cultivated through acceptance of what’s happening in the moment. Presence helps you better understand how different “states” of feeling and being impact your life.

*Awareness* is your ability to fully live in your body and acknowledge your sensations, feelings and perceptions. An important skill for the development of emotional intelligence, awareness is your ability to sense your emotional state and different states of perception that color your interpretations and judgments, including hidden elements of your life called your “shadow material.”

*Perspective* is your ability to “see” and understand your own unique outlook and to take others’ views as well. The approach in this Workbook and Curriculum is particularly effective at helping you build your ability to truly “inhabit” other points of view and to see the bigger picture in any situation.

*Attention* implies not just your ability to act but also to attend fully to what is needed at this moment in your life: it calls for your ability to act with intention, responsibility and focus. Attention is an important aspect of effective anger management and required for the Big Question (aka: “What do I need right now to be OK, and to be healthy in the long term?”).

The best predictor of a positive outcome is your willingness to honestly examine and admit the consequences of your anger problem. Think for a moment what your anger has cost you in terms of your relationships, health, work life, and financial situation. You will need to be willing to look “inside” and take responsibility for your feelings and behavior. You will also need to be willing to be ‘wrong’ sometimes.

Go with your *evolutionary impulse*. Never give up!
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.

Male               Female

Father               Mother  

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:

Father               Mother

Daughter          Son

(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:
**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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE/TIME</th>
<th>SITUATION</th>
<th>TRIGGER THOUGHTS</th>
<th>EMOTIONAL AROUSAL Scale: 1-10</th>
<th>AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR Scale: 1-10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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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.


**MODULE 2**

**Primitive and Evolved Brain**

*The brain immediately confronts us with its great complexity. The human brain weighs only three to four pounds but contains about 100 billion neurons. Although that extraordinary number is of the same order of magnitude as the number of stars in the Milky Way, it cannot account for the complexity of the brain.*  

-Gerald D. Fischbach (Scientific American)

**Human Development and Evolution of the Brain**

There is a great deal of evidence that we humans slowly ascended from lower life forms to what we are today, by way of the evolutionary impulse – the energy and intelligence that gave rise to the universe and is animating our bodies, minds, and personalities in this very moment. Each evolutionary change had to prove its worth by surviving the continual battle for existence and this process has gone on since the cosmos was created out of ‘nothing’ – since the very beginning of time.

The brain is the organizational center of the broader nervous system reaching all the organs of the human body. The exciting and burgeoning field of neuroscience, although still in its toddlerhood, is wrestling with the enormous complexity of the human brain.

Fig. 1 Diagram of the human brain viewing the middle left inner side (1. prefrontal cortex, 2. insula, 3. anterior cingulate cortex, 4. pituitary, 5. hypothalamus, 6. hippocampus, 7. amygdala).
Becoming familiar with the vastly complex human brain makes this module somewhat technical and it may seem a bit overwhelming at first. For our explorations of the brain as it pertains to anger management we will begin to focus on a barebones sense of human brain neural anatomy and shortly I will further simplify it... so hang in there with me.

The human brain is made of many parts. Each has certain and sometimes multiple roles - to transform sounds into speech, to record emotions like anger or fear, to recognize a face, to tell the difference between a tree and a bird, or to store particular types of memory. This amazing organ is not a completely rigid kind of mass produced machine - each of our brains has uniqueness, and is remarkably perceptive to its environment. Its different parts are both interdependent and interactive and their tasks are somewhat flexible. At times one component will take over the duty of another, or crash due to some genetic or environmental glitch. The totality of the human brain is combined in a dynamic system of systems that performs millions of assorted duties. In fact, our brain may be so complex that it will never succeed in fully understanding itself.

The human brain may best be understood by tracing the essence of its evolutionary pattern. It is interesting to realize that the nervous system has its origins as ectoderm, the outer layer of cells that become skin (the boundary between internal (inside) and external (outside). Particular clusters of these outer cells began to fold inward to create a neural tube that would become the spinal cord. In other words, the origin of the neuron, the fundamental cell of the brain is related to the “outside” and makes its way to the “inside” to become the organ that links our external and internal environment.

Scientists tell us that as the human brain evolved, certain changes took place within our nervous system that caused it to develop various structures, over time beneficial for our species. Our ancient ancestors acquired “new and revised” neuronal sensors as a necessary means of survival. As a result, our ability to survive began to require increasingly complex actions and reactions to the environment, and our brain adapted accordingly.

The 2% Difference

The DNA of a chimpanzee is 98% identical to our own and most of the crucial 2% difference codes genes for our brain. In other words, most of human evolution is about one organ...the brain. Interestingly, some recent research indicates that the difference involves the human capacity for deeper relationships, empathy, compassion and cooperation.
Fig. 2 The Human Brain includes the Reptilian brain, the Mammalian brain, and the Neocortex.

The Human Brain

Here are some facts about the human brain:

- Size: approximately 3 pounds of tofu-like tissue
- Contains approximately 1.1 trillion brain cells (neurons)
- Contains approximately 100 billion “gray matter” neurons
- Activity: Always ‘on’ – 24/7/365 with instant access to information on demand
- Consumes 20-25% of body’s blood flow, oxygen, and glucose (fuel)
- Speed: Neurons fire approximately 5-50 times per second
- Signals crossing your brain travel in .10 of a second
- Connectivity: Typical neuron has 5000 connections with other neurons
- The average human brain has approximately 500 trillion synapses (firings) creating neuro-peptide-chains (wirings)
The *Primitive Brain* in humans is what we will call the combination of the Reptilian brain and the Mammalian brain.

Fig. 3 The Primitive Brain includes the Reptilian brain and Mammalian brain and is characterized by being both impulsive and automatic.

**Reptilian brain**

The innermost part of our brain is known as the reptilian brain, it is the evolutionarily oldest and most primitive part. The reptilian brain appears to be largely unchanged by evolution and we share it with all other animals that have a backbone. The reptilian brain maintains body functions required for sustaining life including breathing and controlling for body temperature. Reptiles are cold-blooded animals warmed by the sun and thus conserve their energy by restricting activities at night. At this level of evolution, behavior relating to survival of the species, such as sexual behavior, is instinctive and responses are automatic (think of alligators or crocodiles). Their territory is acquired and defended through aggression. In other words, in the world of the reptilian brain - force, power, might and strength determine success.
Mammalian brain

The next part of the human brain to evolve was the mammalian brain. A huge change took place as mammals evolved from reptiles, the mammalian brain contains structures for the more complex automatic management of body functions such as digestion, fluid balance, blood pressure, and the autonomic nervous system (ANS), as well as for storing new experiences as memory (hippocampus...see Fig. 1). This allowed for more efficient recognition of danger by relying on the memory of past experience. The capacity for some feelings about events was also developed in this part of the brain (amygdala...see Fig. 1). In other words, mammals became more aware of themselves in relation to their environment. Millions of neural pathways connect the hippocampus and amygdala structures to the brainstem allowing for mammals to be somewhat less rigidly controlled by instincts. The feelings of anger and fear as well as the ‘fight or flight’ response are now fully in place.

The Primitive Brain in Anger Management

The Primitive Brain consists of the less evolved structures of the human brain. ‘Primitive’ because it is older and less complex. The Primitive Brain includes the brainstem or reptilian brain, plus the mammalian brain or limbic system. When describing the location of the Primitive Brain I have often found myself placing my hand toward the back of my head and neck and toward the top of my spine. While it is true that the Primitive Brain structures are not located in the front of our head, it is not quite accurate to think of it as being just in the back of the head toward the neck either. The Primitive Brain is actually located above the spine and toward the center of our head. As the Evolved Brain developed around the Primitive Brain the neocortex enveloped it and moved forward toward our forehead.

As previously mentioned the reptilian brain is the oldest region of the human brain and is located at the base of our skull emerging from the spinal column. It evolved hundreds of millions of years ago and is much like the entire brain of modern reptiles. Therefore, it is frequently called the 'reptilian brain'. Various clusters of neuronal cells in the brainstem appear to be responsible for the human brain's general level of 'alertness' and to regulate a number of very basic automatic biological processes of the body such as breathing and heartbeat. The reptilian brain is responsible for the 'fight or flight' survival mechanism. The fact that this region of the brain lacked the capability for language helps us to understand why the reptilian brain relies totally on impulse, and instinct. Its function is linked with the basic human needs of survival, physical protection, dominance, and reproduction.
In summary, the mammalian brain structures are located in a slightly more forward and later developed region of the brain. It is similar to the brain of more primitive mammals and is the structure determined to be the home of basic emotions including anger and fear, as well as some early aspects of personal identity and various memory functions. Let’s now turn to some important issues of the Primitive Brain and why it is important in improving our anger management skills.

When we are angry and if we are functioning out of our Primitive Brain we automatically and impulsively react to punish, hurt, get back at, or somehow be destructive to whoever is the focus of our angry feelings. Inevitably, this means that we will also be somehow destructive to ourselves. Consider some of the consequences of acting out anger in destructive ways; there may be losses of your family relationships, losses of jobs, losses of self esteem, and the possibility of legal consequences including prison, to name a few. Logically we definitely do NOT want to function out of our Primitive Brain when we are angry! And yet, it is absolutely necessary for us humans to have a Primitive Brain - especially in regard of our survival. What to do? Some help comes from the area of brain studies research.

**Brain Research**

The amygdala (see Fig. 1) is a primary structure of the Primitive Brain and is important to our understanding of anger problems. The amygdala is responsible for processing the specific emotions of anger and fear.

Neuroscientist, Joseph LeDoux has empirically investigated the pivotal role of the amygdala in the specific emotion of fear (it is now recognized that this pertains to anger also); in particular the relationship between the Primitive Brain’s relay center, the amygdala, and the Evolved Brain. Perhaps the most significant result of LeDoux’s research is that sensory input to the brain is split at the Primitive Brain’s relay center into two streams - one to the amygdala and one to the Evolved Brain. The input stream to the amygdala is faster - 12 milliseconds as opposed to 25 milliseconds to the Evolved Brain. Less information goes to the amygdala more quickly - it operates as a rapid scan to check for threats. LeDouxs considers the amygdala to be the alarm system, for bodily safety and survival - thus the necessity for a rapid scan and an almost instantaneous instinctive (automatic) response. This ‘fast and dirty neuronal pathway’ results not only in a direct automatic bodily response to either an actual or a perceived threat, but because the amygdala also has slower connection to the Evolved Brain, it secondarily causes us to emotionally experience the feeling. We ‘feel’ the emotion a split-second after the physical bodily reaction. Not only is the Primitive Brain’s response ‘fast and dirty’, it is also very influential in that it primes the whole body for action through the release of adrenaline and cortisol into the bloodstream - which is why instinctual reactions or ‘passions’ are often so difficult to manage.
What if many of the difficulties in anger management could be explained by the automatic reaction in your body to what’s happening around you?

Stephen Porges, Ph.D., professor of psychiatry at the University of Illinois, Chicago, and director for that institution’s Brain-Body Center, has developed what he has termed the polyvagal theory. It is a study of the evolution of the human nervous system and the origins of brain structures, and it assumes that more of our social behaviors and emotional disorders are “hard wired” into what I call the Primitive Mind. To understand the theory, let’s look at the vagus nerve, a primary component of the autonomic nervous system (ANS). This is the nervous system that you don’t consciously control, that causes you to do things automatically, like digest your food for example. The vagus nerve leads from the Primitive Brain (brainstem) to regulate structures in your head and in other organs, including your heart. The theory suggests that the vagus nerve’s two different branches are related to the unique ways we react to situations we perceive as either non-threatening or threatening. Porges’ polyvagal theory is beginning to impact the work and training of anger management specialists, educators, and psychotherapists.

Confirmation that the amygdala is faster than the cognitive awareness of the Evolved Brain is supported in part our experience of driving a car and very suddenly encountering a dangerous situation. It is possible for your foot to be on the brake before you are fully cognizant of any hazard. With the awareness of an environmental threat comes a emotional response generated in the amygdala and processed along a ‘strong’ neuronal wiring to your Evolved Brain. As the perceived threat goes away, it can take a while for ‘Ok-ness’ to return because the wiring from the Evolved Brain to the amygdala is significantly ‘weaker’.

Shadow Material and the Primitive Brain

For many people, ‘shadow material’ (see Module 5 – Shame and Shadow material) is consistently related to the experience of anger.

When I lived in New York City I would regularly experience the driving habits of Manhattan cabbies. I’d be driving downtown when a yellow cab in front of me would suddenly stop to let off or pick up a fare. I had to jam on my breaks in order to avoid an accident. This would not have been a big problem except that I would have to wait while the cab fare transaction took place in front of me and I wouldn’t be able to pass the cab because there was heavy traffic moving in the adjacent lane. After the third time this occurred in the same trip I would feel a rush of anger. “What the f@#%... doesn’t this jerk realize that there are other people trying to get someplace?” OK, there is my ‘shadow material’; I have unknowingly disowned the part of my ‘self’ that is capable of not being considerate of others’ needs. In other words, I have forgotten that the cabbie is “just like me.” My amygdala “lights up” (becomes activated) and a shot of adrenaline and cortisol are released into my bloodstream. My body is highly stimulated and ready for action beyond the point of actual necessity and it takes some time for me to return to a sense of well-being and OK-ness.
The Primitive Brain is Automatic

Research supports the notion that no matter what degree of control is exercised by the Evolved Brain in terms of morals, ethics, good intentions, etc., when ‘the rubber meets the road’ in a stressful moment our body relies on the Primitive Brain’s automatic direction. In other words, under the influence of high levels of stress we may function out of the default animal-instinctual process of the Primitive Brain.

The top-down process (wiring from the Evolved Brain to the Primitive Brain) functions like a brake to the drive of the bottom-up process (wiring from the Primitive Brain to the Evolved Brain). What this means is that we want our reasonable, rational and logical Evolved Brain to intentionally kick in when the impulsive, automatic Primitive Brain has been activated. Consider the numerous reported experiences of people being temporarily ‘overcome’ with anger, fear, anxiety, or sadness; and their inability to be reasonable, rational, and logical. Some ‘anger’ situations, for example, are not really as threatening as they are first experienced, and still others may better be handled by “staying in” the situation without reaction in order to set up a more effective response. In other words, there may sometimes be an advantage to holding off the impulsive ‘fight-or-flight’ (survival) reaction while you work out a more evolved investigation of the situation and your options for handling it. This more complex response requires a more evolved structure which we are calling the Evolved Brain.

Can you think of time when you were functioning out of the Primitive Brain? Describe the situation below:
The Evolved Brain is known as the Neocortex

Fig. 3 The Evolved Brain (Neocortex) is reasonable, rational, and logical.

Neocortex

The Evolved Brain is frequently called the Neocortex which surrounds most of the earlier brain and contains roughly 85 per cent of the human brain mass. This enormous addition to human brain structure includes primarily the left and right hemispheres which are enclosed by an outer layer and interconnected by a series of nerve fibers (corpus collosum). The brain is actually divided into its cortical 'hemispheres' by a prominent groove. At the bottom of this groove lies a thick bundle of nerve fibers which allows the two hemispheres to communicate with each other. The left hemisphere usually controls movement and sensation in the right side of the body, while the right hemisphere similarly controls the left side of the body.
We have mentioned that with the development of the mammalian brain emerged feelings such as anger, fear, and the possibility of bonding with others. These human emotional arousals depend on wiring (neuronal pathways) which links the right hemisphere of the Evolved Brain to the Primitive Brain.

The left and right cortical hemispheres together are generally believed to be responsible for the development of human language, abstract thought, imagination, and some aspects of consciousness. Here is a general consensus summary of the functional distribution of activities of the two hemispheres.

**Left Hemisphere** – neuronal structures for: verbal communication; logical and organizing abilities; ability to focus on reality, detail, and local phenomenon.

**Right Hemisphere** - neuronal structure for: visual communication (using mental images); highly developed spatial abilities, imaginative and creative abilities; intuition, and the ability to focus on feelings and the ‘big picture’.

The Evolved Brain consists of the ‘gray matter’ which is directly related to the human thinking (cognitive) capacity. The two cortical hemispheres contain rather deep grooves and wrinkles which increase the surface area of the lobes allowing for enhanced cognitive abilities. The prefrontal cortex (PFC) is the most forward (anterior) part of the brain, lying in front of the motor and premotor areas. This brain region is said to be responsible for planning, organizing, and personality expression, decision making and moderating appropriate social behavior. In other words, this is the part of your brain having to do with thinking – being reasonable, rational, and logical. It relates to abilities to consider conflicting thoughts, to determine what is healthy or not, future consequences, working toward a defined goal, prediction of outcomes, and the ability to suppress urges that, if not suppressed, might lead to socially unacceptable outcomes.

**The Evolved Brain and Anger Management**

It is clear that we want to be functioning out of our Evolved Brain in order to be more effective with our anger. The term ‘effective’ here meaning we assert ourselves verbally in order to get what we really need to be OK (not to punish the other person) in the situation and to be healthy in the long run. Remember the neocortex is the part of the brain that is reasonable, logical, and rational. When we are in our Evolved Brain we can ask the Big Question, ”What do I really need in this situation for me to be OK” (What do I need to be healthy and effective in the long run?). The Evolved Brain is not really interested in punishing the other person, but rather in using the energy from the anger in order to help you get what you really need.
For example, your boss tells you to stay at work until you complete a project recently assigned to you. You have previously made a very important appointment for that night and you can’t miss it without causing lots of problems. Instead of flying off the handle or fuming inside about it, you go to your reasonable, logical, rational Evolved Brain and figure out what you really need in this situation. You need to work out a way to make it to your appointment. So you decide to go talk to your boss and explain the situation and discuss some options for both of you to get what you need. When you explain how important this situation is for you, in a calm way, the boss has to take you seriously and will likely try to negotiate a solution. Although this method is not guaranteed to produce a positive result – you will maintain your self respect simply by knowing that you asserted yourself and acted in a mature and evolved way.

Can you think of a time when you were functioning out of your Evolved Brain? Describe the situation below:
Neuroplasticity

Neuroplasticity is nothing less than the ability of the brain to grow new neurons and rewire itself including the pruning of unused pathways, which neurologists and psychologists once believed impossible. ‘Experience’, now believed by a vast majority of neuroscientific researchers, generates various structural changes in the human brain. Our nervous system activates the firing of neurons in response to a stimulus. This firing is similar to an electrical charge that runs down the length to the end of a neuron (brain cell) where it releases an activating or inhibiting neurotransmitter (neurochemical) at the connecting space (synapse) to the next neuron in the chain of a neuronal pathway. There are perhaps a hundred billion neurons in the average human brain which may be connected by tens of thousands of synaptic connections. Certain neurons fire when we have an ‘experience’ and a neuronal pathway develops between the various areas of the brain. These neuronal pathways may become ‘hard wired’ when we have the same or similar experiences over and over. By the time we are adults, our neuronal pathways are the result of the sum total of our experience up to that time, as well as some basic genetic factors.

Research has shown that new ‘experience’ kindles the growth of new neurons (neurogenesis) from uncommitted neural stem cells. Your experience may also cause neural firings that lead to the activation of certain genes causing them to produce proteins permitting new synapses to form and former ones to become stronger. Neuroplasticity suggests that the human mind can use the brain to change itself. In other words, we may literally be able to participate in our own evolution by careful choosing of our responses, experiences and practices.

When you focus your attention in particular ways, such as mindfulness meditation practice for example, you are activating the brain’s circuitry. This activation can fortify the synaptic linkages between those specific regions of the brain responsible for this intentional attention. Researchers now have data supporting this notion through the use of functional scanners (fMRI) and electrical monitoring devices (EEGs). Neuroscientists are looking not only at the brain’s physical structure and activity with these sophisticated measurement devices, but also the manner in which the brain actually works as a system. These studies reveal how new experiences produce functional and structural changes in the brain itself. Neuroscientists are also capable of examining the membranes of neurons, studying neurotransmitters (chemicals that effect brain activity) and their receptors, as well as observing clusters of neurons and their immediately linked adjacent cells. Consideration of this micro analytically focused research is both significant and hopeful as we will see shortly.
The Seven (7) Conditions

There are at least seven (7) conditions that tend to make us function out of the Primitive Mind. These conditions are:

- **Anxiety** - Anxiety is a complex combination of fear, apprehension, and worry, often accompanied by uncomfortable physical sensations.

- **Stress** - Stress (roughly the opposite of relaxation) is a term for a wide range of strong external stimuli, both physiological and psychological.

- **Drugs** - Drugs are any substance that can be used to modify a chemical process in the body, for example to treat an illness, relieve a symptom, enhance a performance or ability, or to alter states of mind.

- **Alcohol** - Alcohol refers almost always to ethanol, also known as grain alcohol, and to any beverage that contains ethanol.

- **Tired** - Tired is a feeling of excessive fatigue or lethargy, with a desire to rest, perhaps to sleep.

- **Hungry** - Hungry is applied literally to the need or craving for food.

- **Sick or Ill** - Sick or ill is an actual physical, pathophysiological process which may cause an abnormal condition of the body or mind.

So when you become angry and if you are experiencing any one or more of these seven conditions you are much more likely to be functioning out of your punishing Primitive Brain. This type of functioning can look and feel 'out-of-control' and impulsive... "things just sort of happen" as they say. It might be helpful to visualize or think of functioning out of your Primitive Brain as being like what happens with a ‘blender without its cover’... you very quickly get extremely stirred up and it can get quite messy. We will discuss these 7 conditions further in Modules 10 – Stress and Anxiety Management, 11 - Mindfulness, and 12 – Practical Solutions.
The Big Question

One very effective technique to overcome the problems associated with functioning out of the Primitive Brain is to ask the “Big Question”:

What do I need right now to be OK, and to be healthy in the long term?

Let’s take a close look at this question. “What do I need right now to be OK, and to be healthy in the long term?” Obviously, this is a thinking question, meaning you must think about it and begin a ‘thought’ process to determine an answer. To think about an answer you must function out of your Evolved Brain. The Primitive Brain does not have thinking capacity. If you have begun to function out of your Primitive Brain as a result of an anger triggering situation, by virtue of asking the Big Question you are now automatically redirected toward functioning out of your Evolved Brain.

But what does it mean to be OK? Ok-ness implies a return to a balanced state of mind, one of relative well-being and reasonably relaxed...coherence. The word ‘coherence’ here means flexible, stable, and adaptive. Other terms like: serenity, freedom from fear, or conflict, or stress, or tension help the understanding of what is meant by Ok-ness. A more relaxed state allows you to have more access to your Evolved Brain and for deciding on a healthy solution to the triggering situation.

One more important thing, the answer to the Big Question cannot be what someone else can do to make you OK. The answer must be what you can do for yourself to be OK. We may want the ‘other’ to do something to make us OK, however, this is not realistic to expect, and in fact, we have no control over the other to do what we might want. So, it is reasonable to ask another person to do something for us but the other person always has a choice...expecting others to make us OK is a prescription for disappointment and more anger.

You need to come up with an answer to ‘what do I need to be OK’, by figuring out in the moment what you can do for yourself...and take responsibility for your own feeling states. For example, if I’m feeling anxiety and then angry at my wife because she is not ready to go to the airport and it’s starting to be time to go, what I need to be OK, might be to figure out how to temporarily occupy myself until she is ready. This may mean looking at a magazine, or checking my email, or simply taking some deep breaths and trying to calm myself down or
whatever may be effective in a particular context. Figuring out options “to be OK” places you squarely in the Evolved Brain, as opposed to complaining, or criticizing, or acting out feelings in some ‘punishing’ Primitive Brain way.

Remember that Primitive Brain functioning is impulsive and automatic, so timing is of the essence. The Big Question must be asked prior to the anger feelings reaching too high a level of intensity, or else it will be too late to recover from functioning out of the Primitive Brain. If we use a scale of one (1) to ten (10), for example, we would need to ask the Big Question when the emotional arousal is roughly in the one (1) to four (4) range. The levels five (5) and beyond mean it is too late to achieve enough access to the Evolved Brain even to ask the question.

Homework: Anger Log
MODULE 3

Anger Awareness

*To be awake is to be alive.*

- Henry David Thoreau

**Awareness**

A person may be partially aware, subconsciously aware, or may be acutely aware of a mind state or an event. Awareness may be focused on an internal state, such as an angry feeling, or on an external event, like a basketball player skillfully dunking a ball.

*We are using the term awareness here in the relative human sense and not in the absolute pure Awareness non-dual meaning.*

Awareness is the state or ability to perceive, to feel, or to be conscious of events, objects or senses (taste, touch, sight, sound, and smell). More broadly, it is the state or quality of being aware of something. In other words, awareness is your capacity to acknowledge and be conscious of your environment, body sensations, feelings and perceptions. Awareness is an important function of emotional intelligence (EI). In this sense, awareness of anger is your ability to sense the varying intensity levels of anger states which color the judgments and interpretations of your experience. Awareness and emotional intelligence can be considered lines of human development or aspects of yourself that you can choose to grow.

**Lines of Development**

I’m sure you are aware of how some people are really good at some things and not so good at others. We can look around at the people we know and instinctively realize that each person has qualities of strength and weakness, or different lines of human development such as cognitive, emotional, moral, spiritual, interpersonal and self-identity to name a few. For example, I am a pretty good cook (the culinary line of development) but I can’t sing my way out of paper bag (the musical line of development). As we grow and develop through life, we pass through various levels of development within each of the numerous lines, maintaining all the capacities that we have cultivated previously and adding new capacities as we evolve. For example, no one is born with the facility of language—as young children we learn a few words and constantly, throughout our life, we add new words, concepts, and neuronal structures that expand our cognitive capacity to communicate more precisely.
A fascinating thing about these levels of development is that they are a lasting attainment, so language isn’t available one day and disappears the next. In the following pages of this workbook, you’ll have the opportunity to gain a clearer sense of how we all move through these levels of development, across the various lines. You’ll especially have a chance to gain a more comprehensive understanding of your own awareness and emotional intelligence. You are going to like all the benefits of growing in awareness and EI. I guarantee it!

Levels of Awareness

There are different levels of relative human awareness:

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<th>Levels of Awareness</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Self-awareness</td>
<td>- Focusing attention on self; processing self-information and incoming stimuli.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consciousness</td>
<td>- Varying degrees of focusing attention on the environment; processing incoming external stimuli.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unconsciousness</td>
<td>- Being non-responsive to self, others &amp; environment.</td>
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So, for example, when you are in deep dreamless sleep you are obviously in the unconscious state. When you are awake (or dreaming) you can be somewhat unconscious, conscious, self-aware, or meta-self-aware.

Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is a popular term describing the condition of being aware of your self. Anger self-awareness is the ability to accurately perceive your own anger 'in the moment' and understand your tendencies across various anger situations. A person with high anger self-awareness understands the internal process associated with their anger experiences and, therefore, has greater control over them.

Considering awareness from the perspective of the human brain we can say that having a very basic consciousness of one's internal (inside your body) and external (outside your body) world depends on Primitive Brain structures. We are automatically aware of our environment without actually having to think about it. This is the reason why we can sometimes drive a car down the highway on autopilot - without really 'concentrating’. "Higher" forms of awareness
including self-awareness require Evolved Brain functioning. To focus our attention on where to turn off the highway demands a higher level of awareness... we need to concentrate on the where, when, and how to exit or we will miss our turn. Increasing our awareness involves some concentration.

**Awareness Creates Choice**

Increasing our awareness of anger is probably the most important single capacity for effective anger management. This is because awareness creates choice. With enough awareness you begin to see how you’re creating an anger problem and you begin to experience your anger before it takes you over. There are basically two ways to approach life: you can live your life automatically, on autopilot, or you can live it more consciously, with awareness. Unfortunately, most human beings live life with little awareness, on autopilot. What makes development of awareness even more vital is if you’re living on autopilot, you don’t even know that is what you are doing. That’s why they call it autopilot.

Identifying the aspects of your life where you might be operating unconsciously is one of the benefits of this workbook. This curriculum is designed to be something like a mirror, allowing you to see what you might not ordinarily see for yourself, about yourself. Of course, whether you live on autopilot or with awareness is not an either/or (all or nothing) proposition. There’s a spectrum of awareness and each of us is hopefully developing toward greater awareness. The life long process of becoming more aware can continue to almost infinite levels – or it can stop somewhere along the way. This process pauses periodically to allow you to integrate the latest bit of awareness you’ve gained. Each new gain in awareness changes your perception of reality, and of who you are, and this new perspective takes some getting used to (think of yourself when you started your first job).

Whatever amount of awareness you have, you use it to navigate your life. As long as you can navigate with a reasonable amount of success with the awareness you already have, and as long as your environment remains relatively stable (in other words, doesn’t make any out-of-the-ordinary demands on you that require you to become more aware), you’ll likely stay at your current level of awareness. As long as what you’re doing works, you’ll keep doing it.

When something significant changes, however, your awareness will need to expand in a way that allows you to deal with the change. If it doesn’t, you’ll be handicapped in certain ways. Some people purposely seek to change and grow by intentionally putting themselves
in situations that require an ongoing expansion of awareness. They continually try new things. They take on new ideas. They put themselves in challenging and new situations like using this workbook. All these things can stimulate the development of increased awareness.

On the other hand, some people do everything they can to limit the amount of change they experience, or the amount of new information or novel experiences they have. For these folks, development levels off at a certain point – unless something beyond their control causes a significant change to their environment.

As your awareness expands, you see more. You watch, we might say, from a higher altitude looking down from the mountain. Your perspective grows. For instance, when you’re young, you’re more in the moment, but as awareness expands you gain a longer-term view. You plan more and sometimes delay gratification. You’re more likely to see the effects of the past on your life, and how what you do now will affect the future. As awareness expands you gain the ability to take increasingly larger and broader perspectives. At first, you may see only your own perspective, not even realizing that other people have a different perspective. As your awareness expands, though, you begin to see the perspectives of others, first of those in your own family, then your peer group, then the perspective of other groups.

If you continue to develop, your perspective can eventually take in that of all people, and even expand further perhaps to include all living things. It might eventually expand beyond that of living things to include seeing everything as part of an evolutionary impulse and of all separate selves being part of this One process.

An infant first becomes aware of his own existence as something or someone not separate from the rest of the world. He then becomes aware of his body and its movements and sensory experiences. Eventually he becomes aware of his emotions, and then, hopefully, his thoughts and beliefs. In many ways, however, the amount of awareness most people have of this ‘basic reality’ is just the tip of the iceberg. Most people are aware that they have thoughts and emotions, but only consciously experience them now and then. It is rather rare for a human being to be aware of how he creates his feelings, or of the effects of his thoughts. It is even rarer for a person to be aware of the thoughts, mental images, actions, and beliefs that underlie the reality he creates in each moment.
Why are your thoughts, mental images, actions, and beliefs so important? The answer is because these four things generate nearly all of your experience of life. Your internal cognitive processes, and particularly your mental images and beliefs, create how you feel, how you react or respond and what the things going on “out there” mean to you. These aspects of your mind make up most, if not all, of your experience of life. If you can become more aware of how you create them, you will gain a tremendous amount of choice over what happens in your life. Why?

Because: *Awareness creates choice.*

If you’re not aware of how you create your life, you’ll live it out automatically. The part of you that creates your experience of life operates continuously, whether you’re aware of that or not. If you’re unaware, you will create your life on autopilot, and you’ll get whatever you’ve been culturally programmed to create. In other words, your past will determine your present, for better or worse. For this reason, it’s very important that you become aware of the ongoing stream of mental images you make and the thoughts you think – and the effects they create. Ninety-nine percent of this likely happens outside your awareness, but it is nevertheless the raw material that creates your experience of life.

If you wake up enough – become aware enough, you’ll see exactly how the usually unconscious events generate your feelings and other internal states. If you aren’t willing to learn how to watch this stuff, though – then all of it continues to happen automatically - your angry feelings will continue to “just happen”. The really good news is everyone can become more aware, and because your mind states generate your behavior, your awareness of and choice over how you create your mind states will give you choice over your behavior. You’ll stop behaving in ways you later regret. With a wider, more aware perspective, you’ll see the consequences of your thoughts, mental images, and actions. And, in your more clearly seeing this, those things you’re doing that don’t serve you will fall away.

*Embodied Awareness... Anger as a "signal-cue”*

Embodied awareness is made up of various skills: the ability to detect sensations in the body, to direct awareness, to self-regulate, to tolerate uncomfortable feelings or physical discomfort, to remain steadily curious, to distinguish subtle differences of felt experience, and to compare states so that you learn to know what a particular feeling means for you.
Special Place Visualization

Take some time now to picture yourself in a calm, peaceful place. Make sure that all your major senses are involved. You should be able to see the shapes and colors, hear the sounds, and feel the temperature of the special place. If there are smells and tastes, include them too. Work carefully on constructing the image, developing as much detail as possible. Make sure that your visualization is creating OK-ness and a sense of well being and calm.

1. Think about a place where you’ve felt especially safe, relaxed, or content. It could be the beach, mountains, meadows, your childhood bedroom, or a remembered moment of deep relaxation and peace. It can be a real place, or you could just make one up. Close your eyes and try to see the shapes and colors of your place. Hear the sounds of your place; hear birds, waves, or babbling water. Feel the temperature of your place—is it cool or warm? Feel the textures of whatever you touch in your special place.

2. Make sure that everything in your special place makes you feel relaxed and safe. Change anything that doesn’t feel right. If you want to add some trees, put them in. If you want the sound of a waterfall, add it. If you want to be alone, take the people out of your scene. If you want your dog, put him in.

3. Now use your special place visualization quickly, almost like a reflex, when things get stressful. Go ahead and visualize your special place. Construct the scene as quickly as you can; really get into it until you feel the peacefulness, the safety, the relaxation. [Pause one minute.] Now get ready to leave the scene. Open your eyes and look around. Notice the environment. [Pause.] Now close your eyes again and return to your special place. See it, hear it, feel it, let it surround you and touch each of your senses. [Pause.] Now come back to the room and take a quick look at the environment again. [Pause.] One last time go back to the special place. Get there as quickly as you can, allow yourself to feel being there, see its shapes and colors, hear the sounds, feel it in your skin. [Pause.] Now come back to the room. You can go to your special place anytime you need to relax, to get out of a situation that provokes or disturbs you.

Embodied awareness is a process of directing your attention to what is happening inside your body. It is valuable to practice different ways of accessing information from the body and becoming increasingly familiar with the complex body - brain - environment feedback loop.

Awareness of Body

Human movement, in its huge variation and complexity, accounts for the major part of our brain activity, and movement is essential for the development of all brain functions. All responses and behaviors are in essence some sort of movement, whether it is movement of our eyes tracking an object we are looking at, changes in posture, speaking or simply moving from place to place.
So our muscles, which enable movement, become the container for habits, skills, and emotional learning. Muscles are the vehicle of action and reaction, of revealing or inhibiting. Patterns of our musculature embody conflicts and resources which tell the unique story of each of us. More recently we have learned from neuroscientists that mirror neurons which register movement in others make our own bodies extremely sensitive to the influence of the acts and goals of others.

The skin is the body’s envelope, demarcating the boundary between inner and outer. It helps regulate body temperature; it keeps harmful substances from getting into the body; and it is one of the exits for toxic substances to leave the body. The skin is the vehicle for tactile sensing. Tactile experience has the peculiarity ...of being at once... active and passive. Skin receptors are capable of very refined perception, registering changes in temperature and pain.

The state of your skin may reflect anger, fear, pleasure or excitement; it may become red or white with anger; cold with fear, or pliable with empathy. When we have a heightened sense of being exposed - embarrassed, touched by something, sexually aroused, self-conscious, or extremely sensitive - we may experience it directly as an energetic charge in the skin. Conversely, when people close down in order to protect themselves, this too may be felt at the skin level.

What happens to your skin when you feel angry?
What happens to your muscles when you feel angry?
Does anything else happen in your body? (tightness, sweat, shakiness)
Describe below:
Awareness of Body Expression

As humans we have a capacity for finely tuned communication via our face, eyes, ears and hands.

Fig. 4 Diagram of Body Expression Awareness

Awareness of face to face interaction and sounds enables us to participate in pausing and turn-taking in human conversation. It keeps the individual in a focused state. This process of interactive regulation enables you to shift between states of excitement and reflection, between an outward focus on the other person and a more internal state, between conversation and pausing. Awareness of your own body expressions as well as that of others helps you to be aware of the emotional states of both.

Awareness of Anger Triggers

It's important to notice the signal cues your body gives you when you start to feel angry. If you are aware of these signals you have a much better chance of managing your anger before automatically functioning out of your Primitive Brain. What are some of your internal anger cues? You’ll have a chance to consider this further below.

External triggers are what happen to you, like when someone verbally puts you down. Internal triggers are the messages you give yourselves, or thoughts that get you all worked up. They are sometimes based on assumptions, incorrect information, or dysfunctional thinking (See Module 6 – Dysfunctional Thinking).
For some people it is difficult to decide on their anger triggers. Triggers could be a thought, a behavior, or an event. Here are some examples:

- **Thought (internal):** Whenever James thinks of his boss’s self-serving demands, he feels angry.
- **Behavior (external):** Janine feels enraged when her father points his finger at her.
- **Event (external):** Whenever Kyle’s favorite sports team loses he becomes hostile and angry with those around him.

Example: If you know that going grocery shopping on Saturdays is a trigger for you because the store is crowded, then instead of getting angry - talk to your partner about finding an alternative. They might even be happy to do it for you and all you had to do was ask.

This may sound simple, and it is! If you want to avoid the anger then you want to be self-aware, and willing to make the effort to change something, in this case talking about the situation. Determining your anger triggers is the first step to self-awareness and recovery. Try the following anger awareness exercise.

Draw an iceberg showing just the tip above the water line. Label the tip of the iceberg: "anger."
• Think about a recent situation in your anger log.

• Write what you did with your anger in the space above the water line.

• What behavior choices did you make to deal with your anger? What happened as a result?

• What were any underlying feeling(s)? Write them beneath the tip (below the water line).

• Was the problem solved? Do you still need to tell the people involved how you felt?

• Evaluate your choices. What might have happened if you had chosen an assertive response to deal with your anger?

_Emotional Intelligence (EI)_

Although "regular" intelligence is important to success in life, emotional intelligence is key to relating well to others and achieving your goals. Many people believe that emotional intelligence is at least as important as regular intelligence, in fact, many companies now use EI testing to hire new staff.

Emotional intelligence is an awareness of your actions and feelings – and how they affect those around you. It also means that you value others, listen to their wants and needs, and are able to empathize or identify with them at different levels.

Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize your feelings, understand what they're telling you, and realize how they are affecting people around you. Emotional intelligence also involves your perception of others: when you understand how they feel, this allows you to function in all types of relationships more effectively.

People with high emotional intelligence are usually successful in most things they do. Why? Because they are the ones that others want around them. When people with high EI need help, they get it. Because they make others feel good, they go through life much more easily than people who are easily and impulsively angered.
According to psychologist Daniel Goleman there are five elements that define emotional intelligence:

1. **Self-Awareness** – People with high emotional intelligence are usually very self-aware. They understand their emotions, and because of this, they don't let their feelings rule them. They're confident – because they trust their intuition and don't let their emotions get out of control. They're also willing to take an honest look at themselves. They know their strengths and weaknesses, and they work on these areas so they can perform better. Many people believe that this self-awareness is the most important part of emotional intelligence.

2. **Self-Regulation** – This is the ability to control emotions and impulses. People who self-regulate typically don't allow themselves to become too angry, and they don't make impulsive, careless decisions. They think before they act. Characteristics of self-regulation are thoughtfulness, comfort with change, integrity, and the ability to say 'no' sometimes.

3. **Motivation** – People with a high degree of emotional intelligence are usually quite motivated in life. They're willing to put off immediate results for long-term success. They're highly productive, enjoy a challenge, and are very effective in many things they do.

4. **Empathy** – This is perhaps the second-most important element of emotional intelligence. Empathy is the ability to identify with and understand the wants, needs, and viewpoints of those around you. People with empathy are good at recognizing the feelings of others, even when those feelings may not be obvious. As a result, empathetic people are usually excellent at managing relationships, listening, and relating to others. They avoid stereotyping and judging too quickly, and they live their lives in a very open, honest way.

5. **Social Skills** – It's usually easy to talk to and like people with good social skills, another sign of high emotional intelligence. Those with strong social skills are typically team players. Rather than focus on their own success first, they help others develop and shine. They can manage disputes, are excellent communicators, and are masters at building and maintaining relationships.

As you've probably figured out, emotional intelligence can be a key to success in your life – especially in your relationships and career. The ability to function in various relationships and effectively manage yourself and others is very important to almost everyone, so developing and using your emotional intelligence are crucial.
The good news is that emotional intelligence CAN be taught and developed. Here are some tips to get started:

- Observe how you react to people. Do you rush to judgment before you know all of the facts? Do you stereotype others? Look honestly at how you think and interact with other people. Try to put yourself in their place, and be more open and accepting of their perspectives and needs.

- Look at your work environment. Do you seek attention for your accomplishments? Humility can be a wonderful quality, and it doesn't mean that you're shy or lack self-confidence. When you practice humility, you show that you know what you did, and you can be quietly confident about it. Give others a chance to shine – put the focus on them, and don't worry too much about getting praise for yourself.

- Do a self-evaluation. What are your weaknesses? Are you willing to accept that you're not perfect and that you could work on some areas to make yourself a better person? Have the courage to look at yourself honestly – it can change your life.

- Examine how you react to stressful situations. Do you become upset every time there's a delay or something doesn't happen the way you want? Do you blame others or become angry at them, even when it's not their fault? The ability to stay calm and in control in difficult situations is highly valued – in the business world and outside it. Keep your emotions under control when things go wrong.

- Take responsibility for your actions. If you hurt someone's feelings, apologize directly – don't ignore what you did or avoid the person. People are usually more willing to forgive and forget if you make an honest attempt to make things right.

- Examine how your actions will affect others – before you take those actions. If your decision will impact others, put yourself in their place. How will they feel if you do this? Would you want that experience? If you must take the action, how can you help others deal with the effects?

Homework: Anger Log
MODULE 4

Calming Techniques

“Nothing is so bitter that a calm mind cannot find comfort in it.” - Seneca

_OK-ness is a Calm Body/Mind_

The answer to The Big Question, “What do I need right now to be OK, and healthy in the long term” is in part about calming yourself down... soothing yourself, or as psychologists sometimes say, affect regulation. We know that both external and internal anger triggers automatically activate your Primitive Brain which in turn stimulates your sympathetic nervous system to deliver chemicals and other signals preparing you for the fight or flight response. A significant anger management skill is to be able to catch yourself early in the Primitive Brain anger process by using some calming techniques to relax your body/mind.

_The Autonomic Nervous System_

The autonomic nervous system (ANS) is an important part of your nervous system that acts as an automatic control system for maintaining equilibrium (balance) in your body.

Fig. 5 Diagram of the Autonomic Nervous System (ANS)
The autonomic nervous system (ANS) controls all the body's involuntary processes: respiratory rate, heart rate, blood pressure, digestive juice secretion, body temperature, and so on. It has two main components or branches—the sympathetic (SNS) and the parasympathetic nervous system (PSNS). When we feel angry, fearful or stressed, our brain activates the SNS, which has come to be known as the fight-or-flight response. This causes the Primitive Brain to release adrenaline (also called epinephrine) and cortisol, hormones that circulates through the bloodstream, affecting almost every organ. Adrenaline and cortisol rev up the body: The heart pumps faster and harder, causing a spike in blood pressure; respiration increases and moves primarily into the upper chest; airways dilate to bring more oxygen into the body; blood sugar rises to provide a ready supply of fuel; some blood vessels constrict to force blood away from the skin and the core of the body, while others dilate to bring more blood to the brain and limbs. The result? A body pumped up to fight or run, and a mind that is in hyper alert mode. In other words, you are no longer experiencing OK-ness.

**Activating Your Parasympathetic Nervous System (PSNS)**

The parasympathetic nervous system has the opposite effect to the SNS arousal action, allowing the body to calm down and re-balance. The activation of the PSNS supports the relaxation of muscles, slows heart rate and lowers blood pressure. It assists the breathing to return to its normal rate, as well as the digestive and immune systems to normal function. The parasympathetic mode also supports rest and sleep. A good example of optimal autonomic balance can be seen in a cat that responds alertly to certain potentially threatening sounds or movements, but, as soon as the situation is assessed to be safe, returns immediately to a relaxed state.

By intentionally activating the PSNS, you can take advantage of its natural calming effects and stop the escalation of the anger process. Here are some evidence-based techniques for activating your PSNS:

**Diaphragmatic Breathing**

When inhaling, completely fill your lungs, hold for a second, and then exhale slowly. Try doing this right now for a whole minute. This relaxed method of breathing expands the branches in your airways called bronchioles, activating the PSNS that controls them, causing them and the rest of your body and mind to relax.
Babies and young children breathe deeply and fully, using the dome shaped diaphragm that separates the chest and abdominal cavities to move air in and out of their lungs. Their bellies are relaxed and move in concert with their breath. This is the natural, healthy way to breathe. But as we grow up we are taught to constrict the abdomen, “Pull your stomach in and stand up straight”, and that training, coupled with an unconscious tendency to tighten the belly when we experience anger, fear or stress, disrupts the natural flow of our breath. With the abdomen pulled in, the breath is confined to the upper portion of the lungs.

Diaphragmatic breathing, on the other hand, activates the relaxation response only by stimulating the primary transmitter of the PSNS, the vagus nerve. This nerve travels from the brain to nearly all the thoracic and abdominal organs and triggers a cascade of calming effects. Most of the time we wait for it to be activated by something pleasant and hope for a trickle-down effect, not realizing that the nerve and the entire PSNS can be turned on from the bottom up by diaphragmatic breathing.

The Primitive Brain fight-or-flight response is meant to be triggered as needed, in those rare moments when we are actually in danger. Of all the processes regulated by the autonomic nervous system only breathing can be controlled consciously. This is why the first step in reversing our escalating anger process is to learn to breathe again the way we were born to breathe.

As long as you are breathing deeply and from the diaphragm, you will find that you can access a feeling of calm and OK-ness even when you are confronted with a provocative situation. And you may also notice that if you allow your breath to become shallow by breathing only from your chest, anxiety creeps in, your muscles tighten, and your mind begins to race and spin. When this agitated breathing is prolonged, it creates an unsettled and defensive outlook on life. Once you know this from your own experience, you can make a different choice.

Try the Diaphragmatic Breathing technique on the following page.
Close your eyes, put your right hand on your abdomen, right at the waistline, and put your left hand on the center of your chest. Without trying to change your breathing, notice how you are breathing. Which hand raises most as you inhale, the hand on your chest, or the hand on your belly? If your abdomen expands, then you are breathing from your diaphragm. If your belly doesn’t move, or moves less than your chest, then you are breathing from your chest. The trick to shifting from chest to abdominal breathing is to make one or two full exhalations that push out the air from the bottom of your lungs. This will create a vacuum that will pull in a deep diaphragmatic or abdominal breath the next time you breathe in. Focus on your breathing in this way for a few minutes.

More Breathing Techniques

Increasing Heart Rate Variability Technique - This technique increases and harmonizes the variation in heart beats, activating the PSNS to enhance physical and mental well-being. Try it now.

Breathe so that your inhalation and exhalation last the same amount of time; for example, you might count slowly to five for each. While doing this, imagine this breath coming in and out of your lungs, radiating calmness or peacefulness. Imagine yourself incorporating this positive emotion into your whole being.

Awareness Breathing Techniques - Awareness, in part, is the verbalized appreciation of the way things simply are – for example, the experience of "just being with" another person, or the movement of your body as you dance. You are in the moment, enjoying and appreciating what is.

Use your breath in helping you to become more aware in your everyday life. Cue into the process of breathing in all different situations - waiting for the bus, watching the sunset, sitting on the couch, eating a meal, playing with your dog, listening to your favorite music.

Ask what is my body doing? Where are my thoughts taking me? Who is the person I’m talking with? What does this food feel like in my mouth? Why is my shoulder feeling so tight?

Here is another breathing technique to help you experience being aware of awareness itself. Take some time now to give it a try. It is a technique that has helped many people who practice it regularly.
Take a few deep breaths...
Focus on you breathing.
Notice the in breath...notice the out breath...
Relax you whole body...
Relax your attention.
Allow all that is happening to be exactly as is.
Notice all that is happening, exactly as is.
Notice whatever it is that notices -
Notice awareness itself...

Breathing-Cued Relaxation
Try this Breathing-Cued Relaxation technique. It is best done by lying face up on the floor.

Start by putting one hand over your chest and the other over your abdomen, just above your belt line. Try taking a deep breath, way down into your belly. Really try to push your diaphragm down. As you breathe in, the hand on your abdomen should rise, while the hand on your chest remains relatively still. Focus all your attention on your belly - send your breath down, down, down to fill your belly. Let your breath slightly stretch, and relax your abdomen.

Cue-Controlled Relaxation
This deep-breathing technique stretches the diaphragm and very quickly relaxes abdominal tension associated with anger. It's crucial that you succeed in pushing the belly out with each intake or breath.

Select a word that will cue deep relaxation each time you repeat it. The word could be ‘relax’ or ‘Om’ or ‘One’. It could also be a color, such as green, or a feeling, such as love. One- or two-syllable words are best.

With your cue word in mind, turn your attention again to your breathing. With each exhalation, say your cue word to yourself. Keep saying your cue word for the next ten breaths.
**Body Relaxation**

To reverse well-established habits of holding tension in our bodies, we need to work with what yoga practitioners call the energy body. Body relaxation practices offer a precise, orderly technique for releasing tension from head to toe. There are a number of these techniques, and like all practices, they are best honed through consistent practice. They range in complexity from simple tension/relaxation exercises to techniques that require making fine distinctions among various points in your energy body. But all involve moving your attention through the body in a methodical manner. And all require that you withdraw your attention from the drama of your life. For the duration of this technique let go of your memories, plans, and worries, as best as you can and focus on what you are doing here and now as you move your awareness calmly and quietly from one part of the body to another. Breathing from the diaphragm, while systematically bringing your full attention to one point in the body after another, not only releases tension in the places where you place your attention, it also enhances the energy flow among those points.

Try the Body Relaxation technique now.

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Close your eyes, and starting with the toes and moving slowly up your body, ask yourself "Where am I tense?" When you discover a tense area, exaggerate it slightly, so you can become aware of it. Be aware of the muscles in your body that are tense. Then, for example, say to yourself, "I am tensing my neck muscles...I am creating tension in my body." At this point, be aware of anything that is creating tension in your body and what you might do to change it.

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**Progressive Muscle Relaxation**

Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) is a technique for reducing anger and anxiety by alternately tensing and relaxing the muscles. You can reduce levels of anger and activate the PSNS by learning how to relax the muscular tension. PMR includes a body and mind component. The body component includes the tensing and relaxing of muscle groups of the legs, abdomen, chest, arms and face. With your eyes closed and in a sequential progression, one muscle group is purposefully tensed for approximately 10 seconds and then released for 20 seconds before continuing with the next muscle group. The mind component focuses on the difference between the feelings of the tension and relaxation. Try the following Progressive Muscle Relaxation technique.
Make a fist with each hand and squeeze tight. Really concentrate on the feeling of tension in your fists and forearms. Hold for several seconds. Now relax. Feel the difference in your muscles. Notice heaviness or warmth or tingling or whatever relaxation feels like for you. Now raise your arms and tighten them, flexing your biceps. Hold the tension for seven seconds, and then let your arms fall limp by your sides. Once again notice feelings of relaxation, warmth or heaviness spreading through your arms as you let them drop. Really notice the contrast between tension and relaxation in your arms.

Now turn your attention to your upper face. Frown, squint your eyes shut as hard as you can, hold for seven seconds. Relax, and notice what it feels like to let go of tension in your upper face. Now tighten your jaw (not so hard that you'll crack a tooth) and push your tongue up against the roof of your mouth. Hold it for seven seconds. And relax. Notice what it feels like for your jaw to let go and be really loose. Now tense your neck muscles by shrugging your shoulders upward as far as you can. Wait a moment and relax. Let the relaxation move from your shoulders and neck up to your jaw and all the way to your forehead.

Now move your awareness to your chest and back. Take a deep breath and hold it. Tense your chest, shoulders, and upper back muscles, making your entire upper torso rigid. Take another deep breath. After seven seconds, let out the breath with a long, loud sigh, and let your torso go limp. Really melt down into the chair and focus on the difference between the tense and the relaxed states.

Now move your attention downward - into your stomach, lower back, and pelvic regions. Tighten your stomach, lower back and buttocks carefully. After seven seconds, relax and melt again into the chair. Notice feelings of warmth or heaviness spreading throughout your abdomen.

Now work on your legs. With your toes pointed straight out, like a ballerina, tense your thighs, your calves, and your feet. Hold this for seven seconds, and then let your legs totally relax. Feel the heaviness and warmth flood into your legs as they go limp. Now tense your legs again, this time, pulling your toes up toward your head. Hold for seven seconds and let the relaxation spread like a wave throughout your entire body, into your abdomen and your chest, into your arms, your neck, your face and forehead, until you feel totally relaxed. Take another deep breath.

Relaxation without Tension

The Relaxation without Tension technique can be substituted for progressive muscle relaxation when you wish to use a quicker, less obvious method – useful when you are actually in an anger-provoking situation. It can be used anywhere, without the potentially self-conscious routine of progressive muscle relaxation.
You go through the major muscle groups of your body in exactly the same sequence as the above progressive muscle relaxation. But this time don’t tighten anything. Instead, scan each muscle group for tension and relax away any tightness you may experience. The catch phrase observe and relax should be used frequently throughout this practice. Be sure to begin and end the Relaxation without Tension technique with a deep breath. Go ahead and try the technique:

Take a deep breath. Focus on your arms and notice any tension you may feel there. Now relax away the tension. Just let it go. Notice and relax the tension. Feel the difference as you relax your arms. Now turn your attention to your upper face. Notice any tension and relax it away, let it go. Notice and relax the tension. As you relax, really feel the difference in your upper face. Notice any tension in your jaw, and relax. Relax it away. Notice what it feels like for your jaw to let go, to be really loose.

Focused Awareness of Body Sensation

Focusing your awareness on a specific area of your body also activates the PSNS. Listen to your body and feel with relaxed concentration to your breath moving through your nostrils, or to the feeling of your chest filling with air; or the pressure of the ground on the bottom of your feet; or your tongue pressing up onto the roof of your mouth. By becoming aware of sensation in specific areas of your body you activate the PSNS and begin the calming response. Go ahead and try a couple of the mentioned techniques right now.

Meditation

Meditation is a practice that activates the PSNS by directing your attention away from worldly struggles. Meditating even for a small amount every day is one of the most powerful ways to work with your PSNS. Since the Primitive Brain anger process begins with the perception of some kind of threat, working with your mind to alter your perceptions is the most powerful technique for quieting your Primitive Brain reaction. Most of what activates your fight-or-flight response is not a matter of life or death. You may feel a threat to your sense of self identity—but your life doesn’t really depend upon the outcome. With rare exceptions, your habitual thoughts and beliefs that create the experience of anger for you are overreactions to situations in your life. Instead of responding in a way that floods the body with adrenaline, however, you can reframe the experience to make it not only less automatic, but also more accurately reflecting what is really happening.
How to begin meditation practice

Before you begin: First, decide to meditate each day if possible. Next, plan the time, place and duration for your sitting meditation.

Choose a time: Morning is often best because the mind is calmer than it is later in the day. However, the best time is the time that you can commit to on a regular basis. If one longer sit isn't possible, try two shorter ones.

Choose a space: There is no perfect place. If possible, dedicate a space exclusively to your daily sitting. Choose a relatively quiet space where you can leave your cushion (or chair) so that it is always there to return to. You may want to create an altar with a candle, inspiring photos or statues. These are not necessary, but are beneficial if they help to motivate you.

Choose a duration: As long as is comfortable. This is a general guide, not a rule. Even fifteen or twenty minutes will seem an eternity in the beginning, but that impression will change with time. If you sit each day, you will experience noticeable benefits (e.g., less reactivity, more calm) and be able to increase your sitting time.

Every time you sit: Set your intention: It is helpful to recall at the start of each sitting meditation why you are doing it. Remember that your purpose, to become more open and free, will benefit you and those around you.

Set your posture: Alertness is one of the two essential ingredients in every meditation. Sit on a chair, cushion, or kneeling bench as straight and tall as possible. In the beginning, sitting against a wall can help you learn what a straight back feels like. Around this straight-back position, let the rest of your skeleton and muscles hang freely. Let the hands rest comfortably on your knees or lap. Let the eyes close, bringing the attention inward.

Relax deeply: Openness is the second essential ingredient in every meditation. Once you feel your spine is erect, let everything else relax, hang loose, and soften. Breathing through the nose, loosen the face, neck, hands, and stomach area. You may want to begin at the scalp and move your attention slowly downward, methodically relaxing and softening each part of the body. Please don't skip the step of relaxing/letting go! Consciously releasing body tension will help you open to whatever arises during your meditation. Try the exercise below:
Choose your object of meditation: Once you've established an alert and open posture, you are ready to decide where you'll place your attention. Some useful objects are:

- The breath as it enters and leaves the nostrils.
- Other body changes during breathing, for example the rise and fall of the chest.
- Sounds as they arise from within the body or outside of it.
- Other body sensations as they arise.

Whatever object you select, stay with it for at least ten breaths. Even with this effort, your mind will insist on going to its usual places. Make note of this when it happens, and gently lead your attention back to the chosen object of meditation. Your intention and persistence are the key ingredients for cultivating awareness, not the number of times your mind wanders. As often as you need to, check yourself, "Alert and erect? Relaxed and open?" - and begin again.

Meditation helps you understand your mental habits by giving you the opportunity to observe them from a neutral vantage point. This is why I have often prescribed meditation to my patients as a way to manage their anger.

When you are first learning to meditate, the mind will wander away from the object of meditation to dwell on some other thought. This will happen again and again. Your job is to gently and repeatedly bring your attention back to your object of meditation (e.g. breathing, gratitude, compassion), and to do it patiently, without judgment. Sometimes it may seem as if the distracting thoughts are like movie images projected onto a personal viewing screen in your mind. The ability to simply observe them is evidence that they aren't you. And the ability to distinguish between the inner observer in you and the chaotic jumble in your mind means that you can respond with a reasonable, rational, logical Evolved Brain.

The more you practice meditation, the more you will be able to discriminate between what is real and what is not—between what is truly life-threatening and what is just a habitual overreaction. And once you begin to see that almost everything that triggers your sympathetic nervous system is merely a habitual overreaction, you can begin to make different choices.

Meditation is likely to prove challenging in the beginning. However, its benefits absolutely outweigh the required effort. We will return to the subject of meditation in Module 11 – Mindfulness.
Focus on the positive feelings

Positive feelings like gratitude, joy, contentment, serenity and tranquility also activate the PSNS. It's sometimes hard to make yourself think positively on demand but pick out one the positive feelings from the list below and concentrate on it... let yourself breathe in the positive feeling... stay with it as long as you can.

Positive Feelings List

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This is, in fact, another imagination technique for activating the PSNS, however, it is also an actual experience that helps to create new neuronal pathways in your Evolved Brain. Practicing the positive feeling exercise on a regular basis literally creates new wiring that you may call upon at will in the midst of a provocative situation.
**Focus on Sounds**

The practice of concentrating on sounds has also been shown to activate the PSNS. Try one of the techniques below and see if works for you.

Close your eyes and stand very still. Listen carefully. What is the furthest sound you can hear? Concentrate on that one. Hear it with the "ear" of every cell of your body. Stand very close to a tree or bush. Listen only for the sound of the wind playing with the leaves or branches.

Or, locate a source of running water - a river, a stream, a waterfall. Close your eyes and allow the sound of moving water to fill you. Try to attend to nothing else. Hear the water with your whole body. Imagine that it is running through you - the channel. Allow it to cleanse and refresh you. Become a part of the water.

Alternatively, most large buildings have an air-conditioning system or heating system which makes a continual background noise. Close your eyes and listen for this sound. Use the sound to relax yourself.

**Calming Music and BrainWave Stimulation**

Another approach is to listen to calming music, or a brain wave stimulation program. It takes no effort on your behalf to listen to these which may be very welcome at the end of a long, hard day's work!

Quite obviously, you can buy relaxing music in very many places and you may already own some. You can listen to MP3s, for example, on an iPod.

You can to find out about Growth Central’s BrainWave Stimulation Programs on our website www.growthcentral.com. Our "Calm", "Complete", “Patience”, Soothe" and "Heal" MP3s are easily downloaded via email, inexpensive and have proven to be very popular as a way to assist structural brain changes enhancing the balance between the primitive and evolved brain as well as hemispheric synchronization. The entrainment programs are instantly available so you can try them out and see their effectiveness right away.
**Other Calming Down Suggestions**

Even the most seemingly ridiculous of the suggestions below usually help to calm yourself.

- Take a cold shower or bath
- Memorize a poem or scripture
- Take out the garbage
- Go to the convenience store and buy a cup of coffee
- Walk the dog
- Call a friend on the phone
- Rub Vicks Vapor Rub under your nose
- Wash the dishes

One of the best techniques of all is to wait 15 minutes before reacting to a situation, and then ask yourself if you can wait another 15 minutes, and so on.

**Homework:** Anger Log
MODULE 5

Shame and Shadow Material

While his mother talks to a neighbor outside the house, a two-year-old child explores the outdoors. He finds a special place nearby where he digs happily in the soft soil. He feels proud of his accomplishment. “Look at me,” he wants to tell the world. “Look at what I can do. I am good.”

“Just look at this mess!” says his mother with scorn. “Look at you. You are filthy dirty! Your clothes are ruined. I am disappointed in you. You ought to be ashamed of yourself!”

The child experiences himself as very small. He drops his head and stares at the ground. He sees his dirty hands and clothes and begins to feel dirty inside. He believes there must be something very bad about him, something so bad he can never really be clean. He fears his mother’s disdain. He sees himself as defective and small.

The Shame Problem

Shame begins in very young children as an emotion that requires another person. As children we have three options for dealing with shame; (1) find a caring other to attach to us with love and approval, (2) try to avoid the shame experience somehow, or, (3) comply with the shaming message. Since infants and children don’t always have an optimally attached parent (consider the mother in the example above) to pick them up and look into their distressed eyes with love and approval, they often avoid painful shame emotions with the defenses they can muster. Small children generally can’t self-regulate shame so, in the absence of an attuned caregiver, they deal with it as best they can using their magical worldviews, emergent memory capacities, and immature self defenses. A rather typical child’s defense is their experience of shame almost immediately moving through humiliation to rage (a meltdown). The parasympathetic (PSNS) collapse of shame, or the withdrawal into unacceptability, is avoided by stimulating the sympathetic (SNS) rush of rage which feels more powerful and tolerable. Here lies the problem of shame in anger management. Shame is a tricky emotion.

Emotions regulate and influence everything we think or do including our moods, our sympathetic/parasympathetic autonomic balance, our beliefs, and our social relationships. If we are relaxed, wide open, and accepting, our emotions will naturally flow with our purpose of the moment. Emotion that is defensively repressed, amplified, or forbidden cannot easily flow back into a healthy rhythm of harmony and needs firm internal guidance, or self-regulation.
One of the problems with shame is that we don’t develop the neural brain structures to be able to process it with mature self-awareness until we are at the very least adolescents. In particular, around eleven we just begin to be able to handle competing concepts at the same time. We just begin to have the capacity to consider that shame is an unpleasant experience that indicates we have violated an internal sense of how we should be, and that we need to tolerate the discomfort, all while accepting ourselves as imperfect but lovable beings.

Younger children’s brains have difficulty tolerating any discomfort such as shame emotions, much less looking for guidance and wisdom in such discomfort. This means everybody’s initial preparation in dealing with shame has aspects of trying to avoid the experience, and that certain forms of more mature processing can only be learned when we are more self-aware.

Shame and guilt can sometimes be confused. Guilt is when you have done something wrong. Shame is when you are something wrong. For example, a child might feel guilt if she broke her mother’s vase and hid the pieces, but she might feel shame if her mother then told her she was a clumsy, no-good sneak who would never amount to anything.

Shame as an Inevitable Human Experience

Most of us have felt shame because, as mentioned, it is perhaps an inevitable human experience. We have all suffered feelings of incompetence, inadequacy, and inferiority; known a sense of failure or defect; been scorned or unacceptable to another. Shame is among the most painful of human feelings. If we were to listen to it all the time, we might be driven to take desperate action or just give up in despair. This shame often seems too painful to endure, which helps us to understand why it often goes underground to our unconscious. We can defend against our shame so well that we are literally unaware of its existence.

Healthy and Unhealthy Shame

Shame can be healthy or unhealthy. Healthy shame is normal and temporary, and it provides specific messages for you that maintain a healthy balance for your thoughts and behavior. For example, if you feel shame about showing up late to work, that motivates you to show up on time after that. Most people can stand up to normal, temporary shame. That kind of shame certainly hurts, but it will eventually disappear.
Unhealthy shame, by contrast, is excessive and distorted. People with unhealthy shame have been shamed more than normal by prolonged, repeated, or perhaps chronic situations. Excessively shamed persons often bury an almost intolerable sense that their shame can never go away, and are completely unaware of any shame at all. They have become completely unconscious to the fact that deep down inside they feel inadequate.

Think about a time when you might have had a shame situation. Keep in mind that a shame experience most often has to do with feeling small, or unacceptable, or inadequate, or embarrassed, or humiliated. Describe the situation, how it felt, and how you reacted to it below:

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The Unhealthy Shame-Anger Cycle

Shame is an emotion that feels so awful that many people try to avoid it at all costs. It's driven by the flooding of a neurochemical arousal. Here is how it works. We have a self identity (ego) and an ideal of how we want to present ourselves to the world. Shame is a message about our self identity that hits in the pit of the stomach. It is saying that we are not being perceived as we want. It says, "You are bad. You are unacceptable." It happens when you feel threatened to the very core of who you are. Shame rears its ugly head when there is a threat and you feel helpless, humiliated or embarrassed. If you lose control when you are angry, you have learned to substitute the emotion of anger to take yourself out of the bad feelings of being unacceptable or “small”.

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When you are very angry (above 5 on the Anger Scale) your Primitive Brain releases both adrenalin and cortisol to prepare you to defend against feeling “small”. Your body heats up and your sense of self expands. However you are not in control of your vehicle. A nasty autopilot has the pedal to the metal and ugly things are coming out of your mouth which you will likely feel bad about later. You have been hijacked! You have lost yourself because anger has taken you over when you felt a threat to your self identity.

According to anger management expert Ron Potter-Efron, author of *Rage: A Step-by-Step Guide to Overcoming Explosive Anger*, four different threats produce four different kinds of neurochemically-driven anger (rage) which come from different types of shame. It is important to remember that the shame-anger cycle is primarily unconscious – until we make it conscious:

**Survival Anger** - when you are physically attacked and your body might be injured.

**Impotent Anger** - when you feel threatened and feel utterly helpless and unable to deal with the situation so you become angry instead.

**Attachment Anger** - when you feel threatened because you might be abandoned or rejected by someone you care about. This type may have developed if you had a rejecting sort of parent who used withdrawal and threats to discipline you.

**Shame-Anger** - when you feel humiliated, embarrassed, or ridiculed and your self esteem plunges and you become angry in order to cut off the bad feelings. This type typically develops if you've had a critical, abusing parent, or partner, or were bullied as a child.

Here are three more shame-anger types specific to certain situations where you feel unacceptable.

**I'm Not Garbage Shame-Anger** - if your family was poor, or lived in a run down place, or your parents were dysfunctional alcoholics or different in some undesirable way, you were probably embarrassed by them as a child. As an adult, you get angry when you are reminded of how you are different from others.

**Loss of Performance Shame-Anger** - loss of your identity as a person because you are less of a functioning person than you used to be. You may have lost stamina, memory, or are disabled and can't work.

**Guilt Induced Shame-Anger** - you feel ashamed of yourself because you have not lived up to your values or moral principles and have become someone you don't respect. When someone is critical of your behavior, you become angry to get the other person to back off.
Healing the Unhealthy Shame-Anger Cycle

You will want to challenge the five core shame messages that cause you to feel worthless and small.

1.) You are no good.

2.) You are not good enough.

3.) You are unlovable.

4.) You don't belong.

5.) You shouldn't exist.

These are shaming statements that were thrown at you by someone else or through your own feelings of powerlessness.

Defending against the feeling of shame only keeps the cycle going. As long as you will not allow the feeling of shame to be present, they will stay with you. You cannot successfully push away shame feelings. You must go through them. The best idea is to bring them out into the sunlight and deal with them head on. Understand the process that sends you from feeling threatened right into feeling anger so that you avoid feeling the shame. Learn about shame, bullying and scapegoating. Figure out what types of shame you have.

What triggers your powerlessness and helpless feelings and what sets you off? Really take your Anger Log seriously, especially the Trigger Thoughts. Become aware of what's happening inside you in order to become the master of your feelings instead of letting them master you. Learn to observe the process of feeling a threat (a trigger that threatens self identity) and the automatic swing into anger. Step back and watch how you lose your control and give away your power to do something effective when you feel threatened. When vulnerable feelings such as disappointment or frustration arise say, "This is a feeling. It's only a temporary feeling. Feelings are meant to be felt. That's why they are called feelings. I choose to breathe through this feeling rather than act it out."
Review the following helpful skills and techniques.

**Take Responsibility:**
Taking responsibility for your own actions can become a way to gain self esteem. Allow yourself to feel the emotion of shame. Leave the upsetting situation and hang out with the feelings of shame. To defuse its power, call it by name. "So this is shame. I'm being flooded with adrenalin. I can handle this. Even though it feels excruciating, I can breathe through it." Find an anger management specialist to help you look at the pattern of violence that you learned in your family, the neighborhood or at school when you were young or when you were in an abusive relationship. Living with an aggressive person may have affected you so deeply that you took on the energies of the aggressor. Real strength is learning to allow feelings of hurt, disappointment and vulnerability instead of flying off the handle.

**Listen to your body:**
Catch yourself when you start to trigger, heat up and lose control. Observe how your body reacts when you are about to trigger. Does your stomach tighten up or your jaw clench? Do you stop breathing? Do you feel the adrenalin rush as your first clue? Does your heart beat faster? Find your body cues that signal you are losing it. Learn body cues to break the shame-anger cycle before it becomes punishing behavior.

**Coping statements:**
Use coping statements to keep yourself from blowing up. Talk yourself down. Use several phrases that calm you down such as "This isn't worth it. I refuse to lose it. I don't have to go down the anger road. I can leave instead of blowing up and ruining things." Cool yourself down with deep breathing. Tell yourself, "I will learn to deal with frustrating situations."

Be kind to yourself as you are learning these new skills and techniques. You are breaking habits of a lifetime. If you mess up and revert back to old behavior, analyze what went wrong. Don't beat yourself up - that only makes things worse. Tell yourself that you made a slip and you will be more aware next time. Keep whittling away at the shame-anger cycle. You will get better over time if you keep at it. Give yourself a break; this is a process. You are not a bad person when you feel helpless or poorly about yourself. Forgive yourself for doing what you learned growing up. Change destructive reactive patterns of shame/anger and develop the person you really want to be. Use your capacity to understand your emotions, own them and work with them instead of acting them out. Deeply desire to change and you will. You deserve to have a satisfying, happy life.
We will now turn to the fascinating subject of ‘shadow material’ which is closely related to the issue of shame and very relevant to anger management.

Shadow Material

Shadow material is composed of both negative and positive qualities of ourselves that we do not want to accept as part of our self identity and personality. In other words, shadow material has to do with those aspects of our life that belong to us but that we do not recognize or wish to claim as belonging to us. Shadow material is experienced as “not self” (“I’m not angry, but my husband sure is,” or “I am so impressed with him, he is the most incredible person on the planet.”) It is created when we attempt to rid ourselves of a trait of our personality we find threatening. Although presumably “hidden,” these disowned parts show up all over the place. In fact, what we hide from ourselves may be quite obvious to everyone around us. Others can often see our shadow material... plain as day.

We project onto someone or something else, like a movie projector onto a screen, these undesirable and buried thoughts, motivations, desires, or feelings. When we do this, we have no awareness that we are doing it, in other words, these motivations, feelings, and traits appear to be "outside" of us. Although these qualities are now believed to be "outside" of us, they are actually still a part of us, although loathed. So when we see them in someone else we feel angry, critical or distain. This is not to say that the other does not possess the qualities that we find distasteful. Sometimes a jerk is really just a jerk. But why does it bother us so? Why does it consume our thoughts? Why does it affect us so emotionally? Why do we find ourselves complaining about this person nonstop? If the negative or positive qualities of another person infuriate, disturb, or disgust us, chances are we are looking our shadow material in the face.

Here are a few images you might find helpful in visualizing and better understanding the power of shadow material and how it gets formed.

At 2 or 3 years of age as a child in motion you were a living sphere of energy. But one day you noticed that your parent(s) didn’t like certain parts of this radiant “ball of energy.” “Can’t you be still?” “It isn’t nice to push your brother.” So, to please your parents and retain their love, you began to stuff those parts of your being that they didn’t want into an invisible bag that you dragged behind you. By the time you got to elementary school, this invisible bag was quite large.
At school, the teachers took over as you continued to learn appropriate social behavior, and a lot more went into the bag. By adolescence and high school, this invisible bag may have been “a mile wide.” And then your peers took over. It’s no longer just grownups now who were to be pleased. Indeed, your parent(s) may have watched with dismay as peer pressure caused you to stuff many wonderful parts of yourself into the bag, while they, your parent(s), at the same time, might have wished that they could stuff some other parts in the bag that didn’t seem quite so wonderful. At any rate, by the time you were in your twenties you had only a slice from that original, radiant ball of energy; the rest is stuffed into this very wide, invisible bag that you were dragging behind you.

Keep in mind that this shadow material is not just the “negative” parts of ourselves – our anger, aggression, selfishness, jealousy, greed, and anti-social tendencies – it’s not just those aspects that go into the bag – but also our “positive” parts – our creativity, our exuberance, our ecstatic joy – whatever doesn’t fit into our particular cultural worldview is cut off and goes into the shadow bag. However, we will focus on the negative or dark shadow material as it mostly pertains to anger management.

To spot your shadow material, you can notice when another person triggers you, either because of a positive or negative quality. If you are not able to own that quality in the 1st-person, for example, if you think, "I am not angry," then you are likely hot on the trail of uncovering some of your shadow material. When you push that quality away or project it onto the 2nd-person, "I am not angry, but she sure is," you can be fairly certain you are dealing with some shadowy aspect of yourself. If it is a quality that is threatening to your self identity, you may push it even further away from the self, into the 3rd-person. "There is a lot of anger in the world."

Projecting Your Shadow Material

The phenomenon of projecting your shadow is that of using another person, or nation, or culture as a carrier for your shadow – for those parts of yourself that belong to you but which are not recognized as belonging to you. These projections can go in two directions. On the one hand, you may ask others to carry your “negative shadow,” those parts of reality that you regard as negative and don’t want to be identified with, that you literally don’t see as being parts of yourself.
The “black sheep” of the family is the designated shadow carrier for unwanted aspects of a family, for example. This doesn’t mean there might not be a hook in these shadow carriers, or that bad things weren’t done, but the projection of the shadow has to do with the way you relate to the other, namely, that you prefer not to relate, not to see the other as yourself. You may keep a distance. You build up barriers between yourself and “the other,” which more easily enables you to keep the projection going. Thus, a clue to a projection of your negative shadow is your passionate anger, judgment and criticalness of the other. Here lies a little known profound aspect of anger management. Whenever you feel passionate anger, judgment or criticalness, you have uncovered some of your shadow material.

Watch what really angers you. Watch what you judge. Watch what you criticize. There’s a clue there for something that belongs to you but has not been accepted. In other words, if you feel something a little over the top, you can bet there’s some connection there. This doesn’t mean you’re exactly like the individual who angers you, but you’re in the same ballpark and don’t yet realize it. Maybe it relates to a similar issue with power, or self-importance, or weakness, or greed, or fear. If you wonder about your shadow material, watch what triggers your anger.

_Destructiveness and Shadow Material_

How do you work with the energy of your shadow material without having it destroy the life you’ve built up? You will eventually need to engage with the disowned projected aspect of yourself – and if not, it will eventually engage you in some very unpleasant ways. For example, the more one denies their shadow material, the more ready one is to find the quality in others.

In the box on the next page is an illustration of William a male teacher who began dating Barbara who is a female artist. William had been in a previous relationship that did not work out very well partly because he was quite controlling and had a pretty bad anger problem. Barbara had also been in a previous marriage relationship to a man who was a hard working guy but whom she found critical and boring. Dissatisfied with her marriage, Barbara distanced herself from her husband and found a sympathetic ear in her new teacher friend, William. As you read through the description try to figure out what William might need to work on in himself.
William a respected teacher started to date Barbara an attractive local artist. At first, William listened intently to Barbara and the attraction and fantasy grew for both. However, as William began to experience deeper emotional connection his fears increased and his shadow material began to emerge in full force. William was fearful that ‘others’ close to him would ‘control’ his life, completely unconscious of his own tendency to ‘control.’ William soon began to feel very angry toward Barbara when she would suggest that they go to see certain movies. He did not call her after this and the relationship dissolved. William projected onto Barbara his shadow material of wanting his own way. He despised Barbara for wanting to have her way in selecting a movie and was he not aware of this quality in himself.

The more we hide from or refuse honest feedback from others, the less we know and understand ourselves. None of us know ourselves completely. Whatever is incomplete or unfinished in our own development is bound to be projected on to others with whom we will react according to our script which casts others into specific roles. The ability to be objective about oneself and accept criticism about oneself from others may be one of the most important skills in life and certainly in human relationships. Everything else hinges on this.

Until we confront and befriend our shadow material, we will continue to live with the illusion of virtue and righteousness. We remain vulnerable to the damage of marriage, family, work, love and important friendships. Unless honesty with oneself is valued more than being "good," secure, successful or accepted, more than any other value, one is destined to a life of self-deception, full of hidden self inflation, and programmed for self-defeat.

Shadow material in a nutshell:

- Disowned aspects of the *self* (disconnected, repressed, regressed, split-off, or despised).
- Projected onto others (which we then feel angry at or critical toward).
- Unconscious or subconscious (we are not aware that we have done this).
- Anger and critical feelings point directly to Shadow material.
- Opportunity to re-integrate the healthy essence of the disowned parts of the *self*.

Anger Management Workbook and Curriculum
The 3-2-1 Shadow Material Process

The 3-2-1 Shadow Material Process is a simple and effective tool designed for helping you to work with your shadow material. It was developed by Ken Wilber and his associates at Integral Institute, and is a recommended practice in the Integral Life Practice Starter Kit.

This is a process for re-owning your shadow material. You'll FACE your shadow in the 3rd-person; you'll TALK to our shadow in a 2nd-person dialogue; and you'll BE your shadow in 1st-person. Face it, Talk to it, Be it...It's that simple. Try it now:

1. Choose an experience in your life that you want to work with. It's often easier to begin with a person with whom you have difficulty (e.g., lover, relative, boss). This person may irritate, disturb, annoy, or upset you. Or maybe you feel attracted to, obsessed with, infatuated with, or possessive about this person. In any case, choose someone with whom you have a strong emotional charge, whether positive or negative.

2. Face It : Now, imagine this person. Describe those qualities that most upset you, or the characteristics that you are most attracted to using 3rd-person language (he, she, it). Talk about them out loud or write it down in a journal. Take this opportunity to "let it out." Don't try to be skillful or say the right thing. There is no need to sugar-coat your description. The person you are describing will never see this.

3. Talk to It: Begin an imaginary dialogue with this person. Speak in 2nd person to this person (you). Talk directly to this person as if he or she were actually there in the room with you. Tell them what bothers you about them. Ask them questions such as "Why are you doing this to me?" "What do you want from me?" "What are you trying to show me?" "What do you have to teach me?" Imagine their response to these questions. Speak that imaginary response out loud. Record the conversation in your journal if you like.

4. Be It: Become this person. Take on the qualities that either annoy or fascinate you. Embody the traits you described in "Face It." Use 1st-person language (I, me, and mine). This may feel awkward, and it should. The traits you are taking on are the exact traits that you have been denying in yourself. Use statements such as "I am angry," "I am jealous," "I am radiant." Fill in the blank with whatever qualities you are working with: "I am__________."
5. To complete the process, notice these disowned qualities in yourself. Experience the part of you that is this very trait. Avoid making the process abstract or conceptual: just BE it. Now you can re-own and integrate this trait in yourself.

You may now actually say, “They are just like me.”

**Shadow Material in Relationships:**

Partners in a relationship are sometimes powerfully drawn to each other’s bright shadow material. Initially, as partners are attracted to each other, the partners may project onto their partner some of the bright shadow material of Eros “a reaching beyond to what is yet to be within them.” One or both partners may represent each others’ bright shadow. It is also possible for the dark shadow material to dominate although not as frequently in the early attraction phase. This shadow material attraction is usually found in the early phase of a romantic relationship as fantasy abounds and seems rather wonderful. Often you will hear someone describe their partner as “my better half.” Over time as fantasy is replaced with more relative reality, the partners begin to project less bright shadow material, which then opens the possibility of increased dark shadow material projection as substitution. In other words; the dark shadow material fills a space voided by the loss of the bright shadow material in order to maintain a bonding emotional charge. A pattern may develop with one partner projecting dark shadow material with more intensity than the other partner. This is a time of power struggle as partners may begin to polarize in conflict. The major point is that both bright shadow and dark shadow material are always at play. It is the play of shadow material in relationships that helps to explain the potential for criticism, destruction, and dissolution on the one hand, and affirmation, healing, and deeper commitment on the other. The acceptance of one’s own projected shadow material offers both partners a royal road to healing and growth.

Homework: Anger Log
Dysfunctional Thinking

“What problems cannot be solved by the same level of thinking that created them.” - Albert Einstein

What is Dysfunctional Thinking?

Dysfunctional thinking is simply having assumptions about ourselves, others, and life in general that work against you. Dysfunctional thinking also includes errors in information processing, based on unreliable thoughts and concepts, which can lead to unhealthy situations. These thoughts promote negative interpretations and behaviors and an inability to resolve conflicts.

Where does dysfunctional thinking come from? We learned these unhealthy thoughts from our parents, teachers, and peers, as well as from the larger society around us while growing up. They are typically so basic to our thinking and feeling that we do not recognize them as dysfunctional at all; we just take them as truth. Becoming aware of our dysfunctional thinking—as well as learning skills to change or overcome them with more logical, healthier thoughts—helps to view yourself, others, and your life in a more harmonious, realistic manner.

Here are the most common categories of dysfunctional thinking:

“All or nothing” thinking: You tend to see things in black-or-white categories and make choices from that perspective. In other words your thinking involves only extremes (good/bad, perfect/worthless, competent/incompetent) and fails to consider the middle ground. For example: either the concert was great or it was the worst. In terms of self-esteem you’re either brilliant or you’re stupid. "Getting a dog is a bad idea. he'll ruin the garden." Of course, the puppy may ruin part of the garden initially but it will also give you years of joy. All or nothing thinking is responsible for a major portion of judgments’, criticalness’ and anger.

Shoul ds: You try to motivate yourself with “shoulds” and “shouldn’ts”. “Musts” and “oughts” may also be involved. You tell yourself that things should be the way you hoped or expected them to be. When you place “should” statements on others the emotional result is frustration, annoyance, or anger. Some “shoulds” are a part of a healthy, normal concern; for example, “I should look both ways before crossing the street,” or “I should not tailgate that car just because the driver cut me off.” However, shoulds may also reflect excessively high
or unrealistic standards imposed by yourself or others, such as “I should get along with every boss I ever have.” “He should have addressed his anger problem earlier and now he's been involved in a legal problem. Yes, it would have been best if the anger problem had been addressed earlier, but it wasn't and now the present situation must be dealt with. "Shoulds" keep us locked in the past.

Catastrophizing: You tend to blow things out of proportion thinking that the outcome of a challenging situation will be a total disaster for example. Or, you’ve been making progress at work and then you have a disappointing setback. Instead of seeing the setback as inconvenient and a normal part of life’s ups and downs, you feel as though you’ll be fired. In other words you anticipate the very worst ("what if") even when that outcome is highly improbable. In short, you predict a catastrophe.

Overgeneralizing: You tend to think in absolute terms such as “always” and “never.” For example, on the basis of only one or two instances, you draw a conclusion about your partner’s pattern of behavior, such as, “He’s such a slob.” Or you translate one negative experience, such as being turned down for a promotion, into a principle governing your whole life, such as, “I’m a hopeless failure. I’ll never make it in life.” Absolute statements such as “I’ll never be able to trust you again,” or “You always put me down,” are examples of this type of dysfunctional thinking.

Minimizing/magnifying: You exaggerate the importance of problems or shortcomings; or you minimize the significance of your desirable qualities. For example, you receive many positive comments about your presentation to a group of associates at work, but one of them says you could have spoken louder. You obsess about his reaction for days vacillating between feeling embarrassed and angry, and you ignore all the positive feedback.

Taking it personally: You have a tendency to relate everything to yourself. This thinking consists of shouldering responsibility for all the things that go wrong in your life, regardless of whether or not you are to blame. For example, when a woman received a note that her child was having difficulty in school, she told herself, “This shows what a bad mother I am,” instead of trying to pinpoint the cause of the problem so that she could be helpful to her child. Some people do the opposite. They blame other people or their circumstances for their problems, and they overlook ways they might be contributing to the problem: “The reason my marriage is so lousy is because my partner is totally unreasonable.” Blame usually doesn’t work very well because other people resent being scapegoated and they will just toss the blame right back.
Emotional reasoning: You assume that your negative emotions reflect the way things really are: “I feel terrified about going on airplanes. It must be very dangerous to fly.” Or, “I feel angry. This proves that I’m being treated unfairly.” Or, “I feel hopeless. I must really be hopeless.” The belief is that you are what you feel. If you feel inadequate, then you must be inadequate. The problem with this kind of reasoning is that feelings by themselves are not a conclusive definition of who you are. Feelings are temporary and sometimes exaggerated. They are important and deserve your respect, but they represent only one aspect of the truth.

Jumping to conclusions: You tend to interpret situations negatively when there are no facts to support your conclusion. You can misinterpret a statement or event by taking it out of context, ignoring important information, and come up with a negative conclusion in the absence of any evidence. For example, James learns that Lauren has given permission to their teenager to go to a party without discussing the situation with him. James concludes that Lauren is intentionally punishing him because of a recent argument they had. Assumptions are often made without first checking them out.

Labeling: You assignment of a negative label to a partner’s character. Instead of saying “I made a mistake,” you attach a negative label to yourself: “I’m a loser.” You might also label yourself “a fool” or “a failure” or “a jerk.” You may also label others. When someone does something that rubs you the wrong way, you may tell yourself: “He’s an S.O.B.” Then you feel that the problem is with that person’s “character” or “essence” instead of with their thinking or behavior. For example, Lauren fails to make a telephone call during the day to James. James labels Lauren as “irresponsible” and continues to see future behavior in that light, even if it could be interpreted otherwise. These labels are useless and lead to anger, anxiety, frustration and low self-esteem.

Mind reading: You may assume that someone is reacting negatively toward you and don’t check out your assumption. The assumptions may also include expecting other people to know what you need or want without having to communicate it directly. For example, Lauren tells James, “You should have known that I would want to go out for dinner tonight for my birthday,” or even, “How could you not make dinner reservations? That was very insensitive of you.” It is dysfunctional thinking to expect others to know what we need or want.
Requiring “Specialness”: When you are not treated in a special manner; you conclude that the other person or situation is unacceptable. “She doesn’t say ‘hello’ to me...what a jerk.” When you do not get what you want or need; you conclude that it is not fair. “He could take me out more often, it’s not fair.” This type of dysfunctional thinking causes vacillation between feelings of specialness (grandiosity) and worthlessness, and can lead to becoming angry, whenever the specialness is taken away by someone not treating you in a special way.

Got to be right: You have difficulty tolerating being wrong. This type of dysfunctional thinking presumes that you must be perfect in order to be acceptable. You can be quite defensive and intolerant of criticism. For example, when some questions your way doing something you reply, “I’ve been doing it this way for almost twenty years... I know what I’m talking about.”

Dysfunctional Thoughts

Your thoughts in response to a situation or event mostly determine your emotional state. For example, two people are caught in traffic while they come home from work. James believes he is trapped and employs such thought phrases as “I’ve got to get out of here,” and “How did I ever let myself get into this situation? I was an idiot not to take the other route.” This person feels anger, anxiety, and frustration. Lauren sees the situation as an opportunity to calm down, relaxes, and turns the radio on to listen to music. She says such things to herself as “I can unwind by doing some depth breathing” or “I might as well go with the flow.” This person has chosen a path of acceptance and self-soothing. In both people, the event is exactly the same, but the emotional states in response to the situation are uniquely different. You really do have a choice.

Your thoughts regarding a situation or event generate your mood and feelings. Therefore you are primarily responsible for how you feel. At the very least, you are responsible for exploring the thoughts connected to your mood rather than blaming it on the situation or on another person. It is through accepting this responsibility that you will ultimately be able to take charge and have real control over your life. Keep in mind when you experience moderate or greater levels of anxiety you are especially prone to engage in dysfunctional thinking. Consider four fundamentals regarding dysfunctional thoughts on the next page.
1. Dysfunctional thoughts are typically so automatic and subtle that you are unaware of them or their effect on your moods. You respond without being aware of what you told yourself.

2. Dysfunctional thoughts often appear in coded form. One short word or image may contain a whole series of thoughts, memories, or associations.

3. Dysfunctional thoughts are often irrational but almost always believed to be true. For example, catastrophizing “what if” thinking leads you to expect a negative outcome, one that is highly unlikely to occur. Yet, because the dysfunctional thought is sent so rapidly, it goes unchallenged.

4. Just as you can replace unhealthy behavioral habits (such as smoking or drinking excess coffee) with more positive, health-promoting behavior, so can you replace unhealthy thinking with more positive, supportive mental habits.

**Typical Dysfunctional thoughts**

The following are some typical Dysfunctional thoughts that damage life experiences:

- I should always be generous and unselfish.
- I should be perfect.
- I should be able to endure any hardship.
- I should be able to find a quick solution to every problem.
- I should never feel tired or lazy.
- I should always be efficient.
- I should always be competent.
- I should never be angry or irritable.
- I should always be pleasant or nice no matter how I feel.
- I am powerless or helpless.
- I am a victim of circumstances.
- I am unworthy. I’m not good enough.
- I feel ashamed of my condition.
- I’m nothing unless I’m loved.
- I feel personally threatened when criticized.
- I don’t have the money to do what I really want.
- There is seldom enough time to do what I want.
- Life is very difficult—it’s a struggle.
- If things are going well, watch out!
- I don’t deserve to be successful or happy.
- It’s useless to bother.
- My condition is hopeless.
- There is something fundamentally wrong with me.
- If I take risks to get better, I’m afraid I’ll fail.
- If I take risks to get better, I’m afraid I’ll succeed.
If I recovered, I might have to deal with realities I’d rather not face.
I can’t stand being separated from others.
It’s very hard to be alone.
What others think of me is very important.
It’s important to please others.
People won’t like me if they see who I really am.
I need to keep up a front or others will see my weaknesses.
My accomplishments at work/school are extremely important.
Success is everything.
I have to be the best at what I do.
I have to be somebody really outstanding.
To fail is terrible.
I can’t rely on others for help.
I can’t receive from others.
If I let people get too close, I’m afraid of being controlled.
I can’t tolerate being out of control.
I’m the only one who can solve my problems.
I’m just the way I am—I can’t really change.
The world outside is a dangerous place.
Unless you worry about a problem, it just gets worse.
It’s risky to trust people.
My problems will go away on their own in time.

Dysfunctional Thinking Personality Types

Patterns of dysfunctional thinking commonly point to some typical personality types. Four such personality types are the pessimist, the faultfinder, the victim, and the perfectionist. Most of us have a tendency to fall into at least one of the following categories:

The Pessimist
The pessimist has a dysfunctional thinking personality type found in many people who are prone to negativity. The pessimist’s predominant tendencies include a) anticipating negative outcomes, b) fear of the future, and c) catastrophizing. The pessimist is forever hypervigilant, watching with concern for signs of trouble. “What if?” is a phrase familiar to the pessimist.

Instead of “What if?” you can say: "So what?" "I can handle this." “I can be anxious and still do this.” “This may be daunting, but I can tolerate a little anxiety, knowing that it will pass.” “I’ll get used to this with practice.” “I can retreat if necessary.”
The Faultfinder
Faultfinders have a dysfunctional thinking personality type that is constantly judging and evaluating their own behavior, pointing out flaws and limitations whenever possible. In order to portray inadequacy or failure, the faultfinder pounces on any mistakes. The faultfinder typically uses comparison to bolster their own sense of self. For example, You should have gotten an A on that paper, like Sally. But at least you did better than Bob. He only got a C minus. “You could have done better” is a phrase familiar to the faultfinder.

Instead of “You could have done better,” you can say: “I’m OK the way I am.” “I’m lovable and capable.” “I’m a unique and creative person.” “I deserve the good things in life as much as anyone else.” “I accept and believe in myself.” “I’m worthy of others’ respect.” “I’ve done as well as I could, for now.”

The Victim
The victim has a dysfunctional thinking personality type that feels helpless or hopeless. Victims tend to believe that something within them is inherently wrong, deprived, defective, or unworthy. They always perceive insurmountable obstacles between them and their goals. Characteristically, the victim laments, complains, and regrets life’s situations. “I’ll never be able to” is a phrase familiar to the victim.

Instead of, “I’ll never be able to,” you can say: “I don’t have to be all-better tomorrow.” “I can continue to make progress one step at a time.” “I acknowledge the progress that I’ve made and will continue to improve.” “It’s never too late to change.” “I’m willing to see the glass as half-full rather than half-empty.” “I’m in control of my own behaviors.”

The Perfectionist
The perfectionist has a dysfunctional thinking personality type similar to that of the faultfinder, typically self-critical. However, the motivation of the perfectionist is less to find fault but rather to improve. There is a grandiose desire to be special, and an intolerance of the un-specialness of setbacks. The perfectionist is dependent on external qualities such as: a) being accepted by others, b) attaining money and status, c) achieving career success, and d) being pleasing and nice to others. The perfectionist often experiences stress, exhaustion, and burnout, by way of achievement and the drive for acceptance. “I have to” is a phrase familiar to the perfectionist.

Instead of “I have to,” you can say: “It’s OK to make mistakes.” “Life is too short to be taken so seriously.” “Setbacks are part life and a necessary learning and growth experience.” “I don’t always have to be perfect.” “My needs and feelings are as important as anyone else’s.”
Adjusting Dysfunctional Thoughts

Dysfunctional thoughts are learned. This means they can also be adjusted to become mentally healthy. This adjusting requires first becoming aware of the specific Dysfunctional thoughts, understanding where they came from, challenging the validity of dysfunctional thoughts, and finally replacing them with one or more healthy thoughts. Here are five suggestions to help you adjust your dysfunctional thoughts:

Awareness of Situations Likely to Induce Your Dysfunctional Thoughts

Here are some examples of these kinds of situations:

- All occasions when you’re feeling anxiety
- Times when you’ve made some kind of mistake or have failed to meet expectations, and therefore feel ashamed or inadequate
- Situations in which you feel under scrutiny or criticized
- Times when you’re angry at yourself or others

What are some of your situations?

Explore Yourself

Ask yourself, “What have I been saying to myself that led me to feel this way?” “Do I really want to do this to myself?” When you feel too upset to explore and adjust the dysfunctional thoughts, allow yourself the chance to acknowledge and express your feelings. Then later, when you’ve calmed down and are ready, you can proceed with the following steps.

Relax or Distract Yourself

Interrupt your dysfunctional thoughts by doing diaphragmatic breathing or using some alternative method of distraction. The objective is to slow down and self-soothe. Dysfunctional thoughts are so rapid, automatic, and unconscious that they can escape discovery if you’re feeling urgency or stress. In some situations, it may take 10 to 20 minutes of deep breathing, whole body relaxation, or visualization to soothe yourself sufficiently to be able to explore your dysfunctional thoughts. Under less intense anxiety or shame, you will be able to do this step in a few minutes.
Keep a record of Dysfunctional Thoughts

It may be difficult to unscramble the dysfunctional thoughts that initiate your anger, anxiety, or shame by simple reflection. It can be confusing to consider what you’ve just been thinking. The technique of recording your trigger thoughts, using either a cassette recorder or a pencil and paper in your anger log, will clarify the specific dysfunctional thoughts you made to yourself. This step may take practice to master. It’s helpful to be able to distinguish thoughts from feelings. The best way to do this is to jot down only the feelings first and then secondarily the thoughts that led to them. For example, the dysfunctional thinking phrase “I feel hopeless and inadequate” is one where thoughts and feelings are mixed. It can be unbundled into a particular feeling—“I feel hopeless”—and the dysfunctional thought that precedes the feeling—“I am inadequate.” Therefore you first ask, “What was I feeling?” Then you ask, “What thoughts went through my mind prior to my feeling this way?”

Consider a recent anger situation in your anger log – describe below:

- The feelings (e.g. “frustrated”, “very annoyed”, “rage”)
- The trigger thoughts (e.g. “this traffic is going to make me late for work”.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feelings:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trigger Thoughts:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Confront the Dysfunctional Thoughts

You can confront the dysfunctional thoughts by requiring direct proof of their validity. Here are some helpful confronting questions:

- Is this the whole picture or just a kernel of truth?
- Am I being balanced in my thinking about this?
- What’s the worst scenario here? Then what would happen?
- What evidence is there for this?
- What is the real truth about this?
- Has this ever been true before?
There are two additional questions in confronting dysfunctional thoughts which help to challenge their reality and reasonableness:

(a) Did I choose this belief, or did it come out of my experiences growing up?
(b) Does this belief promote my OK-ness (well-being)?

Restructuring Dysfunctional Thoughts

Outside of our awareness we often engage in internal conversations with ourselves throughout the day. Unless we’re trained to observe these conversations, however, we don’t even realize we’re having them! For example, imagine looking in the mirror at yourself. What’s the first thing you think when you look at yourself? That thought is a part of our internal conversation. Having these kinds of conversations with yourself is perfectly normal and in fact, everybody does it. What becomes dysfunctional is when we let these conversations take on a life of their own. For example, if you think something like, “I’m stupid and lazy and nobody cares about me,” that’s an example of dysfunctional thinking. Your thoughts have taken on an unhealthy position, one that works against you instead of for you. Psychologists say these thoughts are “irrational,” because they have little or no real basis in reality. For instance, the reality is that most everyone is cared about by someone (even if they’re no longer with us), and that we can certainly care about ourselves.

It is exactly these kinds of dysfunctional thoughts that you can come to observe as you go through your day. It may be helpful for you to keep a log of the thoughts, writing down the day and time you had it, the thought itself, and the type of dysfunctional thought from the list of dysfunctional thinking categories already mentioned. As you learn to better identify them, you can then learn how to start answering them back with restructuring statements. Using this technique, you can work to turn your internal conversation back to being healthy.

Restructuring Statement Exercise

The following is an example of a restructuring statement for a dysfunctional thought:

“I can’t stand it when someone gets angry with me.”

Restructure Statement: It can be uncomfortable, but I don’t need their approval. I can handle and tolerate disapproval.
Now take a few minutes to create your own restructuring statement for the following dysfunctional thoughts:

“If I request something it shows that I’m weak.”

Restructure Statement:

“If they say ‘no’ I’ll be devastated.”

Restructure Statement:

“I don’t deserve to get what I ask for.”

Restructure Statement:

“I have to be sure a person is going to say ‘yes’ before I ask for something.”

Restructure Statement:

“I must be incompetent if I can’t do something myself.”

Restructure Statement:

“Asking for something is really a selfish and pushy thing to do.”

Restructure Statement:

Coping Statements for Replacing Dysfunctional Thoughts

A Coping Statement is a short, simple, and direct phrase validating your positive humanity as an individual; for example, “I believe in myself.” These statements work because they offer you an alternative, positive thought to replace a negative, dysfunctional thought. Several points are helpful before working with coping statement:

• Use the most positive affirmations you can to replace old, negative Dysfunctional thoughts, even if you don’t believe it yet.
• Don’t use affirmations in the future tense because it is important for your mind to experience a new belief as if it has already occurred. For example, don’t say, “I will be able to express myself comfortably” but “I am able to express myself comfortably.”
• Writing down or saying the affirmations out loud will produce a deeper level of knowing and believing than reading them to yourself.
• Repetition will also allow you to believe in a deeper way.

Here are some useful coping statements:

- I am a worthwhile, deserving person.
- I am worthy of love.
- I love and accept myself.
- I am safe and always feel protected.
- I am unique and loving, loved and free.
- I am acceptable just because I’m a human being.
- I am healthy in all aspect of my being.
- Only I decide what success means to me.
- I accept my feelings and manage them effectively.
- I alone am responsible for my choices.
- I am successful in many ways.
- I have the power to forgive myself for past mistakes.
- I can set my own boundaries.
- I deserve support, and it’s perfectly all right to ask for it.
- I am filled with energy to do all the daily activities of my life.
- I am at peace with all those around me.
- I express anger in appropriate ways.
- I am free to be myself.
- I am responsible for my life.
- I am at one with myself.
- I can trust my perceptions.
- I overcome obstacles to reach my goals.
- Each mistake I make is an opportunity to learn.
- My future begins now.
Working with a Dysfunctional Thought

Think a thought about someone you’re not so pleased with right now and close your eyes. Now think of where the thought of that person comes from? Your thought doesn’t come from outside of you… It comes from inside you, doesn’t it? Who is that thought really affecting, the other person, or you? More than likely, it’s really only affecting you. These types of thoughts can also be going on inside of your mind about yourself as well and they can be quite unhealthy and self sabotaging. For instance: when you get out of the shower and you look at yourself in the mirror, what do you look at? The good or the not so good stuff? A lot of us mostly look at the not so good. And who does this affect when you think negative thoughts about your body? Just you… So now that you see the impact of dysfunctional thoughts try the following exercise:

Take any situation that comes to mind that you would like to fix in your current life. Describe your situations below:

Follow the three easy steps below. In the next few days, you will begin to see a real difference (as long as you don’t give up).

Step 1:
• What thought do you have about your described situation?
• What could you begin to think differently about this thought?

Step 2:
• My “healthier” thought is:
• How can I think even “better” about this certain thought?

Step 3:
• My “even better” thought is:
• My final good thoughts are now going to be:

Now, actively think Step 3 when you’re in your car, in the bathroom, on a walk, working out, taking a break, or wherever you feel comfortable doing so. Aim for five minutes, three times a day. You can’t make changes without changing your thinking, so just do it! It is really that simple.

Homework: (1) Work with a dysfunctional thought. (2) Anger Log
MODULE 7

Judgmental and Critical Reaction

“Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves.”
- Carl Gustav Jung

Recognizing Your Judgmental and Critical Reactions

Everyone has judgments from time to time. We learn quite early in our life to label things either ‘good’ or ‘bad’ – and to determine what is ‘easy’ or ‘hard’, ‘smart or ‘dumb’. It was pretty simple back then, however, as we mature most people begin to see that there is something between the two opposite poles of good and bad, right and wrong, perfect and worthless, etc. In other words that there is some gray between black & white; and, in fact, that middle ground is more of the reality.

To routinely blame, judge severely and find fault with others is a clear indication that you have a tendency toward judgmental and critical reactions. People can judge and evaluate each other on many different things, for instance: physical appearance or attractiveness, personality, intelligence, character, values, beliefs, spirituality, occupation, ambition, success, status, wealth, possessions, and behaviors. Judgment and criticism can, of course, be constructive, and may be very helpful. When it is negative, however, it can be very hurtful, harmful, and destructive.

Judgmental and Critical reaction can often be detected by such words as:

- should
- ought
- must
- don’t

and by phrases like:

- in my opinion
- I think . . .
- this is what you should do
Those of us who have judgmental and critical reactions often put our beliefs, standards, or way of life on to others. We might see people and pass judgment based on their looks or actions and often our opinion is not completely objective. Frequently little effort is made to know the person or understand them either. It's actually a self-identity (ego) thing. We want our point of view to directly influence other people, in order to give us some degree of control over our situation. The following is an example of a person who has severe judgmental and critical reactions leading to his difficulty with anger management.

Lauren walks in the door smiling. "Oh, no," James thinks to himself, "Something’s up." James hasn't even heard a word and he's ready to protect himself. James is in a defensive and control mode without even knowing it. Almost certainly this isn't the first time this has happened to James either, since he tends toward judgmental and critical reactions. His anger gets triggered mechanically on many occasions before he knows what's going on. It really won't matter much what Lauren says now. He'll find something off beam with whatever it is. So, when she tells him about her promotion his mind collects only negative information that will justify his self identity. Lauren gets one partial sentence out of her mouth: "My boss just offered me a promotion and ...” James doesn't need to hear anything more. That's more than enough bad news for James's to trigger his judgmental and critical reaction. Along with his intense emotional reaction comes an old automatic thought: "She’s doing this to put me down.” It is that thought which really infuriates James, so much so he cannot even hear the rest of Lauren’s statement. So long to him being reasonable, rational, and logical as he is now functioning out of his Primitive Brain. Forget keeping things in perspective. Here comes the anger and aggression full force. People who display judgmental and critical reactions don't really plan to get angry. They hardly ever take a time out to consider their options. Instead, they charge ahead with some automatic action to support their self-identity.

It requires a certain amount of self-awareness to see our own judgmental and critical reactions. Assess yourself now using a scale from 1-10 with the following questions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you assume the worst about others? ____</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you stereotype others based on one sample of his/her behavior? ____</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you tell yourself that you would never do something like that? ____</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you either stay away or take it on yourself to correct others? ____</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total ____

Score:  
(30 – 40) Highly Judgmental and Critical  
(20 – 29) Judgmental and Critical  
(10 – 19) Somewhat Judgmental and Critical  
( 0 – 9) Slightly Judgmental and Critical
Now take some time to list four ways in which *Judgmental and Critical Reactions* have possibly caused problems in your life?

1. ___________________________________________________________
2. ___________________________________________________________
3. ___________________________________________________________
4. ___________________________________________________________

**Understanding Judgmental and Critical Reaction**

Judgmental and Critical Reactions take little account of feelings. As already mentioned these reactions condemn others because of their conduct or supposed false beliefs, wrong motives, or character. Judgmental and Critical Reactions are based on perception, without room for negotiation or understanding and are most often an evaluation and rejection of another person’s worth. Judgmental and Critical Reactions are especially destructive to all type of relationships.

Judgmental and Critical Reactions seek to elevate one person above another. They can also include the characteristic of self-promotion and the purpose to be special. The reactions often attack the person rather than the behavior. Judgmental and Critical Reactions create massive difficulty with anger management problems.

When we pass judgment upon others, if we examine ourselves, we will find that the very thing on which we pass judgment is also present within our self to one degree or another. Judgmental and Critical Reactions are also moralistic. They are based on values, rules, standards, approval or disapproval, and encourage anger and resentment in the other person.

**Discernment vs. Judgmental and Critical Reaction**

There is a big difference between what we will call “discernment” (to recognize distinctions) and Judgmental and Critical Reaction. In the Evolved Brain process of discernment, we make a distinction between what behaviors, thoughts, actions or reactions are productive, evolutionary, relationship enhancing, forward thinking, and in general healthy versus those that are destructive, harmful, primitive, unhelpful
to relationships, and generally unhealthy. For example, let’s consider someone who would regularly take supplies from their company’s office for their own personal use at home. They rationalize their behavior by convincing themselves that they are not being paid enough (which may be true), and so they are owed it. And they might feel they were ‘righting a wrong’ by taking the situation into their own hands. Now most reasonable people would agree that what this person is doing is nothing short of stealing. The point of this example is that in this situation there is no need to stereotype this person ‘a thief’ or a ‘bad person.’ In other words, there is no need for a Judgmental and Critical Reaction. However, it does call for the use of discernment and recognition that the behavior is not appropriate, and could have serious consequences. It’s also dishonest, and overall not in anyone’s best interest. To recognize the behavior for what it is and to draw a boundary is not a judgmental and critical reaction but rather an attempt to draw a distinction, and perhaps change the behavior.

In another situation in the same office setting, an office assistant let it be known that she is having an affair with a married man. Soon the office is buzzing with gossip and condemnation of this woman. Many of the comments are aimed at labeling her as a ‘bad person’ with ‘no morals.’ There are conversations describing her as ‘sinful’ and ‘slutty’ and generally denigrating her character. These two situations point out very clearly the difference between discernment and Judgmental and Critical Reaction. In the first situation, there is recognition of destructive behavior and a setting of boundaries. The integrity of all persons concerned is maintained. In the second situation, the recognition of the poor behavior on the part of one person was matched by the equally destructive behavior of those judging her. In fact, their reactions created a trail of blame, and criticism and did not contribute to the development or evolution of anyone.

The crucial point is this; we need not ever deny seeing reality. Of course it is not always so easy to discern reality especially with so many gray areas in how people live their lives, but we can always strive to make discernments the best we can. What we don’t know can hurt us. Our reactions which are judgmental, critical, labeling, blaming, hateful or cruel are never healthy. What we want to aim toward is discernment. We want to recognize poor behavior, reactions, and activity and set boundaries for ourselves without adding a new chain of Judgmental and Critical Reactions. These are never helpful.

The chart on the following page sums up the differences between Discernment and Judgmental and Critical Reaction.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discernment</th>
<th>Judgmental and Critical Reaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintains the integrity and value of all persons involved</td>
<td>Denigrates the value of the other person; labels him/her as “bad” or “unacceptable”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition without harsh blame</td>
<td>Blames and devalues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allows you to set boundaries while maintaining relationships if that is your aim</td>
<td>Destroys relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps you to evolve and develop emotionally, mentally and psychologically</td>
<td>Moves us backward emotionally, mentally and psychologically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gives you a chance to examine your own behavior, reactions, beliefs and values</td>
<td>Directs your attention on someone else’s faults while avoiding recognition of your own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes a distinction between behavior and character</td>
<td>No distinction between behavior and character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotes respect</td>
<td>Promotes disrespect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is ultimately effective</td>
<td>Is ultimately ineffective</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**A Non-Judgmental Perspective**

Having a non-judgmental perspective means recognizing and understanding our own values and standards so that we can suspend Judgmental and Critical Reactions and minimize their influence on the way we respond to other people. In order to be authentic you must remain true to your values and standards. You can not become a human chameleon. When you take a non-judgmental perspective, that stance is perceived by others. No communication can convey a non-judgmental perspective if it does not genuinely live within you. You may not like all people, but it is wise to make every effort to be free from prejudices which will lead you into being judgmental. You may find this aspect of your evolution to be quite challenging but remember you are a work in progress. A non-judgmental perspective means holding within the core of your being a respect for other people’s opinions and lifestyles.

Very often we are judgmental over value issues. A non-judgmental perspective does not mean being valueless or without standards. It does mean trying not to mould others to fit into our value systems. Our values may be right for us, however, they may be totally wrong for other people.
Developing a Non-Judgmental Perspective

You can begin to develop a non-judgmental perspective by:

1. Recognizing and carefully scrutinizing your values and standards; you may decide to get rid of some of them

2. Trying to see the world from the other person’s shoes; they have had different life experience than you

3. Trying not to jump to conclusions; first impressions are often misleading

4. Trying not to compare people; each person has a unique experience that leads to who they are at the moment

Values

Look over the list of values below and check off five Aspirational Values and five Functional Values that feel right to you:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspirational Values</th>
<th>Functional Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(What you aspire to have)</td>
<td>(How you attain Aspirational values)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>______ Achievement</td>
<td>______ Accountability /Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>______ Adventure</td>
<td>______ Affection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>______ Balance</td>
<td>______ Autonomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>______ Beauty</td>
<td>______ Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>______ Community</td>
<td>______ Competency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>______ Contribution</td>
<td>______ Courtesy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>______ Family</td>
<td>______ Courage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>______ Freedom</td>
<td>______ Creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>______ Friendship</td>
<td>______ Discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>______ Fun</td>
<td>______ Drive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>______ Health</td>
<td>______ Fairness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>______ Justice</td>
<td>______ Flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>______ Love</td>
<td>______ Forgiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>______ Nature/Environment</td>
<td>______ Giving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>______ Partnership</td>
<td>______ Honesty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>______ Peace</td>
<td>______ Humor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>______ Power</td>
<td>______ Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>______ Recognition</td>
<td>______ Loyalty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>______ Self-Worth</td>
<td>______ Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>______ Spirituality</td>
<td>______ Reason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>______ Stability</td>
<td>______ Safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>______ Wealth</td>
<td>______ Teamwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>______ Wisdom</td>
<td>______ Tolerance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Now list just your Aspirational Values in order of priority. It is important that you prioritize these values so that you will have more clarity about what is most important to you. It is okay to change the order at a later date.

1. _________________
2. _________________
3. _________________
4. _________________
5. _________________

Do your prioritized Aspirational Values embrace a non-judgmental perspective? If so how?

A non-judgmental perspective involves:

- Be open and accepting
- Concentrate on what the other’s experience might mean for them
- Be interested in the other person, not just in the task or problem at hand
- demonstrating genuine respect for the other as a person of worth
- trying to understand what it means to be this particular person
- trying to get into the other’s inner world; their frame of reference
- not rushing to solve problems or fix situations
- being aware of your own values
- listening, then responding to the other’s expressed and implied feelings
Guidelines for a Non-Judgmental Perspective

1. Remember the Uniqueness of Everyone
Try to remember that not every person you meet will be like you. People come from different cultures, sexual orientations, faith, class, etc. Combinations of these factors make the world seem more interesting and alive. Remember and celebrate the fact that everyone is unique and not the same.

2. Try To Be Empathic
Try to put yourself in the other person’s shoes. What would it be like in their situation? While judging other, if we keep in mind how much we don’t like being judged, it will save us from being critical.

3. Get Rid of the Judgment
We think of what other people are doing and then judge them. Try to avoid having a judgmental reaction to what others think and do. Try to get rid of all the unnecessary stuff and try to notice only what is of concern to you.

4. Know Judging Is Not Healthy
Stressing yourself out by judging what you cannot change is risky to your health. Try to avoid spending days and nights worrying about others, as this will only cause a lot of stress to you. Try to live your life to the fullest and let others find their own way in life. Reserve your energy for what really matters to you.

5. Open Your Eyes To Truth
When you find yourself looking at something that you don’t agree with, try to remember that not everyone would agree with you. Try to put yourself in their shoes and try to imagine their background.

6. Learn To Appreciate
Once you have accepted a person for what he/she is, try appreciating and understanding him/her. If you have loathed him/her in the past, try changing your response to appreciation. Try to express your appreciation for old or young, light skinned or dark, male or female, rich or poor and you will find the world becoming a much more satisfying place to live in.

7. Free Yourself
It is not necessary to agree with the decision of other people, but you can learn to respect their right to have feelings and opinions. Just as you certainly want to feel free, let others too enjoy their right to be free.
Acceptance

Obviously a major component of a Non-Judgmental Perspective is accepting other people exactly as they are and exactly as they are not. When we interact with others in the world, we can honor and respect them exactly as they are, including all their faults and weaknesses. Since each person is a combination of positive and negative qualities, we can accept all of our own attributes as well as those of others, even the ones we don't like.

True acceptance of this kind is not a passive activity. It is a positive contribution that you give to other people. In fact, you could say that love, which we normally assume to be a feeling or emotion, is the natural consequence of such generous acts of acceptance. When you accept other people exactly as they are, they feel connected to you. Because you grant them the freedom to be the way they are, they feel better about you and themselves.

Demonstrating acceptance

Inherent in the idea of demonstrating acceptance is that we don’t judge other people by some set of rules or standards. As previously mentioned this means that we have to be able to suspend our judgments. Acceptance is a special human capacity which moves out toward people as they are, and maintains their dignity and personal worth. It means accepting their strengths and weaknesses; their favorable and unfavorable qualities; their positive and negative reactions; their constructive and destructive impulses, and their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

The qualities of acceptance

- caring
- concern
- compassion
- consistency
- courtesy
- firmness
- interest
- listening
- moving toward
- respect
- valuing
- warmth
**Stereotyping is an obstacle to Acceptance**

Stereotyping, also described as labeling, classifying, typecasting, and pigeon-holing, categorizing, putting in a mould, and making assumptions, is our beliefs about people or groups of people. For example, if we say something like, ‘Well let’s face it, what can you expect... they’re all the same’ we are stereotyping. Referring to someone as a ‘dumb blonde’, or ‘fiery redhead’ are other forms. Stereotyping allows no room for individuality, and is generally negative. It stems from our deeply embedded and often conditioned conviction about others, and may be due to fear or a lack of understanding about people different than ourselves. Minority groups are often the butt of stereotyping, for instance: gays, alcoholics, drug addicts, the mentally ill, the disabled, and the hard of hearing, the visually impaired, unmarried mothers, ethnic minorities, and smokers. It can also be aimed at people employed in specific occupations – social workers, police, priests, or those with a different accent – the list is endless.

Stop reading for a moment and close your eyes. Try to capture any images, feelings or reactions you experienced when reading about the groups mentioned above. Be honest with yourself. Were you guilty of stereotyping? Make a note below of any groups you particularly struggled with to remind yourself that this is an area you need to be aware of.

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**Other obstacles to acceptance**

a) Lack of understanding of human behavior

b) Blind spots within one’s self, for example, unresolved conflicts

c) Attributing your own feelings to the other person

d) Biases and prejudices, values, beliefs

e) Confusion between acceptance and approval

f) Loss of respect for others
**Self Compassion**

Compassion is the hope that a living being not suffer and to actually allow yourself to feel some of their pain. Our best personal and professional selves come from a place of compassion. When we can truly love and accept ourselves we can also see those in our world as collaborators on our path of evolving growth. Self compassion is not self-pity, complaining, or wallowing in pain.

Research studies show that self compassion buffers stress and increases resilience and self worth. But self compassion is difficult for many people, due to self judgment and criticism. Try not to be so hard on yourself – have some compassion for what you have been through. We are all partners on a human journey, and the greatest challenge in our evolutionary roadmap is to acknowledge our mutual humanity, the values of sharing and caring that make us simply together on the road of life. Take a day this week to be aware of your judgmental and critical voice and to free yourself from self imposed negativity and judgment.

**Empathic Understanding**

Empathic understanding means having the ability to perceive the other person’s world as they see it. This is done by considering their frame of reference, and being able to communicate that understanding tentatively. Demonstrating empathy means:

- Being able to step into the other’s shoes, and being able to step out again
- Being able to stand back far enough to remain unbiased, rather than making rigid assumptions about the other person
- Being close to, yet remaining separate from – it doesn’t mean we become the other person but rather appreciate them

Empathy works within the frame of ‘as if I were that other person’. It taps into your intuition and imagination.

**Three parts of Empathy**

1. Thinking – a logical understanding of the feeling of another.
2. Feeling – a mirroring or communicating of the emotion with the other person.
3. Doing – assuming in your mind the role of the other person.
Empathy can also be communicated non-verbally through facial expression, eye contact, and a forward leaning of the body, and sometimes a reduction of the physical distance.

Empathy is not a genetic endowment; it is a skill we can all develop. Some might have to work very hard at it, for others it might come easily. If you find it difficult to pick out feelings and respond to them with empathy, try not to be too discouraged. Keep plugging away at it, and find someone on whom you can practice.

**Building an Empathic Link**

Here are some practical ways to build an empathic link with others:

- Show up
- Pay attention
- Be open
- Drop judgments
- Track the other person’s emotions
- Tune into face and eyes
- Ask: What would you be feeling if you were in the other’s shoes
- Sense beneath the surface and investigate actively...ask questions

**Self awareness**

To develop a non-judgmental perspective and become more effective at anger management, we need to constantly strive to increase our self-awareness – to discover what makes us tick - to monitor what goes on inside our head: our thoughts, feelings, sensing, intuition, reactions, beliefs, and how these show themselves in our behavior. In other words, we need to learn to ‘read ourselves like a book’ – the ‘cover’ and the ‘contents’. Self-awareness is the continuous and evolving process of getting to know who you are. If we don’t know ‘who lives inside here’ and feel at home with ourselves, it’s likely that our ability to be with others will be hindered. A lack of self-awareness means there are areas that are unknown or invisible to us. By increasing our self understanding, we enhance our ability to be genuine and empathic, and our understanding of what makes other people tick.
Self responsibility

Responsibility is also a major cornerstone of effective anger management. Real responsibility means neither credit, nor blame. It is a stance we take to personally take charge of our lives and to always acknowledge the role we--as well as others--play in the problems and conflicts we experience. One of the central aspects of all of our relationships is how we respond when things don't go as we want. Do we blame other people, outside influences, or the relationship itself whenever we experience a lack of satisfaction? Or do we view such problems as signals that we need to learn and grow ourselves? Are we going to try to change or control the other person in order to be happy, or are we going to recognize that our own happiness comes primarily from the stuff we generate--or fail to generate--within ourselves?

Unfortunately, many cultural sources encourage us to adopt a victim's role. These forces tell us that we are not responsible for our problems and we do not have the resources to create our own satisfaction and happiness.

Self vs. Other

How do you think about yourself and others? What is your philosophy about your relationship to other people? Are your needs more important than others needs? Are you in competition with others? Do you need to fight for survival? Answers to these questions will point to your basic worldview – how you see the way the world works and how you need to be in it.

There are people who see the world as you do and there are plenty of people who see it differently. In fact some researchers have discovered that there are various patterns or structures of worldview that people have in common. Interestingly, these different worldview structures also have different ways of seeing the ‘self’ and ‘other’. One way to categorize these structures is by using the following terms: egocentric, ethnocentric, worldcentric, and kosmocentric worldviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Egocentric worldview – self vs. all others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnocentric worldview – self + our group (family, ethnic, nation) vs. all others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worldcentric worldview – self + all others (inclusion, pluralistic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kosmocentric worldview – self + others + all sentient beings (inclusion)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Economic logic says that 'more for you is less for me.' But the evolutionary impulse knows that more for you is more for me too. If you truly have a non-judgmental perspective then when somebody has happiness it is your happiness too. And your sense of self will begin to expand even to include other species.

Look at this way. Every being in nature has an important role in the universe. And the same is true for each person; each of us has a necessary and important part to play; something unique to offer the world. The vast majority of people traditionally believe that it's crazy to live according to what we can offer to the universe. But what if in fact we are here to give our unique gifts and talents? More and more people are waking up to this possibility. This shift of worldview, a consciousness that understands that all beings have an important role, and values the potential in everybody is aligned with the evolutionary impulse.

It’s a different kind of evolution. There is no "other" in this evolution because everything and everyone is an integral part of the whole. Everybody has a unique contribution and there has never been a more crucial time in history to give careful consideration to this truth. It's what the future is crying out for and we are all being called to get ready for it, contribute to it, and make it happen.

Homework: Anger Log
MODULE 8

Assertive Communication

Three Basic Types of Communication

One of the joys of living in the world is the satisfaction you can receive by getting some of your physical, emotional, and spiritual needs met. Your ability to assertively communicate your needs requires healthy thinking and communication skills. Let’s begin by looking at three types of communication.

Assertive Communication

Assertive communication involves clearly stating your needs—how you feel and what you need—without violating the rights of others. The underlying assumption in an assertive communication is: “You and I have differences, and we are mutually responsible for expressing ourselves respectfully to each other.” The significant hallmarks of assertive communication include getting some of what you need without alienating others, active participation in making important decisions, the emotional and spiritual satisfaction of respectfully exchanging thoughts, feelings, and healthy self-esteem.

People who communicate assertively speak in a relaxed, clear tone of voice. They make good eye contact and have an unanxious presence. Here is an example of an assertive exchange between a couple:

Partner A: I wonder if we might discuss our holiday plans - (waits a moment for a positive response). I’d like to take a break from traveling to your parents this year. I’ve felt tired lately and I could use a breather this holiday. We could stay home and just take it easy.

Partner B: Well, I would really like to visit my parents this year.

Partner A: We did go there last year and we’ve visited with them a couple of times already this year.

Partner B: I realize that, but it’s not really the holiday to me unless I’m with my parents.

Partner A: How important is it for you to visit with them this year?

Partner B: On a 10-point scale, it’s a 10 for me. How important is it for you to stay home?

Partner A: Well, I guess about 7 or 8. OK. What about going for just a few days and make plans to come home early in order to rest a bit?

Partner B: All right, that sounds reasonable!
Aggressive Communication

In aggressive communication, needs, feelings, and wants are honestly stated, but at the other person’s expense. Aggressive communicators are usually loud and direct. They tend to use sarcasm, rhetorical questions, threats, negative labels, profanity, you-messages and absolutes (“You never clean up the living room”), glaring, and literal finger pointing as communication weapons. Here is an example of an aggressive person speaking:

Aggressive Person: You’re such a slob, your work space looks like a garbage dump! I don’t care if it takes you all day to clean it up. If it’s not spotless by the end of the day, I’m reporting you.

The underlying message in aggressive communication is: “I’m superior and right and you’re inferior and wrong.” The advantage of aggressive communication is that people often give aggressors what they want just to get rid of the conflict. The major disadvantage is that the aggressiveness can trigger people to get even in some way. Aggressive communication tends to create resentment.

Passive Communication

In passive communication, needs, feelings, and wants are withheld altogether or expressed only partially or indirectly. The passive communicator tends to speak softly. Eye contact and posture are often poor, conveying a message of submission. Here’s an example of a passive person’s response:

Passive Person: (under her breath) I don’t get enough out of this relationship to take this kind of abuse! (Then out loud, after a big sigh, with faint sarcasm) I’ll get on it right away.

The Principles of Assertive Communication

Assertive communication is based on the assumption that people are the best judge of their own thoughts, feelings, needs, and behavior. You are better informed than anyone else about your family background and current circumstances that shape you into a unique person. You are best qualified to express your position on important issues. Since everyone is unique, there are many times when people will disagree. Rather than submit to or overpower the other, you have the right to express your position and to negotiate any differences that arise.
**Assertive Rights**

Children have no choice about the beliefs they were taught. However, as adults we have the option of choosing whether or not we want to hold onto those beliefs that discourage assertive behavior. The following are some examples of dysfunctional thinking that discourage assertive behavior with the corresponding opposing assertive right.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dysfunctional Thought</th>
<th>Assertive Rights</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It’s shameful to make mistakes. **</td>
<td>You have a right to make mistakes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s selfish to put your needs before those of others.</td>
<td>You have the right to put yourself first sometimes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you can’t convince someone that your feelings are reasonable, then the feelings must be wrong.</td>
<td>You have a right to be the final judge of your feelings and accept them as legitimate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You should respect the views of others, especially if they are in a position of authority... Keep differences of opinion to yourself.</td>
<td>You have a right to express your own opinions and beliefs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You should always try to be logical and consistent.</td>
<td>You have a right to change your mind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You should be flexible and adjust.</td>
<td>You have a right to question what you view as unfair treatment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You should never interrupt people. Asking questions reveals your stupidity.</td>
<td>You have a right to interrupt or to ask for clarification.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things could get even worse; don’t rock the boat.</td>
<td>You have a right to negotiate for change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You shouldn’t take up others’ valuable time with your problems.</td>
<td>You have a right to ask for help or emotional support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People don’t want to hear about your pain, so keep it to yourself.</td>
<td>You have a right to feel and express pain you feel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When someone takes time to give you advice, you should take it seriously.</td>
<td>You have a right to ignore advice of others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing that you have something special or have done something well is its own reward. People don’t like showoffs. Success is secretly disliked and envied. Be modest when complimented.</td>
<td>You have a right to receive formal recognition for your special qualities and talents and for your work and achievements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You should always try to accommodate others. If you don’t they won’t be there when you need them.</td>
<td>You have a right to say “no.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You should always have a good reason for what you feel or do.</td>
<td>You have a right not to justify yourself to others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When someone is in trouble, you should give help.</td>
<td>You have the right not to take responsibility for somebody else’s problem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You should be sensitive to the needs and wishes of others, even when they are unable to tell you what they want.</td>
<td>You have the right not to have to anticipate the needs and wishes of others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s always a good policy to stay on people’s good side.</td>
<td>You have a right not to worry about the goodwill of others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You should be able to answer all questions about a field of knowledge with which you are familiar.</td>
<td>You have the right to say “I don’t know” or “I don’t understand.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is shameful to make mistakes. This dysfunctional thought requires some further comment. How many times as a child did you hear, “Shame on you!” when you made a mistake? The ‘take away’ was that if you did something incorrectly, it was bad, and you were bad for doing it. Your value as a person depended on your actions, so it became very important to do well and please others in order to feel good about yourself. When self-worth becomes closely tied to performance, then you feel shame whenever you make a mistake. You would merely feel regret if you viewed your mistake as a learning opportunity. Regret is a useful emotion in that it motivates you to minimize and correct your mistakes. Shame can serve the same function, but it can also undermine your self-esteem and contribute to impulsive behavior. People who are prone to shame believe that only perfection (100 percent) is good enough.

People who believe that it’s shameful to make a mistake are likely to avoid taking risks, even if it means forfeiting their rights. Others may use fear and shame of making mistakes to manipulate. For example, when a shame-prone partner asks for help with a banking problem, the other partner responds with “I remember that you forgot to pay all those bills last month. That’s not the behavior of someone who deserves a favor.” And the shame-prone partner backs down because he or she agrees with the criticism. The connection between mistakes and shame inhibits healthy assertive behavior.

You may still believe that some of your negative beliefs about assertiveness are correct, or you may be having trouble with some of your assertive rights. While your belief about assertiveness may have been true for you as a child, ask yourself whether the same situation must exist for you as an adult. As an adult you have more power and many more choices for coping with these situations.

**Confronting Your Obstacles for Being Assertive**

It is quite helpful to ask yourself the following questions:

1. If I’m assertive in this situation, what is the worst thing that could happen?
2. What beliefs do I have that would lend probability to this happening?
3. Is there any evidence to support this belief?
4. What evidence is there to refute this belief?
5. What would be a more realistic negative outcome of my being assertive in this situation?
6. How might I respond to or cope with this more realistic negative outcome?
7. What is the best thing that could happen?
8. What is going to happen if I continue to do what I have been doing?
9. Is it worth it to me to be assertive in this situation?
Here is an example of a healthy communication process at work:

- If I tell James I’d rather not spend this year’s vacation at his parents’ house again because I don’t particularly enjoy his mother’s company, he’ll get furious and be angry at me for days.
- He loves his mother more than he loves me.
- James calls his mother every week; he does try to be a good son.
- Now and then he’s told me that his mother gets on his nerves too. And he does love me. He recently told me so and gave me a hug.
- He might be annoyed with me for a little while, and we might have a heated discussion about where to spend our vacation without spending much money.
- I could be prepared with some suggestions for alternatives that might appeal to him: a couple of nights at a bed and breakfast, a camping trip, a visit to friends.
- We could end up having our best vacation ever, somewhere new and exciting.
- We’ll keep spending all our vacations at his parents’ house. Nothing will change unless I take the initiative to break our old routine.

**Criticism as Manipulation**

Many People have difficulty dealing with criticism because they experience it as personal rejection. As a child, when you made a mistake, your parents and other authority figures may have passed judgment on you: “Jeanne, you shouldn’t have broken your sister’s toy. Bad girl.” You had expressed some aggression; therefore you were bad. Eventually you learned to feel ashamed whenever you were criticized. This is a rather destructive form of manipulation used to teach children to conform. Less damaging ways of instructing children in how to behave involve reinforcing appropriate behavior and ignoring unwanted behavior, pointing out what is wrong with the behavior and suggesting a more desirable alternative behavior, and the modeling of appropriate behavior.

**Assertive Approaches for Dealing with Criticism**

Some people may have developed special coping mechanisms to minimize the pain of criticism that have followed them into adulthood, such as blowing up, recalling the faults of the critic, or acting as if they didn’t hear the criticism yet still feel miserable inside. These extremes of aggressive and passive approaches to dealing with criticism can damage healthy relationships as well as self-esteem. The following are some effective assertive approaches for dealing with criticism that will help you simultaneously maintain your relationships and self-esteem intact.
Acknowledgment

When others offer constructive criticism, you can use this feedback to improve yourself. When you have made an error, having others point it out to you in a logical way can be helpful in preventing future mistakes. Whenever you receive criticism with which you agree, whether it is constructive or simply a reminder, acknowledge that the other is right. For example, “Yes, I did put on one purple and one green sock this morning. Thank you for pointing it out.” You are not required to give excuses or apologize for your behavior. When you were a child, you may have been asked questions such as “Why did you knock over the trash?” or “Why were you forty-five minutes late?” You were expected to give reasonable answers, and you learned to come up with reasonable excuses. As an adult, you may choose to give an explanation for your behavior, but it is not necessary. It is your choice as you are not obligated to explain yourself. You can decide whether you really want to, or whether you’re just responding out of habit.

Sorting

A non-constructive criticism with which you disagree may require the use of a more creative assertive approach known as sorting. The non-constructive criticism of you usually contains a grain of truth with a spin of the criticizer’s imagination in order to put you down. For example, “When can we get going? You’re always late. Sometimes I wonder how you keep your job.” People who employ non-constructive criticism tend toward name calling and you-messages. When they are in a critical emotional state they may bring up old history or use absolutes such as “always,” “never,” and “everyone.” If you try to reason with them, you may only give them more ammunition for their case. They may not be interested in listening to you at this point, even when they ask you a question. Their present fragile ego state may require them to be right and to win their point. As you’re tempted to justify yourself or retaliate in kind to the non-constructive criticism, remind yourself that you will only feed a senseless argument, which you cannot possibly win. If you are still unconvinced, think back to a similar situation when you have tried to reason or get even with someone. Why continue to waste your time doing something so unpleasant and unproductive? Try some alternative ways to sort out the criticism. Sorting involves distinguishing the piece of truth from the spin of non-constructive criticism. Here are three creative and effective ways to do this.
Agreement in Part
This method of sorting involves finding some piece of the manipulative critic’s statement that you think is true, and agreeing with it. Reframe the other’s statement in a way that does not jeopardize your integrity. Delete the absolutes and leave out the non-constructive part of the message. In response to the example above, you might simply say, “You’re right, I am late sometimes.” Others may try to get you to admit to more than you wish. As long as you persist in staying with some part of the other’s statement to agree with, he or she will probably give up on proving the spin.

Agreement in Principle

The next method of sorting involves agreeing with others in principle. This utilizes simple logic: if X, then Y. “If I am always as late as you say, then I would have truly lost my job long ago.” Here is another example of an agreement in principle response. Others might say, “You did a lousy job cleaning the dishes. They still have grease on them. You’re the laziest person I’ve ever met! You’re not going to make it at your new job if they catch you working like this!” You might respond with, “You’re right; I wouldn’t be a very good dish washer at a restaurant if I left grease all over the dishes.”

Agreement in Probability

The third method of sorting that you can use with a person who employs non-constructive criticism is called agreement in probability. Choose something within other’s critical statement with which you could probably agree. You can remind yourself that the odds of this one piece of the statement being accurate are minuscule as you reply, “You’re probably right that I’m frequently late.” Reframe the other’s wording slightly so that you maintain your integrity.

Clarification

At times when you are unsure about the other’s intent, clarification may be in order. Whether others are trying to help you, however clumsily, or putting you down intentionally, makes a difference. Is the other person actually trying to hurt you under the guise of being helpful? Are the other’s comments actually hiding unspoken beliefs, feelings, and desires? To clarify the intent of the other’s statements, you may want to clarify by listening carefully—a major feat, especially if you have a history of being criticized. Here is an example of clarification.
**Other Person:** Late again, I see. One of these days you’ll arrive at work only to find that everyone else has gone home for the day.

**You:** What is it about my being late that bothers you?

**Other Person:** I work hard all day with a ton of pressure on me. You have a much more stress-free job all day, and you still don’t get dinner on the table on time.

**You:** What is it about my schedule that *really* troubles you so much?

**Other Person:** I haven’t had a vacation in over a year, and I work overtime every weekend. You take it easy all week and make almost as much money as I do and get away with it. It’s just not fair.

**You:** I didn’t know you felt so strongly about this lack of fairness stuff!

**Other Person:** Well, now that I talk about it out loud, I guess I don’t really believe that life is fair. I guess I made my own choices for working so hard and you’ve made decisions along the way so that you don’t have to.

In this situation, clarification was helpful in placing responsibility for the dissatisfaction where it belonged: with others. Sometimes others will not have so much insight or inclination for clarification. When you’ve assured yourself that the other’s criticism is not constructive or is manipulative, then shift from clarification to sorting. If you agree with the criticism, acknowledge it. Be careful when you clarify that you do not either verbally or nonverbally give the message “So what’s the problem now?” (This suggests that you perceive the other as a constant complainer). When used appropriately, clarification can turn a person who employs judgmental criticism into an assertive individual who directly expresses his or her thoughts, feelings, and needs while also honoring yours.

**The Content-to-Process Shift**

If a conversation gets stuck in a conflict of needs or strong feelings, you can shift the focus from the presenting topic to an analysis of what is happening between the two of you. Simply state to others that you experience the conversation has gone off the original point. Rather than argue about this you can simply say, “I’m just stating my opinion” and then you can quickly return to the original topic.

For example, you are asking the other person to talk to you more, and he or she responds: “You feel like I’m emotionally abandoning you? I can recall on our summer vacation you only spoke to me about three times.” Instead of getting into a convoluted discussion about the issues of the vacation, you can say: “We’re getting away from the problem at hand,” or “Maybe you are angry with something I said.”
The Broken-Record Approach

The good news is that you have the assertive right to express what you think, feel, and need. The bad news is that people may misunderstand each other’s assertive need to stand up for their rights. The broken-record approach is one of several assertiveness skills that will help you deal more effectively with others. The key to this approach is repetition. This technique is also effective in communicating to others what you need when their interests are preventing them from seeing yours. Here are the five steps of the broken-record approach:

1. Decide exactly what you need or don’t want. Assess your thoughts about the situation, your feelings, and your assertive rights.
2. Create a brief, specific, easy-to-understand statement about what you need. A single sentence is best. Don’t offer excuses or explanations. It is most effective to say “I don’t want to...,” or “I’m not comfortable with....” In wording your brief sentence, eliminate any loopholes that others might use to further his or her position.
3. Employ assertive body language to support your sentence: good posture, direct eye contact, and a calm and self-assured voice.
4. Firmly repeat your brief sentence, as many times as necessary for others to get your message and to realize that you won’t change your mind. He or she will probably invent a number of excuses or simply say no. Eventually even the most aggressive person will run out of no’s and excuses, if you are persistent and logical in your approach. Change your brief sentence only if others finds a serious loophole in it.
5. You may acknowledge the other’s opinions, feelings, or wants before returning to your broken record. But do not feel obligated to answer questions. Be careful not to be distracted from your goal.

Slowing It Down

The urgency to fix a problem too quickly usually is the result of anxiety. You don’t need to respond immediately to every problem or have an instant answer when others raise an issue. Slowing down the conversation helps in a number of ways. It gives you a chance to better understand what is really being said by allowing others to express all his or her thoughts and feelings. Some momentary delay also gives you a chance to experience your thoughts, feelings, and needs regarding the issue. Finally, slowing it down helps prevent a knee-jerk response that you may later regret. Lack of urgency will allow both you and others a chance to discover a more satisfying resolution.
Stating Your Position

You can use a statement of your position in order to express your thoughts, feelings, and needs regarding an issue. The situation may be a small one, such as which movie to see with others, or a big one, such as explaining to others why you want to change your career. In either case, you need to articulate your position clearly and completely in order to avoid misunderstandings.

There are four parts to a good statement of your position:

1. Your understanding of the situation
2. Your feelings regarding the situation
3. Your needs regarding the situation
4. An incentive to encourage others to cooperate

Your understanding of the situation is a definition of the problem. This part is necessary for focusing the discussion. It is your chance to state your beliefs regarding the problem situation. Nonjudgmental, non-inflammatory, objective language will be most effective. For example: “We need to make a decision about what we want to see at the movies tonight. I know you really like action films, but we’ve seen one the last three times we’ve gone out. We could use some variety!”

The second part, expressing your feelings regarding the situation, gives others a sense of how important the problem is to you. Try not to mix up an opinion for a feeling here. An example of a feeling is, “I dislike action films!” Once they are stated, your feelings play a significant role in helping you get what you need, especially when your opinion is drastically different from the others. Others may be able to relate to your feelings regarding an issue, even when he or she totally disagrees with your opinion. When you express your feelings, the problem becomes less of a competition. Expressing your feelings can make a mutual compromise more possible.

The third part, expression of your needs, is most effectively stated in a few simple sentences. State your wishes and needs clearly. It is not appropriate to expect others to read your mind even if you have a childlike desire to be given what you want without having to ask for it. Be specific about what you need. Ask others to change behavior, not attitudes. For example, “I would really like to go to a romantic comedy tonight.”
The fourth part of a statement of your position is to encourage the other’s cooperation. Let others know how he or she will benefit by cooperating with you: “We’ll both be more interesting and well-rounded,” or “I’ll be more enthusiastic about going out on Saturday night.” If the other person is very resistant, incentives may not work. In this situation you may need to state the negative consequences for failure to cooperate. As you describe negative consequences, do not make threats such as this: “If we don’t go to a romantic comedy, I’m going to make your life miserable.” This will only bring out defensiveness and hostility. State how you will take care of yourself if your needs are not accommodated: “I’ll have to invite another friend to go see the romantic comedy instead of you.”

Sharing with others your thoughts, feelings, and needs in a statement of your position increases the possibility that the message you want to send will be the message others receive. It is important that the statement of your position does not blame or use destructive language. Otherwise others are likely to become defensive, tune out what you are saying, counterattack, or withdraw. Your position should be described specifically and objectively without negative judgments. By using I-messages as opposed to you-messages, you own your thoughts, feelings, and needs.

A statement of your position is difficult for others to blow off. Your statement may be new to others however, and they may become momentarily silent. Don’t let this deter you. After some time you may want to say, “I’d like to hear some feedback on what you heard me saying.” Then remain silent and wait for a response.

*Active Listening*

Listening actively focuses your attention on others so that you can accurately hear his or her thoughts, feelings, and needs. Active listening involves three steps. First, prepare yourself by becoming aware of your own thoughts, feelings, and needs. Second, listen by giving your full attention to others. Listen to his or her way of viewing the situation, feelings, and needs. If you are not clear about any of these three elements, ask others for more information. For example, “I’m not clear about how you see the problem. Would you be a little more specific about it?” or “How do you feel about this?” Thirdly, acknowledge the other’s comments by using reflective listening. For example, “If I hear you right, you’re saying that you don’t want to go to another action film tonight because you prefer romantic comedies and you’re feeling like we need more balance in our life. Is that what you’re telling me?”
Compromise

When two people’s needs are in direct conflict, a negotiation that will completely satisfy both individuals is difficult to achieve. Instead, you can look for a compromise that you both can live with, at least for a period of time. Here are some examples of compromise:

- Some of what I need with some of what you need.
- If you’ll do X for me, I’ll do Y for you.
- My way when I do it, your way when you do it.
- My way this time, your way next time.
- We’ll try my way this time; and if you don’t like it, you get to choose next time.

Although compromise can spontaneously result from your discussion, you will sometimes need a brainstorming session to come up with one. Brainstorming a relationship compromise involves four steps:

- List all the alternative solutions you can think of. Let your creative juices flow while generating as many solutions to the problem as possible. Don’t judge any of the options at this stage of brainstorming. Just list as many possible solutions as you can, even if some are silly.
- Eliminate the solutions that are not mutually acceptable.
- Identify a relationship compromise that you can both live with.
- Agree to evaluate the relationship compromise after a period of time. If you aren’t both adequately satisfied at this time, you can renegotiate. If your compromise seems to have sufficiently resolved the conflict, celebrate your effectiveness in working together.

An alternative method of reaching a relationship compromise involves having others counter your proposal. If you find the counterproposal to be unacceptable, make sure that you understand the other’s thoughts, feelings, and needs regarding the problem situation, and think of yet another proposal. Continue until a mutually acceptable proposal is found. A helpful question to ask if you’re both having difficulty arriving at a relationship compromise is, “What do you need from me to feel OK about doing this my way?” The answer to this question may serve as the basis for a workable compromise.

Saying NO and Sharing Negative Feelings

Learning how to say no and share negative feelings are an important aspect of effective anger management. Assertiveness problems often originate in families where there were inadequate boundaries and
limits. Your parents likely tended to be overly permissive, overly strict, or inconsistent. In addition, it may have been unacceptable to express your negative feelings appropriately. As a result, you were never exposed to the skills necessary to maintain appropriate boundaries, set limits, and express negative emotions. In fact, one way to understand the assertiveness problem is as a technique for maintaining internal boundaries. Internal boundaries are the helpful guidelines we impose on ourselves to provide structure to our lives—for example, being in bed by 11:00 P.M. in order to get enough rest for the next day. Practice saying “No” to small things at first, like “I have to get off the phone now because it’s getting late.” Give yourself time to develop more sophisticated boundaries and assertiveness skills.

You may have already realized that a major trigger is activated when you feel compelled to say or do things that you aren’t comfortable with, or when you have to act as though you feel something that you don’t. You don’t feel able or confident about how not to do what is being asked of you, so you do it, feel terrible, and then act out the resultant feelings. For example, someone asks you to spend the weekend with their friends, and you say yes even though you really need to stay home and rest after an exhausting two weeks of being overloaded. During the visit you complain and get into an argument with the other person over a bunch of little things. Developing and honing your ability to say no directly can put you back in control of yourself, eliminating the need to act out in these situations.

Replacing passive and aggressive communication with assertive communication requires a lifetime commitment. It’s easy to revert to old patterns at times when you are under stress, such as when you’re tired, hungry, afraid, angry, guilty, ashamed, or trying to do too much. Ask yourself what was going on that prevented you from being assertive. Remember that you have a right to make mistakes: learn from them rather than dwelling on them. Review your assertive rights. Explore your fears to make sure that they’re realistic, and ask yourself whether it is worth it to you to be assertive in this situation. Focus on the constructive things you said or did, so that the next time that situation comes up you’ll be more assertive. Ask yourself what assertiveness skills you could use the next time you’re in that situation. Role-play communicating assertively in that situation in your mind or with a trusted friend. Include what you think others would say. Finally, when you anticipate a difficult situation, mentally role-play communicating assertively, including the other person’s responses.
Some Guidelines for Improving Assertiveness

- When expressing refusal, express a decisive "no"; explain why you are refusing, but don't be unduly apologetic. Where applicable, offer the other person an alternative course of action.
- Give as prompt and brief a reply as you can, without interruptions.
- Insist on being treated with fairness and justice
- Request an explanation when asked to do something unreasonable.
- Look the person you're talking to in the eye. Check your other body language for things that might convey indirectness or lack of self-assurance (e.g., hand over mouth, shuffling feet). Watch your voice tone and inflection, making sure that it is neither a sub-audible whisper nor overly loud.
- When expressing annoyance or criticism, remember: Comment on the person's behavior, rather than attack him/her.
- When commenting on another's behavior, try to use "I statements": Example: "When you keep canceling out on social arrangements at the last minute, it's extremely inconvenient and I feel really annoyed." Where possible, offer a suggestion for an alternative behavior. ("I think we'd better sit down and try to figure out how we can make plans together and cut down on this kind of inconveniencing.")
- Keep a log of your assertion-related responses; review them, talk them over with a friend. Watch good models.
- Tackle less anxiety-evoking situations first; don't leap into the most emotionally-laden situation you can think of right away! You don't unlearn bad habits, or learn new skills, overnight.
- Reward yourself in some way each time you've pushed yourself to make an assertive response - whether or not you get the desired results from the other person.
- Don't beat yourself over the head when you behave non-assertively or aggressively; merely try to figure out where you went astray and how to improve your handling of the situation next time.

*Homework: Anger Log*
MODULE 9

Conflict Resolution

Conflict is basically a disagreement in which we experience a threat to our needs, interests, or concerns. Conflict is perceived through the lens of our perspective or worldview, as well as, our present state of mind be it thoughtful or chaotic. In other words, conflict is based on our interpretation of the situation, not necessarily an impartial view of it. When conflict arises we need to ask ourselves if we are functioning out of our Primitive Brain or Evolved Brain and try to maintain a reasonable, rational, logical stance.

Take a moment to consider either your workplace or a relationship and consider the following questions (write down your thoughts):

- What are some key sources of conflict in your workplace and/or a relationship?
- When do conflicts tend to occur?
- How do you respond to these conflicts as they arise?

Why Does Conflict Occur?

Problems at the workplace or in relationships are more complicated to solve than individual problems. Issues of different values, needs, and beliefs are not easy to resolve. Consider the budgeting of finances for a single person versus for two people. How people spend money requires the working out of many differences. Even rather simple money decisions can be difficult because issues of difference are often raised, and earlier unresolved conflicts may rear their ugly heads.

Research studies in human behavior indicate that conflict is inevitable in human relationships. Studies also show that conflict occurs more over perceived differences than real ones. In other words, people anticipate barriers to getting their needs met that may or may not be real. People each have unique ways of dealing with conflicts in their lives. Coming to understand your style and motives, as well as the style and motives of the other person, will help you resolve relationship conflict more effectively.
Relationship conflict can often become a power struggle or a competition over who gets their way. It can be driven by either or both individual’s need to prove they are right, have a superior opinion, or a desire to hurt each other and “get even.” Consider the following 9 reasons why conflict occurs and determine which one(s) fit in your experience.

1. **Lack of Communication**

Failure to share ideas and feelings in an intimate relationship sets up a situation where the other person may try to fill in the gaps. Person A is left to read into what he thinks Person B will say or anticipate how she will respond. Person A may suspect negative things that provoke anxiety, leading to “looking for the worst.” For example, if Person B is silent at the dinner table night after night, Person A may suspect that Person B is angry or even having an affair. Yet Person B may only be upset about something else, or preoccupied with solving a problem at work. If lack of communication persists, trust is diminished and both people may become suspicious and defensive.

2. **Lack of Effective Leadership or Decision Making**

Lack of agreement about who’s in charge or how things are going to get done in any relationship can be a source of conflict. For example, if one person in a relationship expects democratic decision making and the other wants to be the authority, conflicts may be difficult to resolve. Then when other conflicts arise, the people become diverted into a struggle over whose authority is going to be accepted.

3. **Value Conflicts**

Attitude, belief, and expectation differences may interfere with making decisions if people are inflexible and hold rigid, dogmatic beliefs about the “right way” to do things. Different values and beliefs predispose the people to choose different goals or different methods to achieve the same goals. And, since each goal requires an investment of time, effort, and some sacrifice, people cannot pursue one goal without sacrificing another to some extent. Perhaps Person A wants to spend money on expensive vacations and Person B cares more about saving to move to a nicer apartment. Or maybe Person A wishes Person B would join her in attending every single soccer game that their son plays, while Person B would rather go bowling with his friends some Saturdays. These types of disagreements can cause conflict in a relationship.
4. Gender Role Differences

When people perceive their own and their person’s roles differently, problems can arise. For example, suppose that Tony’s father always came home to a hot dinner and a clean house because Tony’s mother was a traditional, full-time housewife with few interests outside her home. Tony may expect his wife, Amy, to live up to the definition of “wife and mother” he knew as a boy. However, what if Amy believes that since both she and Tony work full-time, they should share the child care and housework equally? Since their concepts of gender role are very different, conflict may result. Differences in beliefs about gender role should be discussed together by people in order to increase understanding and tolerance.

5. Not Pulling One’s Own Weight

Accomplishing tasks and achieving goals is a necessary element of all kinds of relationships. When tasks are not completed, people may become frustrated and angry. For example, Person A responds to Person B’s anger by finally performing a long requested task, a destructive pattern may develop. If Person B’s getting angry is the only thing that convinces Person A to turn off the TV and clean the house, then Person B will eventually tend to get angry right away whenever something needs to get done, because anger is the only thing that works. Low productivity in a relationship may induce manipulative criticisms and shaming interaction. For example, Person A comes home from the office at 7:00 P.M. and says to Person B, who is reading a book on the sofa, “You are the laziest thing on the face of the earth. When are we going to eat dinner?”

6. Change and Transitions

Change and transition are givens for people in relationship. However, human beings tend to prefer secure, predictable patterns to the unknown. When transitions occur abruptly and without thorough processing of thoughts, feelings, and needs, conflict may result. Sudden changes—even if they are seemingly positive ones, like a better job—are likely to provoke annoyance, anxiety, and confusion if not adequately processed.

7. Unresolved Baggage

Unless thoroughly discussed and adequately worked through, people’ past unresolved conflicts inevitably have a negative impact on
relationships. Many people shy away from discussing conflict because hurtful memories of past conflicts remain. These past experiences become the baggage of our present. Relationships have the potential either to heal or to re-wound scars from the past. For example, as a schoolboy Person A came from a family that was always busy doing projects or working. When he would take a break from his homework to watch TV, his father would shame him by saying, “You will never amount to anything.” Now when he comes home from working all day, Person B may rewound that parental scar by criticizing him for taking time to replenish himself by listening to music or puttering in the basement. Or Person B may help heal the old wound by affirming Person A’s right to take some time for self-care.

8. Distorted Beliefs about Conflict

There are several distorted beliefs that have impact on people’s ability to resolve conflict:

- *Harmony is normal and conflict is abnormal.* Conflict is in fact natural, normal, and inevitable whenever people interact together.

- *Conflict is the result of personality differences.* The fact is that personalities do not conflict; people’s behaviors conflict. Frequently “personality conflict” is used as an excuse to avoid the conflict.

- *Conflict and disagreement are the same.* Disagreement is a simple difference of opinion, while conflict is more threatening. Disagreement is somewhat restrained and usually without the presence of powerful feeling; conflict is more feeling-filled and less reasonable.

9. Destructive Patterns

Because relationships have the ability to amplify the strengths and weaknesses in each person’s personality, conflicts can become a destructive power struggle. If the destructive pattern of conflict infests the relationship, both people will feel angry, hurt, misunderstood, and rejected. Trust can become lost and the people may fall into playing games with each other. These relationship games block the people’s ability to communicate fairly and each sees the other as the one at fault and/or the one who should change. When this occurs, the relationship may become stuck. The people reach an impasse at the same point in their efforts to resolve conflicts. For example, one person may block any resolution attempts by routinely refusing to talk about it or withdrawing or sulking. This effectively destroys the conflict resolution process, and stalemate results.
**Conflict Resolution Styles**

We tend to develop one of four conflict resolution styles. Consider which one of the styles you most likely fit into?

1. **Denial or avoidance of the conflict.** This approach emanates from the hope that the problem will simply go away on its own. Unfortunately it usually doesn’t, so this is an ineffective approach.

2. **Giving in rather than confronting the conflict.** This style is typically used by people who tend toward a passive approach. Sometimes these people are being martyrs, sometimes they are fearful, and sometimes they are seeking appreciation. This is an ineffective approach for several reasons. It is unfair, it does not generate creative solutions, and regular submission diminishes self-esteem and creates resentment and a sense of hopelessness.

3. **One person gets angry and blames the other person.** It is as if this person is saying, “You’ve hurt me and I’m going to punish you back.” This conflict style leads to a stormy relationship in which each person must win at almost any price. This is an ineffective approach because it precludes all constructive resolution, is manipulative and unfair, and produces lasting hostility.

4. **Seeking an innovative, fair, optimal solution for both people.** This is the approach adopted by people who want to create healthy relationships. People learn the skills required to control their angry and competitive feelings and their passive and aggressive impulses. They work to authentically find mutually acceptable solutions.

**Basic 10 Step Conflict Resolution Method**

Consider the following basic conflict resolution steps. You may already use some of them. Which of these steps, if any have you been leaving out?

1. **Find OK-ness within yourself.** Take a few deep breaths or whatever you need to be OK prior to attempting to resolve conflicts. You want to make sure that you are functioning out of the Evolved brain in order to be reasonable, rational and logical.

2. **Recognize Conflict Issues.** Healthy people do not want to look for conflicts. However, when a problem does arise, you will find it useful to accept the problem as an opportunity to seek understanding of yourself and each other. Think of it as a time for growth. Each person’s attitude toward the conflict issues will influence the creation of a solution.
3. **Select an Appropriate Time and Place to Discuss the Issues.** You need to select a time and place that will allow for adequate understanding and mutual effort in the resolution process. When one person is tired, emotionally upset, uncomfortable in a public place, or is rushed for time, you will be better off postponing the process until conditions are better.

4. **Treat Each Other with Respect.** Both people need to recognize that respect is conveyed by behavior. The way people look at each other, select their words, and listen, as well as their tone of voice and reasoning approach, communicates respect or disrespect. In the midst of conflict, angry emotions often turn to name calling or verbal attacks on the other’s character. There is a descending emotional force that tends to move the level of communication toward disrespect during conflict. There may also be an inclination toward labeling the other person. Talking at each other or past each other can become the rule, rather than talking with each other. An act of willpower may be required to resist the forces pulling you toward disrespect. People can use self-talk, for example, “I will not get pulled down.” The assertion of a moral decision to treat the other person as a person worthy of respect is required or communication will become no longer creative.

5. **Listen Carefully.** When feelings are very strong and creative communication is difficult, people are inclined to mis-communicate and misunderstand. Thoughts, feelings, and needs of both people must be heard and understood. When people truly listen to each other carefully, they begin to notice that they take each other seriously. Reflective listening is a helpful tool for conflict resolution in couples. Here’s how it works: The other person says something. You can speak up for yourself only after restating the other person’s ideas and feelings, to his or her satisfaction. After you respond to their statement, he or she then restates what you just said, to your satisfaction, before responding. Concentrate especially on reflecting back feelings.

6. **Focus on Feelings.** The key to conflict resolution is to attend to the emotions first. Try to understand what emotions the other person is expressing. There will be no resolution until both people know that the other understands their feelings regarding the issue. Listen until you experience the other side. It is not enough to simply hear each other’s emotions. The feelings need to be understood and accepted. If this step is skipped, there is unlikely to be a real resolution.
7. **Verbalize the Conflict Issues.** First each person must get in touch with his or her own thoughts, needs, and feelings. When one person is in the presence of the other’s anger, there can often be a good deal of anxiety or panic. This may also be the case with one’s own anger as well. The anxiety needs to be managed. State your point of view briefly! Long and drawn out will agitate the other person and may just be an expression of your anxiety. Be careful with loaded words! Words can be pillows or prods, comforts or bullets. But be real with your person. It is not helpful to withhold important information or talk about one thing when the real issue is another. State what you believe without going to the extreme. Tell your feelings! If you are angry or resentful, say that you are angry or resentful, or you have a lot of feelings about the subject under discussion. Until emotional issues are acknowledged, the substantive issues will probably not be resolved. Communicate what the truth is for you. Look for the connection between the problem as you see it and the underlying basic psychological need from which it might have arisen. How does each person define the problem? What behaviors do each contribute to the conflict? What are the issues of agreement and disagreement in this conflict? Both people must ask and understand these questions.

8. **Identify Your Share of the Problem.** Relationship conflict by definition means “we” have a problem. As each person accepts some responsibility for the problem, both notice a willingness to cooperate and will much more likely be open to the discussion. Here are some helpful suggestions for talking with the other person.

- Choose one word to describe what you want to talk about, like “spending.” Now state the word or subject that you want to talk about in one complete sentence, like “I’m worried that we’re spending more than we can afford on Christmas this year.” Be precise and specific. Try not to blame, ridicule or attack, and do not overload each other with too much information all at once. Take responsibility for the problem, and tell them the reason that you are bringing the matter up for discussion. For example, “I have a problem. It is a little difficult for me to talk about, but our relationship is very important to me, and by talking about it I think that we will have a better one. I think ___ is the problem, and ___ is what I am contributing to the problem. I would like to hear what you think and feel about it.”

- Statements like this one are a healthy way of expressing potentially charged conflicts. If your person approaches you in this manner, respond by saying, “Thank you for telling me. If I understand
correctly, you think the problem is ___. I can understand that you think ___.” Restate the problem to make sure you have correctly understood the other. Conflicts may be the result of a specific behavior of the other person. Take, for example, a situation in which one person does not pick up after himself or herself. The other person may give this type of response: “I’ve asked you a thousand times to pick up your things! You couldn’t be this way at work or your boss would fire you. I’m not picking up after you anymore! What kind of a role model are you for the kids?”

• Compare that example to the person who selects an appropriate time and approaches the other by saying: “I have a problem, and I need to talk to you about it, because it involves our relationship. Maybe I have not told you my real feelings, but I am bothered by our differences in keeping the house neat. I would feel more accepting of you and less resentful if I felt you were picking up your clothes in the morning before you go to work. If this were done, I would feel better and actually have more time to make the kids’ lunches.” Wait for response.

9. **Recognize and Identify Optional Solutions.** People have named their own contributions to a problem or conflict; it becomes clear that a behavioral change from one or both people would be to the advantage of each. The next step is to agree upon a solution to the problem. Now is the time for brainstorming. Both people should think of as many solutions to the problem as possible. These should be behavioral changes for each person. It is important to propose more than one option because you will be more likely to find one that both of you will find workable.

10. **Choose a Mutually Acceptable Solution.** Following the identification of the possible options, the people mutually evaluate them and make a choice. The evaluation of each option should include (a) the steps in implementation, and (b) the possible outcomes. What will be required for each person to effect a change by implementing a given alternative? How will the change affect the behavior of both people and the relationship as a whole? If one person prefers a certain solution but the other finds it unacceptable, discuss the reasons. Sharing your ideas can promote growth and prevent feelings of rejection. Continue discussing until you agree to try one solution to see if it works.
**Before Working Through a Conflict**

Here are some helpful questions to ask prior to any attempt at conflict resolution.

- Is the problem issue really worth the effort to resolve it?
- Will talking about these issues really improve our relationship?
- Am I willing to spend the necessary time and energy talking about the issue and helping the other person by listening?
- Have I chosen an appropriate time and place for this confrontation?

If the answer to each of these questions is yes, then continue with the basic 10 step conflict resolution method. If some answers are no, you may need to choose a different manner of expressing your concerns (such as sharing feelings only, without problem solving).

**Suggested Ground Rules for Conflict Resolution**

- One person speaks at a time
- Mutually agree to listen to one another, to try to understand the other person's perspective on the situation before responding
- Agree to maintain confidentiality unless there is a clear understanding regarding who else needs to know further information
- Agree to communicate openly, respectfully, and directly with each other
- Agree not to personally attack each other’s character

**Exercise**

What’s the overall message you’re getting about how to solve a conflict with someone?
Homework:

Practice the *Basic 10 Step Conflict Resolution Method* this week. Try using the method with a lower level conflict issue and with someone you think will be relatively safe and reasonable.

Anger Log
MODULE 10

Stress and Anxiety Management

"For peace of mind, we need to resign as general manager of the universe."
Larry Eisenberg

What is Stress and Anxiety?

Stress and Anxiety are common responses to situations that have caused you to feel threatened or have upset your sense of OK-ness in some way. When you sense danger, whether it’s real or imagined, your defenses kick into high gear in a rapid, automatic process known as “fight-or-flight” or the Stress and Anxiety response.

The Stress and Anxiety response is the body’s way of helping you to survive. When working properly, it helps you stay focused, energetic, and alert. In emergency situations, the Stress and Anxiety response can save your life – giving you extra strength to protect yourself, for example, or causing you to put on the brakes to avoid an accident.

The Stress and Anxiety response also helps you prepare to meet many of life’s challenges. For example, it can keep you attentive during a presentation at work, sharpen your concentration when needed, or energize you to get things done.

However beyond a certain point, the Stress and Anxiety response stops being helpful and starts producing significant damage to your health, your mood state, your thinking, your relationships, and your ability to function normally. It is important to keep in mind that this response is all happening automatically and mostly outside of your awareness.

Recognizing Your Stress and Anxiety

It’s important to learn how to recognize your Stress and Anxiety levels. The most risky part of Stress and Anxiety is how easily increasing levels can sneak up on you. You get used to it. It starts to feel familiar, even normal. You don’t notice how much it’s affecting you, even as it places you outside of OK-ness and functioning out of your Primitive Brain. The signs and symptoms of Stress and Anxiety excess can easily be missed. The states of Stress and Anxiety affect your mind/body system, your reactions, and not everyone experiences the Stress and Anxiety response in the same way.
The following list contains some of the common signs and symptoms of Stress and Anxiety. The more signs and symptoms you recognize in yourself, the closer you may be to Stress and Anxiety excess.

**Signs and Symptoms of Stress and Anxiety Excess**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognitive Symptoms</th>
<th>Emotional Symptoms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>— Memory problems</td>
<td>— Moodiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— Inability to concentrate</td>
<td>— Irritability or short temper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— Poor judgment</td>
<td>— Agitation, inability to relax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— Seeing only the negative</td>
<td>— Feeling overwhelmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— Anxious or racing thoughts</td>
<td>— Sense of loneliness and isolation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— Constant worrying</td>
<td>— Depression or general unhappiness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Symptoms</th>
<th>Behavioral Symptoms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>— Aches and pains</td>
<td>— Eating more or less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— Diarrhea or constipation</td>
<td>— Sleeping too much or too little</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— Nausea, dizziness</td>
<td>— Isolating yourself from others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— Chest pain, rapid heartbeat</td>
<td>— Procrastinating or neglecting responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— Loss of sex drive</td>
<td>— Using alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs to relax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— Frequent colds</td>
<td>— Nervous habits (nail biting, pacing)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Keep in mind that signs and symptoms of Stress and Anxiety excess can also be caused by other psychological and medical problems. If you’re experiencing any of the signs of Stress and Anxiety, it’s wise to see a doctor for a full evaluation. Your doctor can help you determine whether or not your symptoms are Stress and Anxiety response related.

Because of the pervasive harm Stress and Anxiety can cause, it’s important to know your own limit. Precisely how much Stress and Anxiety is “excessive” differs from person to person. It is essential to keep in mind that even moderate levels of Stress and Anxiety will tend to make you function out of your Primitive Brain and increase the likelihood of angry reactions.

**Some Common Causes of Stress and Anxiety**

Some kind of challenging event or situation often triggers the Stress and Anxiety excess. A trigger often acts as a ‘last straw,’ since in most cases the Stress and Anxiety has been accumulating over some time. Among the most common precipitating events are:
• **A significant personal loss** - This can be the loss of a significant person through death or relationship breakup, the loss of employment, a financial loss, or the loss of physical health.

• **A significant life change** - Any turning point in your life cycle, such as getting married, expecting a baby, going off to college, changing jobs, making a geographical move, and so on.

• **Stimulants or recreational drugs** - It’s not uncommon for Stress and Anxiety to develop after too much intake of caffeine. Even more common is the appearance of Stress and Anxiety excess in people using meth, cocaine, amphetamines, LSD, high doses of marijuana, and withdrawal from sedatives and tranquilizers.

Additional causes can operate in the here-and-now to keep Stress and Anxiety states going. Most of the practices you will be learning in this module will help you to deal with the ‘maintaining’ causes. The primary maintaining causes are:

• **Anxious Self-Talk** - Self-talk is what you say to yourself in your own mind. You engage in an internal monologue much of the time, although it may be so automatic and subtle that you don’t notice it unless you step back and pay attention. Statements you make to yourself beginning with the words 'What if' as in 'What if I have another anger episode?' can create much of your Stress and Anxiety. This type of negative self-talk *anticipates* the worst in advance. The more common term for this type of thinking is simply ‘worry.’ You can learn to recognize your Stress and Anxiety promoting self-talk, reject it, and replace it with more supportive and coping statements.

• **Withheld Feelings** - Holding in feelings of anger, frustration, sadness, or even excitement can contribute to a state of free-floating Stress and Anxiety. Free-floating Stress and Anxiety is when you feel vaguely anxious without knowing why. You may have noticed that after you let out your angry feelings or have a good talk, you feel calmer and more at ease. Expressing feelings seems to have a distinct physiological effect that results in reduced levels of Stress and Anxiety.

• **Lack of Assertiveness** - To express your feelings to other people, it’s important that you develop an assertive style of communicating. Assertiveness, in a few words, is expressing your self in a direct, up-front manner. It involves a healthy balance somewhere between submissiveness, where you are afraid to ask for what you want at all,
and aggressiveness, where you demand what you want through coercion or threats. People who are prone to Stress and Anxiety excess often tend to act submissively. They avoid asking directly for what they want and hesitate to express strong feelings, especially anger. Often they are afraid of imposing on others or of not maintaining their self-identity as a pleasing and nice person. They may be afraid that assertive communication will alienate the other person.

- **Absence of a Self-Care Practice** - Common to many people with Stress and Anxiety excess is a underlying sense of insecurity. Such insecurity arises from a variety of conditions in childhood, including parental emotional neglect, abandonment, abuse, overprotection, perfectionism, as well as from patterns of alcoholism or chemical dependency in the family. Since they never received reliable nurturing as children, adult survivors of these various forms of deprivation, often lack the understanding to sufficiently take care of their own needs. Unaware of how to care for themselves, they may have problems in the face of life demands and responsibilities. The absence of a self-care practice serves to perpetuate Stress and Anxiety excess and can lead directly to anger management difficulties. The most lasting solution to parental deprivation is to become a good parent to your self.

- **Fast Paced Lifestyle** - Think carefully for a moment about the place where you live and your everyday life: your country, your culture, your town or city, your daily habits and customs. What is the pace of your lifestyle? Is it rushed and fast paced most of the time, or slow and tranquil? A self-care practice for managing your Stress and Anxiety will help reduce your vulnerability to life’s problems in general. Mastering the concepts and practices offered here in connection with relaxation, exercise, coping statements, dysfunctional thinking, and assertiveness will all contribute to managing your anger more effectively.

- **Lack of Meaning or a Sense of Purpose** - It has been my repeated observation that people experience relief from Stress and Anxiety when they feel that their life has meaning, purpose, and a sense of direction. Until you discover something larger than just personal self-gratification - something that gives your life a sense of purpose - you may be prone to feelings of boredom and a vague sense of confinement because you are not realizing all your evolutionary potential. This sense of confinement can be a potent breeding ground for Stress and Anxiety excess and recurrent anger issues.
Early Signs of Stress and Anxiety

You can learn to recognize early signs of Stress and Anxiety. For example, you may detect an increase in your heart rate. Or you might become aware of a tightening in the chest, sweaty skin, or butterflies in your gut. Many people experience some type of preliminary signs before excess levels of Stress and Anxiety kick in. It’s helpful to recognize different levels of Stress and Anxiety by using the Stress and Anxiety Table below.

The Stress and Anxiety Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0- OK-ness:</th>
<th>Feeling of well-being and peace</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1- Very Early Stress and Anxiety:</td>
<td>Passing glimmer of Stress and Anxiety; feeling slightly nervous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2- Early Stress and Anxiety:</td>
<td>Butterflies in gut; muscle tension; feeling moderately nervous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3- Low Stress and Anxiety:</td>
<td>Feeling awkward but still in control; heart starting to beat more rapidly; slightly sweaty skin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4- Moderate Stress and Anxiety:</td>
<td>Feeling uncomfortable or beginning to “zone out”; heart beating rapidly; muscles tightening; worry about maintaining control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5- High Stress and Anxiety:</td>
<td>Heart pounding quite rapidly or beating irregularly/abruptly; constricted breathing; feeling “zoned out” or dizzy; real fear of losing control; feeling compelled to escape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6- Major Stress and Anxiety:</td>
<td>Great difficulty in breathing; palpitations; disorientation or dissociation (unreality as mind goes someplace else); increasing fear in response to perceived loss of all control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-10- Extreme Stress and Anxiety:</td>
<td>The symptoms of marked Stress and Anxiety but magnified; fear of going crazy or dying; terror; obsession with escape</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The symptoms described in the Stress and Anxiety Table may be varied. Each individual has his or her own unique set of signs and symptoms that will show up before the point where a sense of control seems lost.
Practices for Managing Your Stress and Anxiety

Anxiety and Stress management through relaxation, exercise, good nutrition, time management and organization, social support, redirecting attention, and adopting healthy thinking will help reduce overall levels of Stress and Anxiety. It is also very helpful to develop a regular ‘practice’ including some of your favorite Stress and Anxiety management techniques.

Having a practice that you follow on a regular basis to relieve Stress and Anxiety in your life can help you to keep your Stress and Anxiety levels lower so that you’re less likely to function out of your Primitive Brain. A consistent Stress and Anxiety practice will help you bring your autonomic nervous system back into balance by activating the parasympathetic nervous system and causing the relaxation response. The relaxation response is not lying on the couch or sleeping but an active process that leaves your body relaxed, calm, and focused.

Learning the basics of these practices isn’t difficult, but for it to be consistently effective, some discipline is necessary. Most experts recommend setting aside at least 10 to 20 minutes a day for your Stress and Anxiety practice. If you’d like to get even more benefit, aim for 30 minutes to an hour. If that sounds like a scary commitment, remember that many of these practices can be incorporated into your existing daily schedule; practiced at your desk over lunch or on the bus during your morning commute.

Depth Relaxation

One of the most powerful practices for coping with and managing Stress and Anxiety is depth relaxation training. It is at the very foundation of any practice undertaken to manage Stress and Anxiety. As previously discussed, depth relaxation involves an intentional focus that neutralizes the activated mind/body state of Stress and Anxiety. This intentional focusing has been described as the relaxation response. Depth relaxation techniques such as visualization, diaphragmatic breathing, and whole-body muscle relaxation are distinct from more passive forms of relaxation such as listening to music or watching a movie.

Some of the changes that depth relaxation practice provides are:

1. Lowering of heart rate
2. Lowering of respiratory rate
3. Lowering of blood pressure
4. Greater alpha-wave brain activity
5. Lessening of analytical thinking
6. Lessening of muscle tension
7. Lowering of metabolic rate
8. Lowering of oxygen consumption

The practice of depth relaxation for 20 to 25 minutes per day will yield a beneficial relaxation response. Following only 5 to 10 days of depth relaxation practice, you will feel the benefits from the relaxation response.

Visualization

Visualization is a practice of creating in your “minds eye” a fully detailed mental image of a calm and peaceful place. With eyes shut you may begin with visualizing small details and work up to a whole picture from top to bottom. Eventually you may extend the practice to being able to hold a complete picture in your mind. Your brain cannot tell the difference between a visualization experience and an actual experience of OK-ness. The ability to construct and work with images in your mind also offers potential for increased attention, awareness, and Evolved Brain functioning.

Visualization#1
Take a few moments to think about a place where you've felt especially safe, relaxed, or content. It could be the beach, mountains, meadows, your childhood bedroom, or a remembered moment of deep relaxation and peace. It can be a real place, or you could just make one up. Close your eyes and try to see the shapes and colors of your place. Hear the sounds of your place: hear birds or waves or babbling water. Feel the temperature of your place - is it cool or warm? Feel the textures of whatever you touch in your special place. Make sure that everything in your special place makes you feel relaxed and safe. Change anything that doesn't feel right.

Visualization#2
Observe an object within the range of your sight and notice that you can zoom-in on a specific aspect of the object, or zoom-out to see the big picture. When you shut your eyes, zoom-in on various facets of your visualized image to see them more clearly, and then zoom back out again. Switch between looking at the actual object and closing your eyes and focusing on the visualized image may help to improve your process. Begin with simple objects like the number ‘1.’ Think about big red number ‘1’ on a large white poster board and focus on the precise shade of red. Then change to the number ‘2’ and in a moment, to ‘3’ and so on continuing sequentially as high as you want to go for now.
Diaphragmatic Breathing

Diaphragmatic breathing, as discussed in Module 4, involves breathing fully from your visceral cavity or from the bottom of your lungs. It is the inverse of the way you breathe when you experience Stress and Anxiety, which is usually rather shallow and high in your chest. This requires becoming more conscious of the act of breathing. Many people tend to use only their intercostal muscles—the muscles between the ribs—to regulate breathing. The average number of breaths taken is 12 to 14 per minute. Normally this number increases under physical exertion and decreases during sleep. The rate of breathing relates to increased Stress and Anxiety levels; however, faster breathing tends to become a shallower hyperventilation. This style of breathing is inefficient. Perhaps you have noticed how; when you are very stressed or anxious, even the act of speaking can make you out of breath. Clearly you are not getting enough oxygen. Thoracic breathing, which uses mainly the intercostal muscles and makes your chest heave, allows only for shallow breaths. It may also actually cause a certain amount of tension, as it requires that you draw your shoulders up with each breath.

Diaphragmatic breathing has a positive effect on decreasing overall levels of Stress and Anxiety. Regular diaphragmatic breathing practice has been shown to be associated with long-term health benefits, related to cardiovascular and immune system functioning. Practice diaphragmatic breathing by the steps below:

1. Place one hand on your stomach right beneath your ribcage.

2. Inhale slowly and breathe deeply through your nostrils into the lowest point down in your lungs you can reach. Your chest will move up a little, while your stomach area lifts up, forcing your hand up.

3. As you have inhaled fully, count to three and then exhale fully through your nose. As you exhale, let go and imagine your entire body getting limber, relaxed, and resilient.

4. Remind yourself that all you need to do is give and take, breathe in and breathe out. Repeat depth breathing in this way for ten breaths. Concentrate on keeping your breaths smooth, avoiding sudden inhaling or exhaling.
If you start to feel light-headed while practicing diaphragmatic breathing, stop for 60 seconds and then start over. This practice may sound a bit technical and awkward, but soon you can stop using your hand on your chest and it will become quite easy. Diaphragmatic breathing for a few minutes is an efficient way to reduce levels of Stress and Anxiety, and it is always available whenever you need it.

Physical Exercise

A consistent practice of physical exercise will help you to manage and reduce levels of Stress and Anxiety. Exercise provides a natural biological release of the adrenaline that accompanies Stress and Anxiety. Physical exercise also relaxes muscle tension and initiates production of endorphins in the brain, generating a sense of OK-ness. Research has shown that consistent, moderate (20 to 30 minutes) aerobic exercise helps to decrease some of the chemical imbalances associated with higher levels of Stress and Anxiety.

To take advantage of the Stress and Anxiety reducing effects of exercise, it is best to do aerobic exercise three to four times per week for approximately 20 to 30 minutes. Aerobic exercises include brisk walking, running, aerobic dancing, bicycling, swimming, jumping rope, using a treadmill or stepper, and ice or roller skating. It is important to both break a sweat and raise your heartbeat for the above length of time. If you haven’t done any type of exercise in a while, you may want to begin with walking for only very short periods (from 5 to 10 minutes) and build up your time slowly. Here are some helpful hints.

1. Begin exercising slowly. Start out by spending only 5 to 10 minutes every other day for the first week. Add 5 minutes to your workout time each successive week until you reach 30 minutes. Doing too much too fast causes the greatest exercise attrition rate.
2. Expect some initial discomfort such as aches and pains when you start out. These will disappear as you gain improved physical condition allowing your body to recover sufficiently.
3. Warm up before exercising by doing some very light stretches, sit-ups, and/or push-ups to get the blood flowing to your muscles. When you’re finished with more vigorous aerobic exercise, cool down by walking for 2 or 3 minutes and do some heavier stretches.
4. Make a commitment to an exercise practice for a minimum of 30 days and then re-evaluate. You may find exercise to be sufficiently rewarding so that you will choose to continue.
5. Quit exercising right away if you experience any sudden, unexplainable body pains or other symptoms. If you go too long with pain, it will prevent you from exercising for a longer time than if you stop and wait to recover.
Organization and Time Management

The world demands a great deal from us today, so that we need to organize our time at home and at work more efficiently than ever before in history. Many of us spend way too much time looking for things, searching for information, and or, just generally spinning our wheels. All of this simply adds to an increase in our overall level of Stress and Anxiety. Organizing your life and using your time efficiently leads to lower levels of Stress and Anxiety. It also offers the possibility for actually finding the time for Stress and Anxiety practice or simply just being and not just doing, doing, doing. Try any or all of these specific suggestions on the next page and see what a difference they can make in your overall sense of OK-ness.

**List jobs and their priorities** - If you become overwhelmed at all you have waiting for you, there is an answer. Make lists of things needing to be done and use it! Make note of when the jobs need to be complete and then put them in chronological order. If one of the items is a really big task, break it down into segments and tackle them one at a time. If the things needing to be done are keeping you awake at night, keep a notepad at your bedside. When your mind won’t relax and let you sleep, write down the things you are dwelling on.

**Organize your finances and mail** - Do you throw the bills in a drawer when they arrive? Or do you make piles for you to get around to? Create just one place where you keep your bills so you know where to find them. There are financial organizers on the market with pockets for bills and receipts, budget folders, expense logs, and so on. Find one that suits you. Just a few minutes every day can prevent a ton of work later.

**Keep a journal** - A daily journal can keep important things in the forefront of our minds as well. This journal can be where you make your notes and lists. There are many organizers and notebooks on the market (or again, you can make your own) for this purpose. The important thing is that you can always have it with you.

**Organize and label your belongings** - We’ve all experienced the frustration of looking through a dozen boxes for something—it’s always in the last place where we look! Label every box with its contents so down the road you don’t have to go through a dozen boxes! It takes a little time but saves more time later.

**Use driving time wisely** - If you use public transportation or car pool, use this time to make notes on things to do, results of previous meetings, and/or new things you want to try. If you drive, use this time to listen to music that elevates your mood or an inspiring audio book. You can also make notes into a personal tape recorder and then write them down later. Use this time to mentally organize your creative thoughts.
Social Support
Getting support from friends, coworkers, or family members is a very good way to help manage your Stress and Anxiety. However, this in itself can sometimes cause you some Stress and Anxiety. Almost everyone dreads conversations where emotional and psychological stakes are high. But it is possible to have an honest, supportive, and Stress and Anxiety-reducing social network. It takes some work and some patience but is certainly well worthwhile.

Withdrawal from High-Stress and Anxiety Situations
Withdrawal is appropriate when your Stress and Anxiety is excessive. To remain in a situation when Stress and Anxiety gets too high can sensitize you to a particular situation. So that when you reenter a similar situation, the excessive level automatically returns. For example, if you are driving a car and your Stress and Anxiety reaches overload, withdraw by pulling off the road, get out of the car, and walk around while doing some diaphragmatic breathing. Work on letting go of your concerns. Learning to withdraw is the basis of time-outs used in basic conflict resolution.

Redirecting Attention
Redirecting your attention away from bodily symptoms as well as from dysfunctional thoughts about a triggering situation is an effective way to lower levels of Stress and Anxiety and can stop your reaction from increasing momentum. Many people have found that the following techniques will lower Stress and Anxiety:

- Talk to someone in your support network about your experience. Talking out the experience can help us to process and work it out thus relieving some of the Stress and Anxiety. A little help from someone else can assist us to turn our perspective from negative to positive.
- Get some exercise. Go for a walk, ride an exercise bike, do some dance steps or other physical activity.
- Perform an activity requiring concentration like reading, going online, doing puzzles, knitting or sewing, or playing a musical instrument.
- Safely express angry feelings by pounding a pillow or hitting your bed, but do not vent at the source of your anger.
- Engage in pleasurable activity, for example, get a hug, have sex, take a shower or bath.
- Have a healthy snack, such as a cup of decaffeinated tea with low-fat milk as a soothing treat. You will need to think of it as a healthy treat rather than a deprivation, however.
Don't Fight Stress and Anxiety

It’s important to avoid fighting against your Stress and Anxiety, for example, by tensing up against Stress and Anxiety symptoms or trying to ‘force’ them to go away. This only creates more muscle tension, which is one of the contributing causes of Stress and Anxiety in the first place. In her books, Hope and Help for Your Nerves and Peace from Nervous Suffering, Claire Weekes describes a four-step process that many people have found very helpful:

1. **Face Stress and Anxiety symptoms** rather than running from them. Instead of telling yourself, ‘I can’t handle this,’ you might say, ‘This will pass... I’ve handled it before and I’ll manage it this time, too.’

2. **Accept** what your body is going through. Again, don’t fight Stress and Anxiety. Work on adopting an attitude of acceptance. Ideally, learn to observe your body’s state of physiological arousal, no matter how uncomfortable it may be, instead of reacting to it.

3. **Float** with the ‘wave’ of Stress and Anxiety, instead of forcing your way through it. You might imagine that you are literally riding a wave, moving with the upsurge and gradual fading out of Stress and Anxiety. Realize that it takes only a few minutes for most of the adrenaline produced by Stress and Anxiety to be reabsorbed, so that the worst will be over quickly.

4. **Allow time to pass.** Realize that the reactions you’re going through are time limited. Say to yourself, “This will pass”, and engage in some distracting activity such as conversation, moving around, diaphragmatic breathing, or repeating some coping statements until the reaction subsides.

**Coping Statements**

Use any or all of the following Coping Statements to help you to develop states of acceptance and OK-ness, “float,” and allow time to pass during an experience of high levels of Stress and Anxiety. You may find it helpful to repeat a single statement over and over again in conjunction with diaphragmatic breathing, especially during the first minute or two when you notice Stress and Anxiety symptoms. If one of the statement does not fit, or make any sense to you, or gets tiresome, or seems to stop working, try another:
This feeling isn’t comfortable or pleasant, but I can accept it.
I can be anxious and still deal with this situation.
I can handle these symptoms or sensations.
This is not an emergency. It’s okay to think slowly about what I need to do.
This is not the worst thing that could happen.
I’m going to go with this and wait for my Stress and Anxiety to decrease.
This is an opportunity for me to learn to cope with my fears.
I’ll just let my body do its thing. This will pass.
I’ll ride this through - I don’t need to let this get to me.
I deserve to feel okay right now.
I can take all the time I need to let go and relax.
I can always leave if I need to.
There is no need to push myself. I can take as small a step forward as I choose.
I’ve survived this before and I’ll survive this time, too.
I can do what I have to do in spite of Stress and Anxiety.
This Stress and Anxiety won’t hurt me - it just doesn’t feel good.
This is just Stress and Anxiety - it won’t hurt me.
This is just Stress and Anxiety. I’m not going to let it get to me.
Nothing serious is going to happen to me.
Fighting and resisting this isn’t going to help - so I’ll just let it pass.
These are just thoughts - not reality.
I don’t need these thoughts - I can choose to think differently.
This is not dangerous.
So what?

Negative self-talk always aggravates Stress and Anxiety. If you can learn to replace negative self-talk with positive coping statements, you will eliminate or at least diminish the severity of your Stress and Anxiety reactions. Select three or four coping statements from the list. Write these down on a 3 by 5 card and keep it with you at all times. When symptoms come on, pull out the card and repeat one of the coping statements again and again. It may be necessary to do this for three or four minutes - but with practice, you’ll find the technique to be effective. You may want to combine this skill with diaphragmatic breathing previously described.

How to Get the Most Out of Coping Statements

It is not required that you concentrate on the messages or make any special effort. However, to improve its effectiveness, we suggest that you play soft music, and read the affirmations at least once each day. It is especially helpful to read the affirmations aloud to yourself before going to bed at night.
Letting Go

Focusing on the present moment is the secret for letting go. Instead of worrying about everything in your life, you can zero in on the task at hand. Instead of obsessing on an anger or stress situation, you zone in on a project that will actually help you get what you really need to be OK. Once you get absorbed in what you’re doing, it can feel so much more satisfying. Instead of resisting and struggling, you become engaged, alert and involved.

Here are a few simple tips to help you find a focus and increase your present moment awareness.

— Taking One Day at a Time

Years ago Dale Carnegie used to encourage people to live in “day-tight compartments.” He would use the analogy of a ship to demonstrate his suggestion. Ships are built with separate compartments that can be closed off in case of emergency, making the risk of sinking much less likely. If one part of the ship fills with water, you can just close off that compartment and continue on your destination. We sometimes function like poorly designed ships. We allow a problem to fill up our whole minds and take us over. We can become emotionally paralyzed. Dale Carnegie’s solution is to take life one day at a time. Everyone can get through just one day. If we take on more than that, more than the present, our Stress and Anxiety levels begin to rise and we can tend to function out of the Primitive Brain. You may want to plan a bit for tomorrow but to obsess about it is counter-productive. Just be in the now by letting go of the need to control your whole future. Being present in this very moment is both liberating and enlivening.

— Practicing Gratitude

Your thoughts are very powerful. Whatever you focus on tends to amplify. If you place your attention on what you do not have or what is not working in your life, that’s what will become bigger in your mind. If you focus on what you do have, and what is working in your life, a radically amazing thing happens. Your life may not be any different, but the way you look at your life changes the way you experience it. The self-fulfilling prophesy effect begins to play a role as well. Helen Keller had a great way to put it, “Keep your face to the sunshine and you cannot see the shadow.” Face the sunshine and start paying attention to what you have and what’s working. Your Stress and Anxiety will fade into the background.
— Forgetting the Grass-Is-Greener Illusion

You know the saying, “The grass is always greener on the other side.” You think that once you get over there (to some other place), life will really be greener. It certainly looks that way from a distance. The grass-is-greener myth is a fantasy and prevents us from recognizing how good we’ve got it. Instead, we spend our time focusing on the future and wishing for something better. When you were in high school, you might have fantasized about how great it would be to be living on your own. You longed to experience more freedom and independence. But once you were on your own, you couldn’t help but think about how amazing high school was. No worries. No responsibility. No bills. The idea that it was going to be ‘greener’ in the future was keeping you from appreciating what you had in the present. That might not be your personal experience, but there may be other times in your life when you tended to idealize. Maybe you think your life will really take off when you get a big house or retire. While those goals are certainly worthwhile, don’t let them prevent you from appreciating the here and now. Focus on this day, this moment, this place. Get involved. Find what works. Be present to your life.

Homework – Anger Log
MODULE 11

Mindfulness

“Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way;
   On purpose,
in the present moment, and
nonjudgmentally.”
- Jon Kabat-Zinn

The Purposefulness of Being Mindful

Being Mindful is paying attention “on purpose”. In other words, mindfulness involves an intentional conscious direction of your awareness. Sometimes I talk about “mindfulness” and “awareness” as if they were the same thing, but that’s not exactly true. You may be aware of being angry, but that wouldn’t necessarily mean you were being mindful of your anger. To be mindful you need to be purposefully aware of yourself, not just vaguely or habitually aware. For example, awareness that you are driving your car is not the same as driving mindfully.

Let’s take this example of driving and let’s look at it a little closer. If you are purposefully aware of driving, you are consciously prepared and watchful in order to pilot the car successfully, you are aware of the process of driving. You’re intentionally watching the road and anticipating the necessary responses. You may sometimes notice your mind wandering, and when it does you purposefully bring your attention back to the task.

When we’re driving unmindfully we may be vaguely aware of what we’re doing, but we’re probably thinking about other things at the same time, and we may also be listening to the radio or talking. So only a small part of our awareness is focused on driving, and we may be only loosely aware of the road and even less aware of our thoughts, physical sensations and feelings.

Because we’re only vaguely aware of our thoughts they wander freely. There’s only sporadic attempt to bring our attention back to our driving and therefore little purposefulness. This intention is a very important part of mindfulness. The intention to focus on your moment to moment experience, whether it be on your breath or a particular physical sensation or feeling, or something as habitual as driving, means that you are actively being mindful.
**The Need for Intention**

Everyone makes daily choices that take them in the direction that they have decided to go. Some are intentional choices and some are not. If you have the intention to grow and develop as a person, you will, even if at times it does not feel comfortable. When you have made a commitment how it feels doesn’t really matter because you now have a self-created obligation to a higher purpose. If you do not have the intention to grow and develop, then you will tend to make automatic choices swayed by the fears and desires of your Primitive Brain. But if you are completely serious and committed to your intention to evolve as a person you will begin to discover a very different movement within yourself. The momentum of your own commitment will provide you with an inner strength, a conviction to take responsibility for your own future. Take a few minutes to create a statement of intention by describing specific goals for your personal growth. (e.g. “I will ____.”)

Statement of Intention:

**What is Mindfulness Meditation?**

Mindfulness meditation is one of the classically identified forms of mindfulness training that can contribute to your personal growth and development. Mindfulness meditation uses any object of attention, be it the breath, a physical sensation, a feeling, an image, or an external object. You simply take some time out of your day to spend quietly focusing on an object which most often is your breath. This practice has been shown to increase the capacity for nonjudgmental awareness, focused attention, and flexibility - all extremely valuable qualities for anger management. It is in theory a very simple practice. However, it is not a practice that is easy for most modern people because it rubs against the grain of our very busy mind wandering habits. Reading this you might ask “How is mindfulness practice going to help me when I’m angry?”
How Does Mindfulness Help?

I’ll try to explain how it helps, but if you really want to know, you have to experience it for yourself. Explaining how mindfulness works is like trying to explain to people how to swim. It doesn’t necessarily make a whole lot of sense when you explain it, and even if it makes logical sense, it doesn’t quite capture what the experience of swimming is really like if they’d just get in the water, they’d get it. Mindfulness meditation increases your awareness and slows everything down. The more you experientially understand mindfulness meditation, that is, the more you experience being more awake in every moment, the more of yourself you will experience, and the more awareness you will have about what your internal experience really is. Time will slow down...maybe what you actually experience as your life is something very different once you get the hang of focusing on what is really going on inside of yourself.

Mindfulness meditation is not goal oriented; it is process-oriented. The focus is not to reach some future point in time; the focus is always on just being here in the present moment, being with whatever you’re experiencing in the here and now. And when I say “your experience”, I mean your internal experience—what you are thinking, feeling, sensing, and noticing. It is mostly about watching, observing, and witnessing.

Mindfulness Meditation Enhances Brain Structure

Researchers at Harvard Medical School report that those who practice mindfulness meditation for about 30 minutes a day for eight weeks had measurable changes in gray-matter density in parts of the brain associated with anger, memory, sense of self, empathy and stress. M.R.I. brain scans taken before and after the participants’ meditation routine found a reduction of gray matter density in the amygdala, the region connected to experiences of anger, anxiety and stress. The images also showed increased density in the hippocampus, an area important for learning and memory. A control group that did not practice mindfulness meditation showed no such changes. Dr Britta Hölzel, the study’s lead author says, “The main idea is to use different objects to focus one’s attention, and it could be a focus on sensations of breathing, or emotions or thoughts, or observing any type of body sensations... it’s about bringing the mind back to the here and now, as opposed to letting the mind drift.”
There are now over a thousand publications documenting medical and psychological research on mindfulness meditation which demonstrate its validity and effectiveness. Practicing mindfulness helps individuals to:

- Recognize, slow down or stop automatic and habitual reactions.
- Respond more effectively to complex or provocative situations.
- See situations more clearly
- Become more creative
- Achieve balance and resilience at work and in relationships

**Mindfulness in Anger Management**

1) Learn and practice mindfulness meditation to reduce reactivity

2) Learn to stay “present” in every moment especially when you feel your anger mounting

3) Learn to shift your attention to your breath to return to OK-ness

4) Learn to mindfully remove yourself from the source of your anger and only return to the situation once the anger has been processed and you have returned to OK-ness

**Mindfulness Meditation Exercise**

Mindfulness meditation is for everyone from all walks of life. It is not a religion and there is no necessary religious component, everyone can enjoy the benefits of mindfulness. Try this 4-step mindfulness meditation (if possible, find a calm place where you can be alone and not distracted):

1. Get centered — Take a moment to just be aware of your body, noticing any areas of tension and see if you can choose to let that tension go. Become aware that you’re breathing.
2. Close your eyes. Is there a tension or loosening in the body? Do any feelings of anger, fear, joy, or calm arise? Whatever arises this is alright. Just take notice and focus on your breathing.
3. Bring your mind back if it wanders — You may notice the mind going off into thoughts of what you need to be doing or judgments such as “how is this going to be helpful to me?” Just note where it wanders to and gently guide it back. Repeat this step a gazillion times, if necessary.
4. Come back to the breath – Have gratitude for taking this time out of your daily busy-ness to practice this meditation for your health and well-being.
**Mindfulness Pauses**

Once you have practiced mindfulness meditation for awhile you may find it very helpful to do "informal" mindfulness pauses during the day which follow the same pattern but are abbreviated. Here’s how it goes:

1. Stop what your doing; if possible, find a calm place where you can be alone and not distracted.
2. This mindfulness pause is your invitation to slow down and restore OK-ness.
3. Take 1 deep breathe, another with nasal focused breathing, another with progressive tension from toes to skull, release, another deep breathe with focus on relaxing.
4. Visualize: "I am calm. Like the eye of the hurricane, I maintain this OK-ness in the midst of all the activity around me.
5. Regain awareness of yourself and your body. Take a few deep breaths. Breathe naturally...starting with the inhalation, count each breathe and focus on air moving through nostrils. Say “I am here. This is now. I will just be here now. I will let my thoughts and feelings be and then let them go.” Connecting with “who I am” allows you to regain awareness of who you want to be.
6. This mindfulness pause has provided the foundation and inspiration from which you will return to the world and extend your practice into the rest of your life.

By learning to be in a mindfulness mode more often, it is possible to develop a new tendency that helps to weaken old, unhelpful and automatic reactivity. For anger problems, these old tendencies can often involve being overly pre-occupied with thinking and feeling about others, yourself, or your situation in a negative way. Mindfulness training does not aim to immediately control, remove, or fix this unpleasant experience. Rather, it aims to develop a skill to place you in a better position to break free of or not ‘buy into’ these unhelpful thoughts or feelings that cause problems and prevent positive action.

**Anger: Reactive (or...functioning out of the Primitive Brain)**

If you have ever been really angry (above 7 on anger scale), you probably remember feeling so incredibly angry you didn’t care about anything except releasing your anger, and possibly you unleashed your anger on the person, creature, or thing that seemed most deserving of it at the time. You were certainly not calm and rational and most likely not particularly mindful either; therefore, you may not have been able to stop yourself from doing or saying something you later regretted. You were being what is called highly reactive.
Anger: Non-Reactive (or...functioning out of the Evolved Brain)

When you exercise mindfulness, you exercise non-reactivity or the capacity to stay centered, grounded, and unshaken in response to a provocative situation. Now, don’t confuse non-reactivity with non-feeling. Let’s use road rage as an example. You’re driving, and someone cuts you off, and in response to being cut off you flip the driver the bird. You’ve just behaved reactively. Contrast that with what non-reactivity would look like in that scenario: You are cut off by the driver, and rather than focusing your attention on the provocative situation, you focus it on you. You focus it on the sensations you are feeling in your body, most likely a fast heart rate, perhaps tightness in the chest, or shallow breathing. Then you shift your attention to your breathing, sending the breath into the parts of your body that are feeling the anger—your heart, your chest—wherever it is for you. In the time it took you to use this technique, you never even thought about flipping the driver the bird because you were too busy focusing on your internal workings; that driver has probably gone on his or her merry way by now. This is non-reactivity.

Non-reactivity allows you to feel all of our feelings but not react to them. You feel them until you physically feel something else or until you decide with awareness and choice, that either you want to focus on something else or ask yourself what you really need to be OK.

Expressing Anger Mindfully (or...functioning out of the Evolved Brain)

In general, there are two types of people: those who act out anger, and those who don’t. Which are you? If you act out your anger, then your challenge is in acting it out better, learning how to stay present enough to recognize when you are about to reach the point of Primitive Brain functioning. You can have strategies for releasing your anger constructively—through exercise or some kind of physical movement like walking, running, hitting a punching bag, or letting out a primal scream in a safe place like your car. If you’re in a provocative situation and feeling angry past the point of being able to have a calm, rational discussion, it’s probably best to gently remove yourself from that conversation by simply saying, “I’m feeling really angry, so I think it’s best if I remove myself from this conversation until I cool down.” If you are unable or it’s not appropriate to say this directly and to excuse yourself from the conversation, then place your full attention on your breathing and avoid doing anything until you have control of your words and actions and then perhaps excuse yourself from the room without making a theatrical exit in anger.
If you don’t act out your anger, meaning that anger is not familiar to you or a feeling you avoid, repress, or deny, then your work is in allowing yourself to feel it in the first place. Warning: If you are just learning how to get in touch with your anger, the anger will likely feel very intense until it is given its necessary time and space—this could mean months. Individual or group work with an anger management specialist would be enormously helpful for you if your anger is scaring you or those around you because it offers a safe container in which you can explore your anger with guidance. So if you have difficulty giving yourself permission to feel angry, work on becoming aware of how you act out your anger, when and how does it arise, and what happens then to make sure you don’t have to feel it? Where does the anger go? As you begin to learn about how you’ve been doing (or not doing) anger, try allowing yourself to experience it instead of fighting it. When you allow yourself to feel it, what happens? Does it immediately become too intense for you or can you tolerate it for a little while focusing on your breathing? The more space you allow the anger, the more you will start to feel liberated from it. Mindfulness is a skill that takes time to develop. It is not easy, and like any skill it requires a certain level of effort, time, patience, and ongoing practice.

*Essential Elements of Mindfulness*

- **Letting Go of Everything**

The capacity to ‘let go’ of your anger as well as your judgments are increased through the practice of mindfulness meditation. If you really want to experience sustained OK-ness you will need to practice *letting go of everything*. When you sit down to meditate, you will want to practice holding on to nothing, to have no mental attachments to any objects at all – no attachment to your possessions, no attachment to other people, no attachment to your self, no attachment to life, no attachment to death, no attachment to anything at all. In other words, it is not about letting go of any *thing* in particular. You have to be willing to absolutely let go of everything to really experience sustained OK-ness. So what are you really willing to see? What are you really willing to feel? What are you really willing to accept? The spectrum of human reality for each and every one of us includes potentials for the highest glory and goodness, and the lowest primitive drives, motives, and impulses. We are all a work in progress but this development has a specific direction – an evolutionary movement toward greater complexity and a capacity to simply accept whatever arises from moment to moment without judgment and without unnecessary reactivity.
• Self and Other

The practice of mindfulness can fundamentally alter our attitudes and understandings about our relationship with the world. For example, have you ever had the experience of having an argument with someone, but completely in your own head? Have you ever wondered who it is that you’re arguing with? Most of us never get that far in our awareness of ourselves, but let’s consider it now. It’s obviously not the actual other person that you’re arguing with, since they’re probably not there. If you think about it, you can only reach the conclusion that it’s yourself that you are arguing with. One part of your mind (which you identify as yourself) and another part of your mind (which appears as an internal representation of the other) are locked in a clash. The “real” other isn’t involved at all. It is all about parts of you! Mindfulness practice helps us to better understand that what we think is ‘other’ is essentially a part of our self. In this sense ‘self’ and ‘other’ are one and the same.

• Observation

Another major element of mindfulness involves observing your experience in a way that is more direct and felt in the body, rather than being just thought about or analytical. A natural tendency of the mind is to try and think about something rather than directly experience it. Mindfulness aims to shift the focus of attention away from thinking to simply observing thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations (e.g., touch, sight, sound, smell, taste) much like watching a movie. By tuning in to mental processes, we are able to recognize that our thoughts are just thoughts, our feelings are just feelings; they don't necessarily represent reality. We can observe them rather than being ruled by them.

• Description and Distinction

This aspect of mindfulness relates to noticing the very fine details of what you are observing. For example, if you are observing something like a tangerine, the aim is to describe what it looks like, what are its shape, color, and texture. You might give it a descriptive name, like “orange”, “smooth”, or “round”. The same process also can be applied to emotions (e.g. “heavy”, “tense”). Mindfulness creates more description and distinction to what we observe because we are observing more closely. These descriptions and distinctions are especially helpful in understanding our anger and life in general more clearly.
• Being Non-Judgmental

It is important to adopt an accepting stance towards your experience. A significant reason for prolonged emotional distress relates to attempts to avoid or control your experience. When being more mindful, no attempt is made to evaluate experiences or to say that they are good, bad, right, or wrong, and no attempt is made to immediately control or avoid the experience. Accepting all of your experience is one of the most challenging aspects of mindfulness, and takes time and practice to develop. Bringing a kind and gentle curiosity to your experience is one way of adopting a non-judgmental stance.

• Focusing on One Thing at a Time

When observing your own experience, a certain level of effort is required to focus your attention on only one thing at a time, from moment to moment. It is natural for distracting thoughts to emerge while observing, and there is a tendency to follow and ‘chase’ these thoughts with more thinking. The capacity of ‘being present’ is to develop the skill of noticing when you have drifted away from the observing and sensing mode, into thinking mode. When this happens it is not a mistake, simply acknowledge that it has happened, and then gently return to observing your experience. Mindfulness lets us absorb the richness of the moment instead of going through life with half of our attention on the past or future or our own mental wandering. The self-knowledge that comes from mindfulness lets us be more intentional in choosing priorities and actions.

• Suspension of Reactivity

Mindfulness practice helps to develop a capacity for suspension of reactivity. Suspension does not mean that you will passively do nothing, but rather you will take some time to determine the best response. In other words, you will suspend your certainties, take a step back, and allow yourself to think through the situation by way of your Evolved Brain.

Suspension is not easily grasped because the activity is unfamiliar. When we listen to someone speak, for example, we face a critical choice. If we begin to form an opinion we can do one of two things: we can choose to defend our view and resist theirs. First we can try to get the other person to understand and accept the “right” way to see things (yours of course). We can look for evidence to support our view,
and discount any evidence that may point to flaws in our own logic. Or, we can learn to suspend our opinion and the certainty that lies behind it. Suspension basically means that we neither suppress what we think nor advocate it. Rather, we allow some time to go by that lets us and others see and understand it. We simply acknowledge and observe our thoughts and feelings as they arise without being pressured to act on them.

• Life Is Not a Personal Drama

Your life is not a personal drama...although it may seem as such. We are each personally involved in a developmental process way bigger than whatever petty problems we are presently attached to. We are all, whether we know it or not, a small but significant part of the evolution that is taking all of us to a higher place, a more complex place, and frankly no one really knows what it will all look like in the future. So your life, viewed from this powerful perspective, is not a personal drama you’re playing out but rather an impersonal process. It is a process of growth and development that is propelling all of us forward toward higher and higher levels of complexity. Just as this evolutionary impulse has taken atoms to molecules, to organisms, to creatures, to humans, this very same energy which is responsible for the creation of a whole universe ‘out of nothing’ is propelling humanity to a more complex place and you and I are integrally part of this process. It is this evolutionary impulse present in you, which has been present since before you were born, that brings you to this very moment. If you are reading these words it is because of the presence of this awesome force that has generated poetry from dust and symphonies from simple vibration. It may pop your bubble to know that you are not the center of the creation having a personal drama, but in truth you actually have as much significance in terms of how this evolutionary impulse plays out as any one. You have a choice to align yourself with the process of growth and development or not. To choose “yes” is to become a creative cog in the wheel toward higher functioning not just for you but for the whole universe. To say “no” is to not participate in the moving forward. It is really your choice.

Summary

Let’s summarize: 1) Learn and practice mindfulness meditation; 2) Reduce reactivity; 3) Give yourself permission to feel and access your anger; 4) Learn how to express anger and to release anger’s energy in a non-destructive way; 5) Stay as present as possible in every moment, especially when you feel your anger rising; 6) Shift your
attention to your breath to calm yourself until you return to OK-ness; 7) When you sense yourself getting too angry, remove yourself from the provocative situation and only return to the discussion once the anger has been processed and you return to OK-ness.

Homework – Anger Log
MODULE 12

Practical Solutions

A tourist in Manhattan asks a cab driver for directions: “How do you get to Carnegie Hall?”
Cab driver: “Practice, practice, practice.”

Developing an Anger Management Life Practice

Author Malcolm Gladwell, in his book entitled Outliers says that it takes roughly ten thousand hours of practice to achieve mastery in a field. Gladwell studied the lives of extremely successful people to find out how they achieved success. A team of psychologists in Berlin, Germany studied violin students twenty years ago. In particular, they studied their practice habits in childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. The musicians were asked this question: “Over the course of your entire career, ever since you first picked up the violin, how many hours have you practiced?” All of the violinists had begun playing at roughly five years of age with similar practice times. However, at age eight, practice times began to diverge. By age twenty, the elite performers averaged more than 10,000 hours of practice each, while the less able performers had only 4,000 hours of practice. The elite had more than double the practice hours of the less capable performers.

One interesting point of the study: No “naturally gifted” performers appeared. If natural talent had played a role, we would expect some of the “naturals” to float to the top of the elite level with fewer practice hours than everyone else. But the data showed otherwise. The psychologists found a direct statistical relationship between hours of practice and achievement. No shortcuts. No naturals.

Practice plays a key role in successful anger management. You have already logged many hours of anger management experience before even starting this workbook. You now can intentionally use the skills, concepts, and techniques presented here to further develop you anger management practice. The following are some empirically based and clinically proven practical solutions to shape the foundation of a lifelong practice.

STOP and Remember the Consequences

“STOP”! - and ask yourself, “What are the consequences of expressing anger in this situation. Telling yourself to “STOP” gives a few moments to avoid impulsively reacting out of the Primitive Brain. Remembering
the “consequences” also gives a few moments to avoid any knee-jerk reactions. Remembering the consequences of not managing your anger effectively is the most powerful single technique for keeping you from automatically reacting in a destructive way. Keep in mind what ineffective angry reactivity has cost and what price you may need to pay in the future. The consequences can typically include: loss of jobs, loss of relationships, loss of self-respect, and legal issues including jail time. Other helpful questions to ask yourself in provocative situations are, “Is it worth it?”, How will my anger make things better for me?”, “Do I want to be right? Or, Do I want to be happy?”

Take a “Time Out”

One answer to the ‘Big Question’ (“What do I need right now to be OK and to be healthy in the long term?)” is that you may need to take a ‘time out’ and change your environment. Removing yourself from the source of reactivity allows for time to connect with your Evolved Brain in order to be reasonable, rational, and logical. A time out also provides time for the intensity of your angry feeling to subside. In order to be able to take a time out you must develop the capacity to suspend your reactions by telling yourself that you are getting overheated and the situation is not likely to get resolved at this time. You can come back to the situation when your anger has subsided enough for you to be fully functioning out of your Evolved Brain. Examples of a time out include: going to another room, taking a walk, going out for a cup of coffee, taking a shower, reading, listening to some soothing music, going shopping, or getting some exercise.

Ask the “Big Question”

When anger arises, there is a moment where you have just enough time to catch the anger arising and try to suspend the action that will follow. It is this moment when you ask yourself - ‘What do I need right now to be OK and to be healthy in the long term?’ The answer to this question cannot be what someone else can do for you to be OK. The answer is what you can do for yourself to be OK. The answer requires you taking responsibility for your own feelings and actions. You cannot control what someone else is going to do; but you can control how you respond. For example, you are walking down the street on your way to work and someone yells and curses at you, “what do you need to be OK, and healthy in the long term?” Well, most likely you need to get to work and get on with you day. In other words, your answer is to simply ignore the provocateur and move on down the road. Rather than focus on the yellor you focus on what you really need.
Respond rather than React

Imagine going to the doctor for medication and returning for a follow-up visit. In one case the doctor says you are reacting to the medication, in the other case the doctor says you are responding to the treatment. There’s a big difference between reacting and responding. It’s a matter of speed. Generally, a reaction to medication happens quickly and responding to a treatment takes some time. In terms of anger management ‘reacting’ is an automatic, impulsive Primitive Brain activity, while ‘responding’ is an Evolved Brain function relying on a more complex thought process. Reacting is fast and dirty. Responding is slowing down, suspending action, and being reasonable, rational, and logical. Here are five tips for responding rather than reacting:

- **Think goals.** When you think about how this specific situation fits into your overall goals and objectives it will be easier to respond.

- **Put the situation in context.** Always consider the context – what is happening and how the next step will best serve you and everyone involved.

- **Blend thought and feelings.** The best decisions are both informed by facts and integrated with feelings. The goal isn’t to deny your feelings, but to balance them with thoughts and facts to fill in the blanks. This is the essence of responding.

- **Recognize choices.** Often reacting comes when you don’t know or think you have any options. When you realize that you always have choices, you can remember to consider them and the outcomes they bring before moving forward.

- **Big picture view.** Your goal in the angry moment is to mentally move yourself into the future and look back with ‘big picture’ view to determine your best response to the current situation.

Communicate Assertively

Being assertive means that you express yourself effectively and stand up for your point of view, while also respecting the rights and beliefs of others. Because assertiveness is based on mutual respect, it's an effective and diplomatic communication style. Being assertive shows that you respect yourself, because you're willing to stand up for your interests and express your thoughts and feelings. It also demonstrates that you're aware of the rights of others and are willing to work on
resolving conflicts. Of course, it's not just what you say but also how you say it that's important. Assertive communication is direct and respectful. Being assertive gives you the best chance of successfully delivering your message. Here are some tips to help you improve assertive communication:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is your communication style?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Do you voice your opinions or remain silent? Do you say ‘yes’ to additional work even when your plate is full? Are you quick to judge or blame? Do people seem to dread or fear talking to you? Understand your style before you begin making changes.</td>
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- **Use 'I' statements**
  Using "I" statements lets others know what you're thinking without sounding accusatory. For instance, say, "I disagree," rather than, "You're wrong."

- **Practice saying ‘No’**
  If you have a hard time turning down requests, try saying, "No, I can't do that now." Don't beat around the bush — be direct. If an explanation is appropriate, keep it brief.

- **Rehearse what you want to say**
  If it's challenging to say what you want or think, practice typical scenarios you might encounter. Say what you want to say out loud. It may help to write it out first, too, so you can practice from a script. Consider role playing with a friend or colleague and ask for blunt feedback.

- **Use body language**
  Communication isn't just verbal. Act confident even if you aren't feeling it. Keep an upright posture, but lean forward a bit. Make regular eye contact. Maintain a neutral or positive facial expression. Don't wring your hands or use dramatic gestures. Practice assertive body language in front of a mirror or with a friend or colleague.

- **Keep feelings in check**
  Conflict is hard for most people. Maybe you get angry or frustrated, or maybe you feel like crying. Although these feelings are normal, they can get in the way of resolving conflict. If you feel too emotional going into a situation, wait a bit if possible. Then work on remaining calm. Breathe slowly. Keep your voice even and firm.

- **Start slowly**
  At first, practice your new skills in situations that are low risk. For instance, try out your assertiveness on a partner or friend before tackling a difficult situation at work. Evaluate yourself afterward and tweak your approach as necessary.
Assertiveness Rights

**Assertive Right 1:** I have the right to judge my own behavior, thoughts and emotions and to take the responsibility for their initiation and consequence.

**Assertive Right 2:** I have the right to offer neither reason nor excuse to justify my behavior. I need not rely upon others to judge whether my actions are proper or correct.

**Assertive Right 3:** I have the right to judge whether I am responsible for finding solutions to others' problems. I am ultimately responsible for my own psychological well-being and happiness.

**Assertive Right 4:** I have the right to change my mind. As a human being, nothing in my life is necessarily constant or rigid. My interests and needs may well change with the passage of time.

**Assertive Right 5:** I have the right to say "I don't know."

**Assertive Right 6:** I have the right to make mistakes and be responsible for them. To make a mistake is part of the human condition.

**Assertive Right 7:** I have the right to be independent of the good will of others before coping with them. It would be unrealistic for me to expect others to approve of all my actions, regardless of their merit.

**Assertive Right 8:** I have the right to be illogical in making decisions. I sometimes employ logic as a reasoning process to assist me in making judgments. However, logic cannot predict what will happen in every situation. Logic is not much help in dealing with wants, motivations and feelings. Logic generally deals with "black or white," "all or none" and "yes or no" issues. Logic and reasoning don't always work well when dealing with the gray areas of the human condition.

**Assertive Right 9:** I have the right to say "I don't understand."

**Assertive Right 10:** I have the right to say "I don't care."

Remember, learning to be assertive takes time and practice. If you've spent years censoring yourself, becoming more assertive probably won't happen overnight. Or if anger has lead you to be too aggressive in difficult situations, you will need to include other anger management practices into your overall assertive communication growth and development.
Check Expectations

The cause of the anger, as previously discussed, is significantly impacted by how you assess or interpret a situation. Anger often results from comparing the actions of others to your expectations of proper behavior. Sometimes it’s reasonable to do that, but more often than not it’s because we have unreasonably high, and sometimes just plain wrong, expectations of ourselves and others.

We can say that anger is created by the difference between what we expect and what we get. We need to figure out exactly what “reasonable” means in terms of expectations of yourself and others. If your expectations are too high, then you probably experience disappointment and anger. Here are five suggestions to adjust your expectations of yourself and others:

- Establish what is reasonable
  This may be tricky because different people have different ideas of this. One way to do it is to think about it when you are calm and cool. Many things that seem “reasonable” when you are worked up, later seem ridiculous and petty.

- Get rid of the ‘shoulds’
  None of us can control other people, try as we may. People behave the way they do for their own reasons. Use statement like “I’d prefer if…” instead of “You should…”

- Recognize other people’s limits
  Others often behave badly toward us because of their limitations or problems, not because they are purpose trying to make us miserable. People are imperfect and may not be able to live up to our expectations, or they may have a different goal than to meet your expectations.

- Relationships are never perfect
  Studies show that the majority of relationship issues are essentially unsolvable and permanent. Successful couples recognize this and find ways to compromise the issues, rather than enduring continuous conflict.

- Tolerance of other worldviews
  Rather than proving that others are “wrong.” Tell yourself they simply see things differently than you do. Anger will not work – they may be as attached to their “truth” as you are to yours.

- Explore creative ways to get needs met
  The primary reason we often get angry at others is because we are not getting our needs met. Negotiate for some of your needs.
Recognize and Manage Stress and Anxiety

Excess Stress and Anxiety may be affecting your life, even though you might not realize it. You may think various conditions are to blame for that pesky headache, your frequent angry mood or your decreased productivity at work. But Stress and Anxiety excess may actually be the culprit.

To be sure, Stress and Anxiety excess can affect your body, your thoughts and feelings, and your behavior. Being able to recognize common signs and symptoms can give you a head start on managing them. Stress and Anxiety that's unrecognized can contribute to anger and other health problems. You may refer back to Module 10 - Stress and Anxiety Management for review and suggested practical solutions.

Check for Dysfunctional Thinking

If you are regularly irritable, annoyed, angry, or resentful – in other words, if you are struggling with your anger – the fault may partially lie in your thinking. Many Anger Management Specialists consider dysfunctional thinking a primary source of these negative emotions. You can learn to identify your specific dysfunctional thoughts, understand what is inaccurate about them, and then correct them allowing for more effective anger management.

For example, a person might tell themselves, “She doesn’t agree with me on this issue, so she’s a completely non-supportive person.” They seem to act as if there is no gray area in between total support and total non-support, total adequacy and total worthlessness. This is "all or nothing" thinking. It ignores the fact that a person can be somewhat supportive or supportive some of the time. The thinking includes only the extremes of “all or nothing” and the category of "some" is completely missing. This type of dysfunctional thinking can be applied to yourself as well causing you to become self judgmental and critical. A person with ‘all or nothing’ thinking is like a person who is in an elevator with access only to the top and bottom floors. It is as if there are no floors in between. Write down an example of ‘all or nothing’ thinking which you may use from time to time:

You may refer back to Module 6 - Dysfunctional Thinking for review and more suggestions.
Focus on the Positive

When you focus on positive things, you push your mind in a positive direction, and your perspective starts to improve. What's important is that if you sustain a positive focus, it's inevitable that you will become a more positive person. Focus gives you a powerful leverage over your mind. When you focus on a thought, it forces your mind to look in the direction of that thought. When you focus for a minute, your mind is focused in that direction for just a minute. When you consistently focus on it for days, weeks, and months, your life moves in that direction.

Not everyone accepts or believes in positive thinking. Some consider the subject as just nonsense, and others scoff at people who believe and accept it. However, the research clearly indicates its benefits. What goes on in your mind can really determine your actions and whether you're satisfied or dissatisfied. If you always think judgmentally, you're always going to turn out to be a judgmental person. It is simply more satisfying to think about positive thoughts. Here are some tips:

- Think about what you need to be OK, not about what is not right with other people
- Remember that you’re in control of your thoughts. If you’re thinking in unhealthy ways, you can change it anytime by thinking about something positive.
- Good habits can replace bad ones by not giving up
- Develop positive focus for purposeful reasons - to enhance the quality of your life and the lives of others
- Accept that you are here to grow and evolve. Life doesn't always go smoothly. Life's lessons can be difficult, but if you see them as opportunities to become stronger, wiser and more resilient, you are growing and evolving
- Find some things positive to say to yourself and repeat them often
- Think of the cup as half full and getting fuller
- Hang around negativity and you'll become negative. Hang around positive people and you will become and be like them!
- Don't go overboard while thinking positive. Make sure that you are constantly learning from your past mistakes
Coping is better than Blaming

Every painful or hurtful situation presents a choice. You can blame somebody for what happened or you can use relaxation and coping skills to reduce your feelings of being upset, and then assert your needs in a non-blaming way. For example, if you tell someone that they are lazy for not doing some assigned tasks, it might really feel good for a minute to get it off your chest. But things will likely escalate from there. You both may end up shouting and the relationship may descend into the deep freeze. In a few weeks, it will be possible to make another choice. You might decide to use some relaxation techniques to lower your stress level, change some of your trigger thoughts, and talk with the other person, for example, non-blamingly about the problem of the uncompleted tasks.

6 Major Coping Skills

When feel angry a few basic anger management coping skills can help. The following are the six major coping skills for more effective anger management:

1. Realize and accept that you are angry
2. Breathe deeply several times and do not react immediately
3. Visualize a calming scene, or remember a coping statement (see Module 6 for coping statements)
4. Think about what may happen if you lose control of your anger.
5. Ask yourself the Big Question: “What do I need right now to be OK, and to be healthy in the long term?”
6. Do something positive with your angry energy

In the space below add two more coping skills that you are finding to be helpful:
Develop Empathy and Compassion

Why develop Empathy and Compassion in your life? There is growing body of scientific evidence that suggest there are significant physical benefits to practicing Empathy and Compassion. Studies show that people who practice it produce 100 percent more of a hormone that counteracts the aging process, and appreciably less of the “stress hormone.”

The primary benefit is that it helps you to be more satisfied in life. If you agree that would like to be happier, then the practice of Empathy and Compassion is one of the main tools for achieving that happiness. How do you do that?

Here are some helpful ways to develop Empathy and Compassion:

- Let people into your life
  First of all, don’t be afraid of being close to other people and letting them in your life. It might be a little awkward at first, but it is only going to help you become a more evolved person.

- Put yourself in their shoes
  One for the best ways to develop compassion is to put your self in the other person’s shoes. What would it feel like to be them? To have had their experiences, to live their lifestyle, etc.

- Understanding yourself
  Sometimes, all it takes to understand other people is an understanding of your self. Once you know what it feels like to care or be cared for, and to hurt or be hurt, developing Empathy and Compassion comes easy. Seeing and recognizing our own feelings helps us interpret the same feelings in other people.

- Breath with the other person
  When you are with a person, breathe with them; at the same rate, imagine you can feel what they feel. Imagine your awareness sinks into their body. Notice what you see in your mind’s eye, feel as if you are very much like the other person. (You are!)

- Movies and Novels
  Watching a lot of movies or reading good novels can also help you in developing Empathy and Compassion. The helpful piece of watching movies or reading novels is that they have a lot of internal monologues going on. This way, you have a firsthand look at how people (fictional or not) react to certain things. When watching the film or reading, allow yourself to feel what the characters in the film are going through. You might feel sad, laugh or get disturbed; but all that helps you develop your ability to relate with other people.
Develop a Practice of Laughter

Studies have shown that the benefits of laughter are many and especially helpful in anger management. Humor and laughter strengthen your immune system, provide a distraction and a physical release, diminish negative emotions, and allows for a new perspective. Best of all, the practice of laughter is fun, free, and easy to use. Here is summary of the benefits of humor:

- **Hormones:** Laughter reduces the level of ‘fight or flight’ hormones cortisol and adrenaline released during the experience of anger. It also increases the level of health enhancing hormones like endorphins, and neurotransmitters. All this means a more resilient immune system, as well as fewer damaging physical effects of anger, stress and anxiety.

- **Physical Release:** Have you experienced the purifying feeling after a good laugh? Laughter provides both a physical and emotional release. A good belly laugh works the diaphragm, contracts the abs and the shoulders leaving muscles more relaxed afterward. It even provides a good exercise for the heart.

- **Distraction:** Laughter takes the focus away from anger, stress and anxiety in a more advantageous way than most other distractions.

- **Perspective:** Studies show that our response to angry situations can be altered by whether we view it as a 'threat' or a 'challenge'. Humor can give us a more optimistic perspective and help us view situations as 'challenges', thus providing a less threatening and more upbeat outlook.

Develop a Breathing Practice

Breathing practices are the essence of settling your body and mind, as well as calling up a more heightened sense of awareness. You can use breathing practices alone or as a preliminary exercise to various other forms of meditation and states training. It is possible to experience states of attunement with yourself and others simply through breathing practices. As the distracting thoughts settle and your mind becomes calmer, a deep state of resonance may naturally arise. This feeling of well-being or OK-ness can be achieved on a daily basis simply through consistent practice. Just by doing breathing for five or ten minutes each day, you may be able to find a balance of body and mind beneficial to coping with anger provoking situations. Oxygen plays a vital role in the circulatory and respiratory systems of your body. As you breathe, the oxygen that is inhaled purifies your blood by removing waste products circulating throughout your blood system.
Irregular breathing can actually impede this purification process and cause waste products to linger in your body. Insufficient oxygen consumption may eventually lead to fatigue and heightened anger, stress and anxiety states. Through breathing practice, you may not only counter the unhealthy effects of stress, but rejuvenate your whole outlook on life.

**Basic Breathing Practice**

Lie on a mat, blanket or rug on the floor. Bend your knees and place your feet about six (6) to ten (10) inches apart, with your toes turned slightly outward. Place one hand on your abdomen and one hand on your chest. Breathe in slowly and deeply through your nose into your abdomen to push up your hand as much as feels comfortable. Your chest should move only a little and only with your abdomen. Continue step three until it becomes rhythmic and comfortable. Smile slightly, breathe in through your nose and breathe out through your mouth, making a quiet, windy sound as you gently release your breath. Your mouth, tongue and jaw will become relaxed. Take long, slow, deep breaths raising and lowering your abdomen. Hear the sound and feel the quality of breathing as you become more and more relaxed. You may start off with this technique by doing it for five minutes. As you become more comfortable with it, you may extend it to 20 minutes or more. When you complete a session, stay quiet and still for a few more minutes and notice your body relaxed. The goal of this practice is to develop a relaxing breathing method. You may practice anytime, however it can be particularly helpful during angry or stressful times.

**Relapse Strategies**

The disappearance of feelings of anger is not the hallmark of a successful or complete recovery. As you mature emotionally, you develop healthier coping mechanisms that take the place of the anger problem. Understand that when your Anger Management relapses occur, you will have broken through a wall of your own creation that was protecting you. It's not nearly as strong as it was before you crashed through it; so be alert to the fact that you are much more likely to slip again and will need to make an extra effort to review this Workbook. You can take these steps when you experience a relapse:

1. Contact people you trust and let them know about your situation. Your honesty with them will help you be honest with yourself and promote your healing.
2. Review any Anger Management Practices that might be helpful in the situation.

3. Relapse usually means that you have forgotten to implement something of what you have learned. If anger is re-emerging, then you should:

   - Re-establish your Anger Log practice
   - Re-establish your relaxation and breathing practices
   - Begin imagining the problem situation and select and review appropriate coping statements
   - Identify any significant dysfunctional thinking (e.g. ‘all or nothing’) that may be triggering the anger, and develop appropriate responses or rebuttals
   - Consider doing more significant work with a competent Anger Management Specialist experienced in the areas of anger
   - Continue and extend you Anger Management Life Practice

A New Beginning

You have completed The Anger Management Workbook. Your thoughts and feelings have been aroused and you have learned some significant skills, concepts and practices that will serve you well if you continue to work at them. This experience has not been easy and you can take some time right now to congratulate yourself for a job well done. You are encouraged to review these modules frequently because they will have new value and meaning each time you do.

We hope you have found yourself with a reduction of anger and an increased sense of hope that you can better manage provocative situations. Even more, we hope that you will use these changes to help evolve a world in which all human beings are accepted without fear. Most of all, we wish you a life that is centered on appreciation and mutual respect. Your process of recovery is a new beginning.
APPENDIX
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<th>DATE/TIME</th>
<th>SITUATION</th>
<th>TRIGGER THOUGHTS</th>
<th>EMOTIONAL AROUSAL</th>
<th>AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR</th>
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REFERENCES


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Integral Institute - http://integralinstitute.org