

ANGER MANAGEMENT WORKBOOK



WHAT CAUSES ANGER?

The causes vary from person to person and from situation to situation.

Anger affects your body.

When you get angry, your body creates energy.

Here's what happens:

- Adrenaline and other chemicals enter your bloodstream.
- Your heart pumps faster.
- Your blood flows more quickly.
- Your muscles tense.

Everyone gets angry sometimes.

Handling anger well can help you:

- Overcome problems
- Reach your goals
- Stay healthy
- Feel better about yourself

But too much anger or uncontrolled anger can cause problems.

Examples:

- Problems in your relationships with family and friends
- Problems at work
- Legal and financial troubles
- Physical and mental health problems

Some common causes of anger include:

Stress

Stress related to work, family, health and money problems may make you feel anxious and irritable.

Frustration

You may get angry if you fail to reach a goal or feel as if things are out of your control.

Fear

Anger is a natural response to threats of violence, or to physical or verbal abuse.

Annoyance

You may react in anger to minor irritations and daily hassles.

Disappointment

Anger often results when expectations and desires aren't met.

Resentment

You may feel angry when you've been hurt, rejected or offended.

POORLY HANDLED ANGER CAN CAUSE MANY PROBLEMS.

Some people try to pretend they aren't angry. Other people feel as if their anger is out of control. They don't believe they can handle it.

Depression

Anger that's kept bottled up can affect your thoughts and feelings. You may begin to feel unhappy and lose interest in things you used to enjoy, such as hobbies, work, friends or sex.

Problems at work

If you blow up on the job, co-workers, supervisors and customers may develop a negative impression of you. Your career may suffer as a result.

Alcohol or other drug problems

You may use alcohol or other drugs to try to:

- Dull anger and other strong feelings
- Forget about the negative consequences of an angry outburst.

But using alcohol or other drugs won't solve any problems. And it usually results in more anger and problems.

But ignoring anger or giving up control over it can lead to:

Physical health problems

These may include:

- Headaches
- Sleep problems
- Digestive problems
- High blood pressure
- Heart problems

Poor decision making

Anger can make it hard to think clearly. You may have trouble concentrating or may use poor judgment. This can lead to car crashes, injuries and other problems.

Problems with relationships

If you can't control your anger, you may end up insulting, criticizing or threatening those close to you. They may respond with anger or resentment. Getting angry may also keep you from telling your loved ones how you really feel.

Low self-esteem

If you have trouble managing anger, you may feel bad about yourself. You may feel as if you have little control over what happens.

WHAT SETS YOU OFF?

Different things trigger a person's anger. Some common triggers are listed below. Check the ones that trigger your anger. Use the blank spaces to fill in your own triggers.

I feel angry when I:

- Think I am treated unfairly
- Am embarrassed
- Feel ignored
- Don't get credit for something I've done
- Have to follow orders
- Fail at something or don't do something well
- Feel helpless or out of control
- Get jealous

I feel angry when people:

- insult me
- criticize me or my work
- don't listen to me disagree with me
- don't work as hard as I do
- lie to me
- tell me what to do
- are rude or inconsiderate
- are late
- don't act or feel the way I think they should

I feel angry when faced with these events or situations:

- Traffic jams and encounters with other drivers
- Conflict at work
- Family arguments
- Child misbehavior or temper tantrums
- Waiting in line at the bank, store, etc.
- Financial problems
- Yelling or loud noises
- Mistakes or errors
- Wasted time
- Losing a game or a contest
- Name-calling or teasing
- Child abuse
- Prejudice toward anyone
- Mistreatment of animals

Once you're aware of things that set you off, you can work to change the way you respond to them.



KEEP AN “ANGER JOURNAL.”

Use these 2 pages to start your journal. Over the next several days keep track of things that trigger your anger.

BE AWARE OF HIDDEN ANGER.

Sometimes what triggers your anger isn't the only thing causing angry feelings.

What are your warning signs?

Think about how you feel when you get angry. Check the warning signs you often have when you get angry. Write in signs that aren't listed.

My warning signs are:

- Tense muscles
- Tight fists
- Clenched jaw
- Sweaty palms
- Racing heartbeat
- Fast breathing
- Trembling or feeling shaky
- Feeling warm or flushed
- Upset stomach
- Loud or mean voice

Talk with your health-care provider.

Certain physical and mental health problems, such as Alzheimer's disease or brain injury, may increase your anger. And handling anger poorly can lead to health problems. Talk to your health-care provider about your anger and how it affects you. Have regular checkups.

When you get angry, ask yourself:

Are my level of anger and my reaction out of proportion to the trigger?

Do you seem to overreact to minor annoyances? Perhaps there is something else on your mind that's making you angry.

Am I directing my anger at an innocent person?

Are you really angry with the person who triggered your feelings? For example, suppose you have a disagreement with your boss. It bothers you all day, but you say nothing. Later, you let your anger out by blowing up at your partner or child.

Am I taking something personally?

Learning to deal well with anger means learning not to take problems or arguments personally.

Is this how I usually respond in similar situations?

You may respond with anger in certain situations because that's what you've always done. You may have learned this behavior growing up. But you can change the way you react.

Am I trying to take charge with my anger?

Anger is a common reaction when a person feels as if he or she is losing control. But the best way to show control is to react calmly and manage your feelings.

The results of uncontrolled

HOW ANGER CAN

HELP YOU

Learning to recognize and express anger appropriately can make a big difference in your life.

Anger can help you:

Reach goals

Trying to reach a goal can be frustrating. Frustration can lead to anger, which in turn can motivate you to work harder.

Communicate with others

Talking about your anger can help keep it from building up. You may release tension and enjoy better communication with family, friends and co-workers.

Solve problems

Anger is a sign that something is wrong. It may serve as a warning for you to think about your feelings and attitudes.

Handle emergencies and protect yourself

Anger can cause an immediate burst of strength and energy. This allows you to react quickly if you're in danger.

anger may include:

Verbal attacks or physical assaults

You may lose control and attack others physically or verbally. For example, you may:

- Throw or break things
- Yell, insult or threaten
- Slap, shove, kick or hit.

Abuse

Tension and frustration may build. Family members may become your target, even if your anger has little to do with them. The abuse may be:

- Physical
- Verbal
- Sexual

Other criminal behavior

Anger is often a driving force behind:

- Destruction of property
- Murder
- Other violent crimes

You can find ways to help anger work for you – not against you.

DEALING WITH SOMEONE ELSE'S ANGER

Here are some tips:

Keep your cool.

Don't answer anger with anger.

Remember that anger can lead people to say things they don't really mean.

Criticism, threats or name-calling won't help resolve the situation.

Don't take it personally.

Try to understand why the person is angry. His or her feelings may have little or nothing to do with you.

Listen to the person.

Sometime an angry person just needs to "blow off steam". Let the person express his or her feelings. Don't interrupt. Maintain eye contact to show you are listening.

Think of solutions together.

If you're having a conflict with someone, try to find solutions that you can both agree on. Do this only when you are both calm.

Don't take chances.

- If you're worried about your safety, get help right away. Try to leave yourself an escape path.
- If the person has a weapon, seek safety at the first opportunity. Don't confront or try to restrain him or her.

Meditation

This can help calm you and clear your mind of anger. Follow these steps:

1. Find a quite place. Wear loose, comfortable clothing. Sit or lie down.
2. Close your eyes. Take slow, deep breaths.
3. Concentrate on a single word, object or calming thought.
4. Don't worry if other thoughts or images enter your mind while you are doing this. Just relax and return to what you were focusing on.
5. Continue until you feel relaxed and refreshed.

Deep-breathing exercises

These can help keep anger from getting out of control. Follow these steps:

1. Sit comfortably or lie on your back.
2. Breathe in slowly and deeply for a count of 5.
3. Hold your breath for a count of 5.
4. Breathe out slowly for a count of 5, pushing out all the air.
5. Repeat several times until you feel calm and relaxed.

SOURCES OF HELP

You don't have to face your problems alone. Let others know that you want help controlling your anger. They can provide valuable support and encouragement.

Consider contacting:

Your health-care provider

Your health-care provider can give you a physical exam and suggest relaxation techniques. He or she may also prescribe medications for related health conditions.

Mental health professionals and mental health centers

These provide a variety of services, including outpatient treatment and support groups.

Counselors, family therapists or social workers

They can help you learn ways to manage anger, control stress and solve problems.



Hotlines

Hotlines may provide emergency counseling to help you control angry feelings or behavior. Check your local phone book.

Employee assistance programs (EAPs)

These may offer referrals or counseling to help employees deal with issues like alcohol or other drug problems, job stress and relationship problems.

Religious leaders

They may offer advice and reassurance – or just listen when you need someone to talk to.



Asking for help is a sign of strength – not weakness.

DEVELOP AN ANGER MANAGEMENT PLAN.

Now that you've learned more about anger and how you respond to it, you can develop your own plan for managing your anger.

Follow these steps:

1. Set positive goals and a time frame

Your goals should address both a specific behavior and your reaction. For example, over the next month, your goal could be to communicate your feelings using "I" statements whenever you get angry at work.

You can set different goals for yourself. But don't try to meet too many at one time. You're less likely to reach them.

2. Get support

Tell family, friends and co-workers about your goals. They can offer encouragement and advice. Seek out their help if you're having trouble with your anger. Or consider seeing a mental health professional.

3. Track your Progress

Consider keeping a daily log or journal. Make note of times when you avoid getting angry or handle anger well. Seeing improvement over time can keep you from feeling discouraged.

4. Reward yourself!

Treat yourself when you reach a goal or get halfway there. For example, go to a movie or enjoy a special meal.



MY ANGER MANAGEMENT PLAN

Goal

My action plan

Target date

Reward



People I can call on for help:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

TAKE STEPS TO GET BACK IN CONTROL

Start by taking a “timeout”:

Stop what you’re doing.

When you feel your anger warning signs developing and you start thinking angry thoughts, tell yourself to stop. This may help you calm down and think more clearly.

Try to relax. For example:

- Count to 10 or 100.
- Get a drink of water.
- Take a walk.
- Take several slow, deep breaths

Leave, if necessary.

If you are angry with another person, tell him or her that you need to take a timeout. Ask someone to watch a child or elderly or ill person for you, if necessary. Then go to a safe place to calm down. Avoid driving.

Return when you’re calm.

Once you’ve got your anger under control, go back and talk with the person or face the situation that triggered your anger.

Remember to calm down.

Think carefully before you speak. You’re less likely to say something you’ll be sorry for later.

Name the problem.

Calmly and clearly explain why you’re angry or what the problem is. Don’t yell, use insults or make threats. People will be less likely to consider your point.

Use “I” statements.

After you describe the problem, use “I” statements to tell the person how you feel. These statements focus on you and your needs, wants and feelings. They also help the listener avoid feeling blamed or criticized.

Identify solutions.

Say what you would like to change or see happen in the future. If you’re having a conflict with another person, try to find a solution together.

Get help if you need it.

Talk with a family member or friend if you’re having trouble expressing your anger constructively. Or consider seeing a counselor or other mental health professional. He or she can help you learn ways to express your feelings through role-playing and other methods.

Don’t hold a grudge. After a disagreement, be willing to forgive.



AVOID NEGATIVE REACTIONS, SUCH AS:

Not letting go

You may have trouble getting past your anger. You may remember painful events that occurred long ago. As time goes by, your anger may continue to grow. You may become obsessed with angry thoughts or hopes of revenge.

Keeping it bottled up

This usually makes you feel worse. Sooner or later, your feelings come out. And when they do, it may be in the form of an angry outburst. Holding angry feelings in may also contribute to health problems.

Blaming

Blaming others doesn't solve problems. You need to learn to take responsibility for your own feelings and actions – both positive and negative.

Responding to anger with anger

This may seem like a natural reaction, but it often makes a situation worse.

Remember – you can take steps to change how you react to anger.

It's important to know that:

Alcohol or other drug use may increase anger.

Using alcohol or other drugs to dull anger doesn't work. These substances may mask angry feelings – but only for a short time. And they often bring the opposite result. Alcohol and other drugs play a major role in many cases of violence.

You shouldn't use alcohol or other drugs as an excuse for angry or violent behavior.

The truth is, there's no excuse for losing control in this way.

Treatment programs are available.

Some treatment programs are designed to help people recover from an alcohol or drug problem – and learn to manage their anger.

Get help if you have a problem with alcohol or other drugs.

- Call the center for Substance Abuse Treatment's National Helpline at 1-800-662-HELP (1-800-662-4357).
- Look in the phone book for numbers of local self-help groups, such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA).

Having a problem with alcohol or other drugs makes it harder to manage anger.

PRACTICE YOUR POSITIVE SELF-TALK

In the space below, write down several problems or situations that made you angry. Did you tell yourself a negative message? What positive message could you tell yourself if the problem or situation happens again?

Situation	Negative Message	Positive Message
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		

PRACTICE YOUR “I” STATEMENTS

When you’re angry, it’s easy to blame someone or something for your problems. Getting comfortable using “I” statements can help you learn to take responsibility for your feelings. Fill in the statements below to practice talking in terms of yourself and your feelings.

I feel angry.

when you are late getting home for dinner

for dinner.

Next time, I would like to know if you’re going to be late.

Please try to call.

I feel _____

when _____

Next time, I would like _____

_____.

I feel _____
when _____

Next time, I would like _____

_____.

MORE WAYS TO HELP GET A HANDLE ON ANGER

When things start heating up, try these methods to cool down:

Progressive muscle relaxation

You tense and relax each muscle group, starting at your head and working your way down to your toes. **Here's how:**

1. Wear loose, comfortable clothing. Sit in a comfortable chair or lie down.
2. Tense the muscles in your face for 5-10 seconds. Then relax them for about 20 seconds.
3. Tense the muscles in the back of your neck for 5-10 seconds. Then relax them for about 20 seconds. Notice the difference is how your muscles feel when relaxed.
4. Move down to your shoulder. Tense and relax the muscles the same way you did in step 3.

Have a sense of humor.

For many people, having a good sense of humor helps them avoid getting angry. Try to find the humor in minor troubles and annoyances.

Do a hobby.

For example, try gardening, learning a musical instrument or making crafts. A hobby can be a productive outlet for tension and energy, and it can serve as a welcome distraction from angry feelings.

Write about your feelings.

Consider recording your thoughts and feelings in a journal or diary, or write a letter (You don't have to send it.). Writing can help you

5. Repeat the same steps with the other muscle groups in your body – in your hands, arms, chest, stomach, lower back, buttocks, thighs, calves and feet – one at a time.

Visualization

This technique uses your imagination to help you relax and reduce your anger.

1. Sit in a comfortable chair or lie down.
2. Imagine a pleasant, peaceful scene, such as a lush forest or sandy beach. Picture yourself in this setting.
3. Focus on the scene. Continue until you feel refreshed and relaxed.

work through situations and problems calmly and at your own pace.

Get plenty of rest.

Most people need about 6-9 hours of sleep each day. When you're angry, you may have trouble falling asleep. In turn, this lack of sleep may leave you feeling more irritable. If you have trouble sleeping:

- Go to bed at the same time each night.
- Wake up at the same time each morning.
- Read or watch a good movie or TV show.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IS A GREAT OUTLET FOR ANGRY FEELINGS.

It lets you quickly and safely let out strong feelings. And regular activity can improve your overall health.

Choose moderate activities.

Good choices include:

- Walking
- Swimming
- Tennis
- Dancing
- Yoga

Just about any activity – even household chores – can be an effective outlet for your anger.

Avoid negative self-talk.

This includes criticizing yourself and blaming yourself or others for your problems. Negative self-talk can add to your anger and make it harder to manage it effectively.

Learn to use positive self-talk instead.

Try to stop negative self-talk as soon as it gets into your head. Replace the negative thought with a positive one. **For example:**

- Instead of saying "I can't handle this traffic. I'm going to explode," you could say, "Relax. I can handle it. This happens to everyone sometimes. It won't last long."

Don't overdo it.

Slowly increase the amount of activity you do. And be sure to warm up before you begin and cool down afterward.

What activities will you try to help manage your anger?

Write them here.

- Instead of saying, “That jerk. She embarrassed me on purpose,” you could say, “It’s OK. She probably didn’t mean anything by it. Maybe she’s just having a bad day.”

How do you talk to yourself?

You may say things silently to yourself every day. This is called self-talk.

Learning to identify negative messages and changing them to positive ones can help reduce the amount of anger you feel.

CONCEPTS IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Conflict is a part of life – it can be a positive part of life, an instrument of growth; it can be good or bad depending on how we learn to deal with it. Every time we interact with someone there is a potential for conflict because people's needs and expectations are almost always never the same. We can even feel conflicts within ourselves-and may displace these on to others unless we are careful. Small conflicts should be dealt with as soon as possible so they don't grow. Try to unearth and bring out hidden conflicts. Disagree with ideas or behavior, not people.

Feelings are important – dealing with how we feel and being able to express feelings (both positive and negative) in a non-destructive way is very important in dealing with others. Talking about feelings (either to the person involved or to someone outside the situation), getting enough exercise, healthy food and sleep, enjoying what you do, all contribute to preventing unnecessary or destructive conflicts.

Make the conflict a problem to solve together. This puts both of you on the same side of the problem rather than on opposite sides. Remember, there can be a lot of solutions to any one problem and everyone can win.

HINTS FOR DEALING WITH CONFLICTS ON A ONE-TO-ONE BASIS:

TAKE TIME TO COOL OFF – issues can't be dealt with until emotions are worked through. In both individual and group situations, the long-term relationship is generally more important than the conflict. Also, the process of conflict resolution is as important as the content. A resolution where one party is the winner and the other party is the loser is no resolution.

THINK ABOUT THE PERSON AS A PERSON – this helps to break down role stereotypes.

KNOW YOUR AIM – knowing what is important to you in the conflict and stating it clearly makes it more likely that your needs will be met and that the conflict will be resolved.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION CHECKLISTS

PROBLEM DEFINITIONS:

- MUTUAL OWNERSHIP:** “WE HAVE A PROBLEM”
- BRIEF DESCRIPTION:** “HERE IS AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT I MEAN”
- PRESENT & FUTURE ORIENTED:** “PERHAPS THE NEXT TIME WE...”
- ISSUE, NOT PERSONAL:** “THE ISSUE SEEMS TO BE...”
- ISSUE AGREED UPON:** “IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU AND I AGREE ON THE PROBLEM”

PROBLEM RESOLUTION:

- LISTEN (OBSERVE, ACKNOWLEDGE, DON'T INTERRUPT)**
- CHECK OUT:** “LET ME SEE IF I UNDERSTAND...”
- VALIDATE:** “I CAN SEE HOW YOU MIGHT FEEL THAT WAY.”
- BRAINSTORM:** “LET'S THINK OF ALL THE POSSIBLE OPTIONS.”
- POSITIVE PRESENTATION:** “I WOULD APPRECIATE IT IF...”
- COMPROMISE (ADOPT A TWO-WINNER APPROACH)**
- AGREE:** “SOUNDS LIKE WE HAVE AGREED TO TRY...”
- REPEAT:** “LET ME MAKE SURE I UNDERSTAND WHAT WE HAVE AGREED...”
- CONGRATULATE:** “WE DID A GOOD JOB. LET'S TAKE A BREAK.”

EXAMPLE:

PROBLEM

DEFINITION _____

PROBLEM

RESOLUTION _____

CONFLICT CONTAINMENT PRINCIPLES

- 1. JOINT EFFORT/MUTUAL SATISFACTION.**
RESOLUTION OF AN ISSUE WILL EITHER POSITIVELY OR NEGATIVELY AFFECT THE INVOLVED PARTIES. THE GOAL OF PROBLEM SOLVING SHOULD BE TO RENDER A POSITIVE AND PRODUCTIVE OUTCOME FOR BOTH PARTIES. THEREFORE, EACH PARTNER SHOULD CONSIDER ISSUES TO BE MUTUAL AND COLLABORATE ON A RESOLUTION THAT WILL BE BENEFICIAL TO BOTH.
- 2. PROBLEM DEFINITION.** THE PROBLEM SHOULD BE DEFINED SO THAT BOTH PARTIES HAVE A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF THE ISSUE BEING ADDRESSED. PROBLEM DEFINITION SHOULD BE LIMITED IN SCOPE.
- 3. PROBLEM RESOLUTION.** ONCE PROBLEM RESOLUTION HAS BEEN INITIATED, BOTH PARTIES MUST REMAIN FOCUSED ON THE ISSUE DEFINED. NO OTHER ISSUES SHOULD BE INTRODUCED, NOR SHOULD THE ISSUE UNDER DISCUSSION BE REDEFINED.
- 4. CHANGE FIRST.** EACH PARTNER SHOULD BE WILLING TO MAKE CHANGES IN HIS/HER BEHAVIOR FIRST WITHOUT THE EXPECTATION/INSISTING THAT HE/SHE WILL CHANGE WHEN HIS/HER PARTNER CHANGES.
- 5. LISTEN AND VALIDATE.** THE FEELING THAT ONE IS BEING LISTENED TO AND TAKEN SERIOUSLY MAY BE MORE IMPORTANT THAN WINNING.

6. CONCLUSION. RESOLUTION SHOULD REFLECT A NEGOTIATED COMPROMISE. SUCCESS SHOULD BE MUTUAL.

WORKING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE

Difficult people can sabotage any conflict resolution session. But often the trouble arises when we overreact to these people. Here are seven difficult types and some do's and don'ts for working with them. Add your own notes on what works with these people.

Aggressive types want to force their viewpoint on you. They may blow off steam and attack verbally.



- Don't attack back.
- Do ask them firmly to sit down and explain calmly what they have to say. Just listening without returning the anger seems to calm them.

Know-it-alls are "experts" who have no patience for other people's input.



- Don't be intimidated, or let them take over a meeting.
- Do listen to them and try to benefit from their knowledge.

Victims often complain and feel they are being treated unfairly.

-
- Don't try to become their protector.
 - Do ask them for suggestions to improve the situation. They need practice giving positive ideas.

Sarcastic types use words as weapons, often destroying harmony in a group and causing resentment. They can be poor team players.



- Don't let them get away with this behavior. Let them know that sarcasm is unacceptable.
- Do compliment them when they say something positive or show team spirit.

Nay-sayers have nothing good to say about others' ideas.



- Don't try to reform them.
- Do invite them to suggest alternatives. Many times they will back off if asked to say something constructive.

Yay-sayers will go along with anything just to gain approval.



- Discourage them from making more commitments than they can handle.
- Do make sure they follow through on what they agree to do.

Withdrawn types seem to have nothing to contribute and are



difficult to draw out.

- Don't nag them to open up.
- Do ask open-ended questions that require them to produce more than a yes or no answer. Be patient about waiting for their answer.

Fight



Fair

Disagreements and outright arguments are part of the territory of close relationships. Because nothing destroys a relationship faster than the hurtful things couples say to each other in a bitter argument, it's crucial that couples learn to argue well.

Imagine you had used the following rules in your last argument. How would it have been different? Under each rule write how observing the rule might have affected the course of the argument:

Be honest.

If we had been more honest, our last argument...

Admit your mistakes.

If we had been more willing to admit to a mistake, our last argument...

Refrain from blaming or shaming.

If we had focused on our own feelings instead of blaming each other, our last argument...

Assume your partner wants you to be happy.

Spend as much time listening as you do talking.

If each of us had spent more time listening, our last argument...

Put yourself in your partner's shoes.

If we had made a bigger effort to see each other's point of view, our last argument...

Take a "time out" if things get too intense.

If we had taken a time out when things got too intense, our last argument...

When the argument is over, do something

If we had done this instead of assuming that we were just trying to make each other feel bad, our last argument...

Frequent arguments are often a sign that couples need to take better care of themselves and each other. Get together and agree on a time every week to do something that you both enjoy.

healing such as a hug or saying “I love you.”

If we had known that we would have to end with a hug our last argument...

DIRTY FIGHTING TECHNIQUES

Indicate how frequently you use each of the following dirty fighting techniques during conflicts with your spouse:

- 0 = never
- 1 = rarely
- 2 = sometimes
- 3 = often

- Timing.** Pick the right time to begin an argument. As a general rule, look for the time your spouse least expects it or is least able to respond. For example, late at night, during a favorite television show, after several drinks or just before your spouse leaves for work.
- Escalating.** Move quickly from the issue to a personality attack, to wondering whether it is worth the effort to stay together (issue – personality – relationship). Interpret your spouse’s shortcomings as evidence of bad faith and the impossibility of a happy relationship.
- Multiplicity.** Try to list as many problems in as much detail as possible. Don’t stick to the original issue, but rather throw in all the problems you can think of. Don’t limit yourself to the present. If your partner can’t remember the offense, so much the better.
- Who Me, But You...** Respond to any complaint your spouse may raise with one of your own. For example, “Me late? If it weren’t for the fact that you never wash any of the clothes...” If done properly, you can balance complaint against complaint forever.

- End of the World.** Exaggerate the importance of the issue with statements such as “If you really loved me, you would have never done it in the first place” or “This proves that you don’t care.” Never concede that an issue is not absolutely critical.



Resolving Conflicts

What's Your Style?

When conflicts arise, as they inevitably do, most people use one of the following five approaches to restoring harmony. Which approach do you feel most comfortable using?

Avoidance

It's not that big a problem. Why rock the boat?

Accommodation

I'm willing to give up a lot to end this conflict.

Aggression

Every conflict has a winner and a loser. I intend to be the winner.

Compromise

I'll give a little if you'll give a little.

Problem Solving

If we discuss this openly,
We can find a solution that benefits everyone.

Often we use different methods of conflict resolution for different people. Who are some of the people you might have conflicts with? How do you usually respond when conflicts arise with these people?

What if you tried the problem solving approach with all of them? If you were confident of your problem solving skills, would you be willing to try it with more people?

	Conflicts occur...			I usually use this...
	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	
Coworkers				
Parents				
Spouse				
Children				
Neighbors				
Friends				
Supervisor				
Employees				
Strangers				

POSITIVE SELF-TALK

I am good.
~

I am confident.
~

I am competent.
~

I am worthy of success.
~

I am a gifted human being.
~

I am respected.
~

I am admired.
~

I am a kind and loving person.
~

I contribute to the world.
~

I can deal with conflict.
~

I can handle anger.
~

I can deal with stress.
~

I will be the best I can be.
~

I am committed to being healthy, happy.

REPEAT

REHEARSE

VISUALIZE

Pearls of Wisdom

1. *Conflicts are solved when there is willingness to let go of being right, of being defensive, of being “in control.”*
2. *In order to get where you want to go, you first have to leave where you are. I am willing to be open to change today. To live in this world successfully, we need to become flexible, like the limbs of a tree, and learn to bend in the wind, all the while keeping a firm footing on the ground.*
3. *Today I am willing to dissolve all barriers between others and myself. The world would be more peaceful if we spent our energy taking down fences rather than putting them up. Every thought of blame, revenge, and justified anger creates a wall between others and ourselves.*
4. *Changing the thoughts in our minds can change our lives. Today I will do my best to remember that the solution to any conflict begins with changing the thoughts in my mind. If for any reason today we feel attacked, or victimized, we can remember that it is only our thoughts that ultimately hurt us. We can elect to change those thoughts at any given moment and choose to see things differently.*
5. *Forgiveness is giving up all hopes for a better past. We often keep alive our pain from the past and relive it as if it is still happening today. In reality, the incident will never change, only our perception of it will.*
6. *I am willing to forgive at least one person today that I am holding a grievance against. Our egos will do anything to keep us in conflict. We can choose to not listen to the voice of ego.*
7. *Justified anger never brings us peace of mind. I will remember that anger is part of our human condition and is nothing to feel guilty about. When I feel anger, I will do my best to honor it, to express it in healthy ways, and then to see no value into holding on to it.*
8. *Today I will look at my lifestyle and strive to change things in order that I may live a more harmonious life. Much of the stress we have is due to the fact that we have created very complex lifestyles for ourselves. Today is the day to simplify and take the complexities out of our lives.*
9. *Create an atmosphere where equality prevails, such as equality of personal worth, dignity, and respect.*

10. *Communication should be give and take, not give or take.*

11. *I win, you win.*

12. *Do things with people, not to them, or for them.*

13. *Perhaps one of the most important questions we can ask ourselves before talking is “are my words going to bring about joining or separation?” Many times our statements and questions to others are communications that attack and separate. Let us begin all of our conversations with the intention of experiencing joining with others.*

14. *The less defensive we are, the more we are able to help others discard their defenses.*

15. *Invite criticism.*

16. *We feel weak when we feel we have given our power away to others. Today, I will respect the power within me. When we feel fearful, we tend to give the control of our lives over to others to make decisions for us. The power of making decisions always is within us.*

17. *Practice being wrong.*

18. *The discrepancies between reality and our ideals will determine how satisfied we are with our lives and ourselves.*

*God, grant me the serenity
To accept things I cannot change
Courage to change the things I can
And the wisdom to the difference*

COMMUNICATING WITH “BODY LANGUAGE”

Words are only part of communication. We also communicate in the way we sit or stand, use our hands or our facial expressions.

Take a look at the following body “messages.” What would you be trying to say if you used these movements?



Doing This

Clenched jaw

Eyebrows raised

Fidgety movements

Clenched fists

Crossed arms

Fixed smile

Furrowed brow

Hands open, palms out

Hands quietly in lap

Head tilted

Narrowed eyes

Pursed lips

Shoulder shrugging

Slumping posture

Wringing hands

Might Mean This

Anger, stress

Surprise, curiosity

Nervousness

How does your “body language” reinforce what you are trying to communicate?

When you listen to a person, what clues can you

pick up from their “body language”?

Personal Development

ASSERTIVE VERSUS UNASSERTIVE AND AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR

Many people are concerned that if they assert themselves others will think of their behavior as aggressive. But there is a difference between being assertive and aggressive. Assertive people state their opinions, while still being respectful of others. Aggressive people attack or ignore others' opinions in favor of their own.

Passive people don't state their opinions at all.

The chart below gives some examples of the differences between passive, aggressive, and assertive behavior.

Passive Behavior (The Passive Person) – Aggressive Behavior (The Aggressive Person)
Assertive Behavior (The Assertive Person).

The Passive Person	The Aggressive Person	The Assertive Person
Is afraid to speak up	Interrupts and 'talks over' others	Speaks openly
Speaks softly	Speaks loudly	Uses a conversational tone
Avoids looking at people	Glares and stares at others	Makes good eye contact
Shows little or no expression	Intimidates others with expressions	Shows expressions that match the message
Slouches and withdraws	Stands rigidly, crosses arms, invades others' personal space	Relaxes and adopts an open posture and expressions
Isolates self from groups	Controls groups	Participates in groups
Agrees with others, despite feelings	Only considers own feelings, and/or demands of others	Speaks to the point
Values self less than others	Values self more than others	Values self equal to others
Hurts self to avoid hurting others	Hurts others to avoid being hurt	Tries to hurt no one (including self)
Does not reach goals and may not know goals	Reaches goals but hurts others in the process	Usually reaches goals without alienating others
You're okay, I'm not	I'm okay, you're not	I'm okay, you're okay

DECISION-MAKING

MAKE A CHECK TO THE LEFT OF THOSE DECISION ISSUES THAT ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU. NEXT, CIRCLE THE ANSWER THAT DESCRIBES HOW DECISIONS ARE CURRENTLY MADE IN YOUR FAMILY (1, 2, OR 3). THEN, GO BACK AND DRAW AN X THROUGH THE ALTERNATIVE, REPRESENTING HOW YOU WOULD LIKE DECISIONS TO BE MADE IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

	HUSBAND ND ALMOS T ALWAY S	EQUAL LY SHARE D	WIFE ALMOS T ALWAY S
<input type="checkbox"/> WHETHER/WHEN TO HAVE CHILDREN & HOW MANY		2	3
<input type="checkbox"/> LOCATION/TYPE OF RESIDENCE		2	3
<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS AFFILIATIONS, IF ANY		2	3
<input type="checkbox"/> FAMILY'S FISCAL GOALS		2	3
<input type="checkbox"/> PERSONAL FINANCES		2	3
<input type="checkbox"/> RECREATION/LEISURE/FAMILY ACTIVITIES		2	3
<input type="checkbox"/> RELATIVES & VISITATION		2	3
<input type="checkbox"/> EMPLOYMENT/EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES		2	3
<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIALIZATION (WHEN & WITH WHOM)		2	3
<input type="checkbox"/> INTIMATE RELATIONS (WHEN & HOW)		2	3

ADAPTED FROM R.B. STUART. *MARITAL PRE-COUNSELING INVENTORY*. CHAMPAIGN, ILL.: RESEARCH PRESS, 1973.

GLOSSARY OF ASSERTIVE SKILLS

(Dr. Manuel Smith: When I say No I Feel Guilty)

1. **BROKEN RECORD** – Sticking to your point by using calm repetition. Helps us to avoid arguing and manipulation.

Example: Returning something to a store.

Assertive Response: “I want my money back.”

Clinical Effect After Practice: Allows you to feel comfortable in ignoring manipulative verbal side traps, argumentative baiting, irrelevant logic, while sticking to your desired point.

2. **FOGGING** – Calmly acknowledging that there may be some truth in what the other person is saying; yet allowing you to be the judge of your own behavior. This skill helps us accept manipulative criticism without becoming defensive.

Example: You really are dressed like a bum.

Assertive Response: “I can see how you might feel that way, but I like to dress like this.”

Clinical Effect After Practice: Allows you to receive criticism comfortably without becoming anxious or defensive, while giving no reward to those using manipulative criticism.

3. **FREE INFORMATION** – Recognizing information in a social situation to comment on to encourage the exchange of information.

Example: Person #1 – My dog has just learned to sit.

Person #2 – I really like dogs, tell me more about yours.

Clinical Effect After Practice: Allows you to feel less shy in entering into conversation while at the same time prompting social partners to talk more.

4. **NEGATIVE ASSERTION** – Accepting your errors and faults without having to apologize for them. Helps us to handle criticism about our negative qualities.

Example: You are always late

Assertive Response: You are right; I am usually late.

Clinical Effect After Practice: Allows you to look more comfortably at negatives in your own behavior or personality without feeling defensive and anxious, or resorting to denial or real error, while at the same time reducing your critic anger or hostility.

5. **NEGATIVE INQUIRY** – Asking for criticism to either use it for information or exhaust it. Helps us feel more comfortable with negative feelings.

Example: You don't know how to clean the kitchen.

Assertive Response: What is it that I do not do right?

Clinical Effect After Practice: Allows you more comfortably to seek out criticism about yourself in close relationships while prompting the other person to express honest negative feelings and improve communication.

6. **SELF DISCLOSURE** – Initiating discussions about you. Helps us feel more comfortable by disclosing things about ourselves.

Example: I like to be outdoors rather than inside.

I really feel nervous because this is my first date.

I'm afraid of the dark.

Clinical Effect After Practice: Allows you comfortably to disclose aspects of yourself and your life that previously caused feelings of ignorance, anxiety, or guilt.

WORKABLE COMPROMISE – The ability to agree on a compromise in any situation where no one loses.

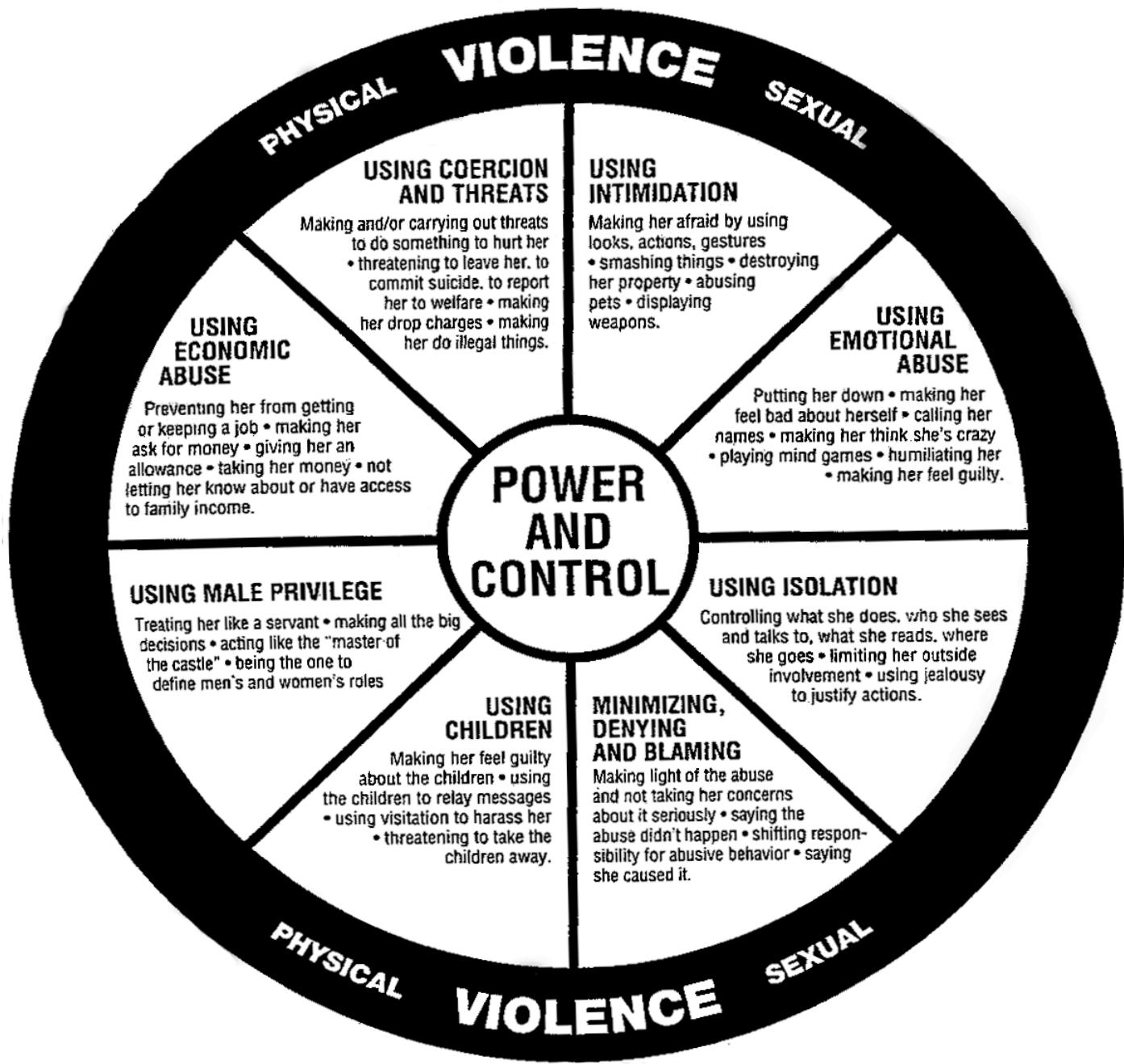
Example: Person #1 – I'd like to watch Monday

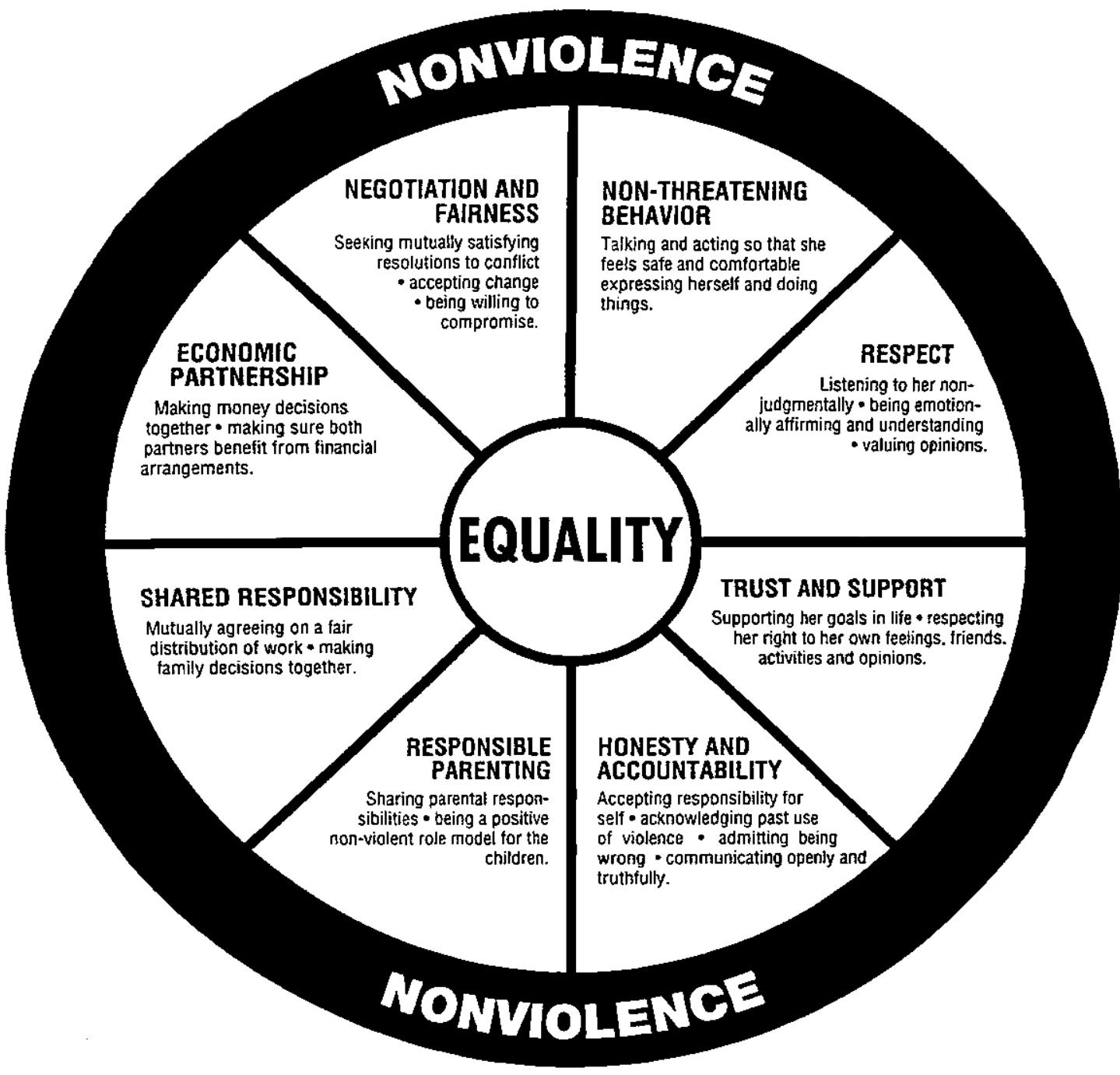
night football on the color T.V.

Person #2 – I'd like to watch the movie.

Clinical Effect Practice: I win/you win.

In using your verbal assertive skills, it is practical, whenever you feel that your self-respect is not in question, to offer a workable compromise to the other person. You can always bargain for your material goals unless the compromise affects your personal feelings of self-respect. If the end goal involves a matter of your self-worth, however, there can be NO compromise.







Be careful of your thoughts, for they become your words.
Be careful of your words, for they become your actions.
Be careful of your actions, for they become your character.
Be careful of your character, for it becomes your Destiny.