

SOLUTIONS FOR PROBLEMATIC ANGER

Shannon Purtell, MA, LPC-S, NCC, CART

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Congratulations on taking the first steps towards changing your life. In this text we will address many different things that contribute to the continuing cycle of problematic anger. You will notice that this is not referred to as an anger management program; it is referred to as anger resolution. The reason for this is that if you are only trying to consistently manage anger, there will still come a time when you are unable to manage it effectively, after all, no one is perfect. The focus will be on resolving the things that contribute to your anger response. By focusing on anger resolution there is a better chance to make permanent changes in your life. Let's look at the impact that anger has had in your life. Take a few minutes and complete the true/false anger inventory below.

- 1. I still get angry about things that people have done to me in the past.**
- 2. Waiting in line or for others really annoys me.**
- 3. I find it hard to forgive someone who has wronged me.**
- 4. I have lost control of my temper on several occasions.**
- 5. Sometimes I have gotten so angry that I have become violent.**
- 6. I have used alcohol, drugs or food to help me deal with my anger.**
- 7. I have been told that I have an anger problem.**
- 8. I have had trouble with work, friends, family or the law as a result of my anger.**
- 9. I have been so angry that I later could not remember the things I said or did.**
- 10. If someone hurts me or makes me angry, I want to get even.**

After completing the inventory, ask yourself these questions:

How has my expression of anger negatively affected my life, my relationships, and my work?

How has my expression of anger positively affected my life?

Why do I want to change the way I express my anger?

What am I willing to do to change this pattern?

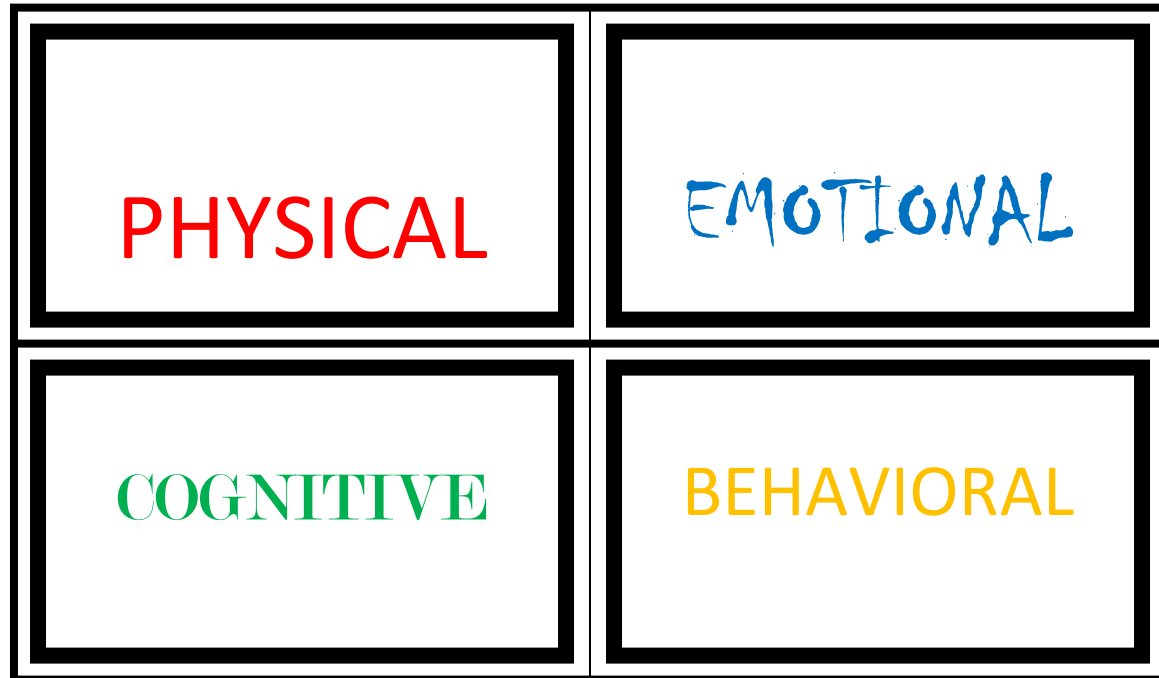
If you answered true to 2 or more of the above questions, you may have problematic anger.

INTRODUCTION TO ANGER

What is anger?

Anger is an immediate emotional state that can range from irritation to rage. Anger is a normal, healthy emotion that is sometimes expressed inappropriately, stuffed, or displaced. Problematic anger is when anger occurs with greater frequency, longer duration, or with greater intensity than is appropriate.

Anger has four components to it.



PHYSICAL: CHANGES EXPERIENCED WITH IN THE BODY THAT ARE NOT NECESSARILY OBSERVABLE BY OTHERS

HEART RACING, BREATHING SHALLOW AND RAPID, MUSCLE TENSION, TUNNEL VISION, DIFFICULTY THINKING CLEARLY

Anger is a very physical emotion. You can physically feel your anger build in your body. As anger builds, so does the physical response. The anger response is closely tied to the stress response. When you get angry you trigger the flight or fight response in your body and your body gears up to do one of those two things: either fight or run away. As a result, your heart rate increases, your breathing becomes more rapid, your muscles tense, you focus intently on your “target”, and rational thought is no longer the primary way you are processing things, instead you are relying on the more instinct-driven part of your brain.

EMOTIONAL: VERY OFTEN THERE ARE UNDERLYING FEELINGS THAT MANIFEST THEMSELVES IN ANGER

PAIN, HURT, SHAME, ANXIETY, FEAR, DISRESPECTED, SAD

In general, anger is often the cover for other underlying emotions. Many times when we feel angry it is really that someone has hurt our feelings or disrespected us in some way. Sometimes it is a cover for fear or anxiety, like when your child is late coming home and when they return you shift into anger. Another emotion that is frequently covered up by anger is shame. It seems that when we feel badly about ourselves, or we believe that someone is judging us, we react swiftly and with a high level of anger. When there are feelings that we are uncomfortable with, or that make us feel vulnerable, many times we show anger instead because it feels more powerful.

COGNITIVE: THOUGHTS, WHAT I AM TELLING MYSELF ABOUT THE SITUATION

WHY IS THIS MAKING ME MAD, UNDERLYING CORE BELIEFS

Since different things make different people angry, it is not the circumstances that trigger anger, it is what we tell ourselves about the situation that causes the anger response. Take the driver who is being tailgated. In this situation many people get angry. They tell themselves that “people shouldn’t tailgate”, that “they are idiots for driving that way,” that “someone is going to get hurt,” or even “I’ll show them”. These thoughts increase the anger response. What if instead the person said to themselves “Man, that guy is really in a hurry, I wonder if there is an emergency. Let me get out of their way.” The situation is the same, but what we tell ourselves about it either increases or decreases our anger response.

BEHAVIOR: HOW YOU ACT WHEN YOU GET ANGRY

LEARNED FROM PRIMARY ROLE MODELS, YELLING, CUSSING, HITTING, PACING,

Not everyone handles anger in the same way. Think back to your family, who in your family handles their anger in the same way that you do? Even though anger is a normal human emotion, the way that we express anger is learned from our role models. Unfortunately, very few people have had good role models for expressing anger. People usually tend towards one of two extremes: stuff it or explode. Some people are so uncomfortable with anger that they do not express it, or they misdirect it. Other people are easily triggered and can explode if their anger response gets too high. There are even some people who will stuff their anger, and stuff their anger, and stuff their anger and then explode when they can't take it anymore. None of these responses are particularly effective ways of handling this emotion, so we are going to focus on learning new, more effective ways to express anger. Since the way we handle anger is learned, we can learn other ways pretty easily.

To recap, anger has 4 components to it: physical, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral. In general, we do not have the ability to control our physical response. It is difficult to control your heart rate, or your blood pressure. It is also difficult to control our emotional response. Try to be happy when you are sad, or calm when you are anxious. We can however change the way that we think, and we can change what we do. When we are working on anger resolution we first focus on changing our behavior and then we work on changing our thoughts. We use the information from our physical and emotional responses to help us with these changes.

Triggers take many forms some of which are physical, emotional, cognitive, behavioral and even environmental (where I am, time of day, who I'm with, etc). It is critical to the anger resolution process to identify what triggers you, and the order of the cues in order to make any attempts at change.

EXAMPLE: I get to the doctor's office at 2:45 p.m. for a 3:00 appointment. At 3:20 I begin to feel agitated, my palms sweat and I get an anxious feeling in my stomach, due to not being called yet by the nurse. I worry that maybe I have the wrong day, or the wrong time. As time goes on, I start to think about how inefficient this office is. By 3:30 I tell myself that if I ran my business this way I wouldn't have any clients. At 3:45 I can't read the magazine any longer. I get up and pace, hoping to draw attention to the fact that I have been waiting long beyond my appointment time. By 4:00 I am so angry that I approach the receptionist and yell that I have been waiting for over an hour, this is ridiculous, and I plan to look for a new doctor immediately.

IDENTIFY THE FOLLOWING CUES:

PHYSICAL:

EMOTIONAL:

COGNITIVE:

BEHAVIORAL:

ENVIRONMENTAL:

How could this situation have been handled differently or more effectively?

When should intervention take place?

How would your experience change if someone who came in after you was called first?

Why would your response change?

Homework: For the next week, complete the anger management journal daily. Try to fill the journal out as soon as possible following an anger episode. Remember that anger has many levels from irritation to rage. Try to complete journals for varying stages of anger. You may even feel the need to complete more than one per day.

ANGER MANAGEMENT JOURNAL

Date: _____

Anger triggering event: _____

Situation: time of day, who are you with, where are you, etc. _____

Physical (what is going on in your body?)

Emotional (What feelings are underlying the anger?)

Cognitive (What are you telling yourself that is contributing to the anger?)

Behavioral (What are you doing?)

How do you think that you handled the situation?

What could you do in the future to handle things even better?

THE PROCESS OF CHANGE

Prochaska and DiClemente's Stages of Change Model (Addictioninfo, 2010)

Change is a process, not an event. There are 4 stages of change: Contemplation, Preparation, Action and Maintenance. Permanent change is possible, but change rarely occurs until the consequences of a behavior start to outweigh the benefits of the behavior. For example, an overweight person may try to lose weight once the doctor tells them that they have high blood pressure and may have a heart attack if they don't make changes.

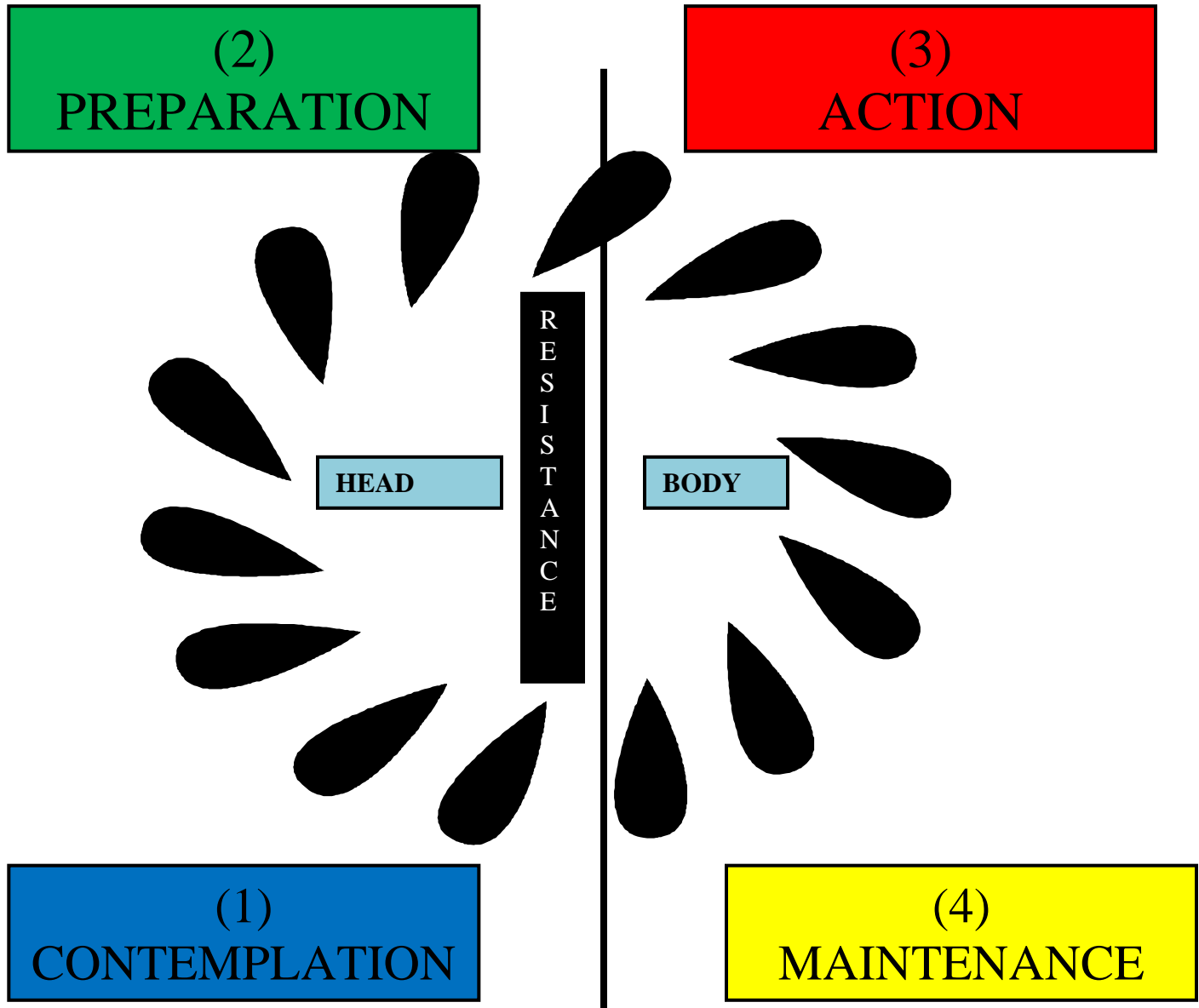
With regards to anger resolution there are generally two criteria for permanent change.

1. An awareness of feelings, thoughts, behaviors, and their impact on others.

People usually decide to get some help when they experience some problem with their family, friends, or co-workers. Until someone has experienced consequences, like being arrested, reprimanded at work, or lost of a friend, people continue to handle their anger the way that they have always handled it. Frequently people realize that their anger responses are escalating, increasing in frequency, duration, or intensity and that they are unable to consistently control their response. It is at this point that they seek some assistance to learn to handle things in a different way.

2. An interruption of the previous behavior patterns, and replacement with more effective coping skills.

In other words, stop what you are doing and do it differently. That is a lot easier said than done. If we knew how to do that, we probably would have already made the changes. We have tried to change on multiple occasions and end up returning to the same unproductive behavior. It takes commitment, desire and practice, but with a sincere effort, sustained change is not only possible, it is probable. (Clancy, 1996)



(1) CONTEMPLATION: This is the beginning of the process of change. It usually occurs when there has been something in our current circumstances that is causing us mild discomfort. We have an idea that if we make a change in our life, things might improve, however things have not gotten to the point where we are ready to implement the change. This is referred to as the “need to” stage. The person knows that they need to change, but they are just not ready to do so yet.

(2) PREPARATION: This is the second stage in the process. In this stage the person is usually experiencing increasing discomfort. They are realizing that things are not getting any better, and they will not get any better unless a change is made. This is referred to as the “going to” stage. The person is “going to” make changes, but again they are just not ready to do so. In this stage they may begin to put things in place to facilitate change, but the actual shift to new behavior has not yet been made. An example of this is someone who would like to lose weight, and they call a gym to ask about membership prices, they are preparing to make a change, but they have not yet done so.

(3) ACTION: This is the most difficult stage in the process. This is the “just do it” stage. In this stage, the person actually shifts and begins to implement the new desired behaviors. In order to shift into this stage, one must work through any resistance that they have to making the change.

(4) MAINTENANCE: This is the most important stage in the process. This is the “keep doing it” stage. In this stage, the person works to maintain the new behavior consistently over a period of time. If the person does not succeed in the maintenance stage, they usually wind up back at the contemplation stage again.

Contemplation and preparation are usually contained in your thoughts, but the action and maintenance stages shift this into your body. People can stay in the thought part of this process for extended periods of time. People struggle to shift from thoughts into action, this is due to resistance. Resistance is what prevents us from making changes. We know we need to change, and we want to change, and yet we just don't do it.

Why do you think this is? Think of a time in your life when you wanted to change something, it may have been a job, your eating habits, a relationship, a new car, etc. what prevented you or delayed the change?

In general, people shift when the consequences of their current behavior outweigh the benefits of that behavior. They quit drinking after a DWI, or lose weight after a heart attack. Without those consequences, change is met with resistance. Resistance is usually due to fear. Basically we know how things are now, but we are not quite sure what they will be like after the change. In addition, people are generally getting some need met by maintaining the current behavior, and this increases the resistance to change. We know that change is difficult, so if we focus on identifying what needs we get met by maintaining the behavior, and figure out a healthier way to meet the need, change is easier.

Describe your experience with the contemplation phase with regards to your anger:

Describe your experience with the preparation phase with regards to your anger:

When you think about the process of change, where do you think you are with regards to changing your anger behavior?

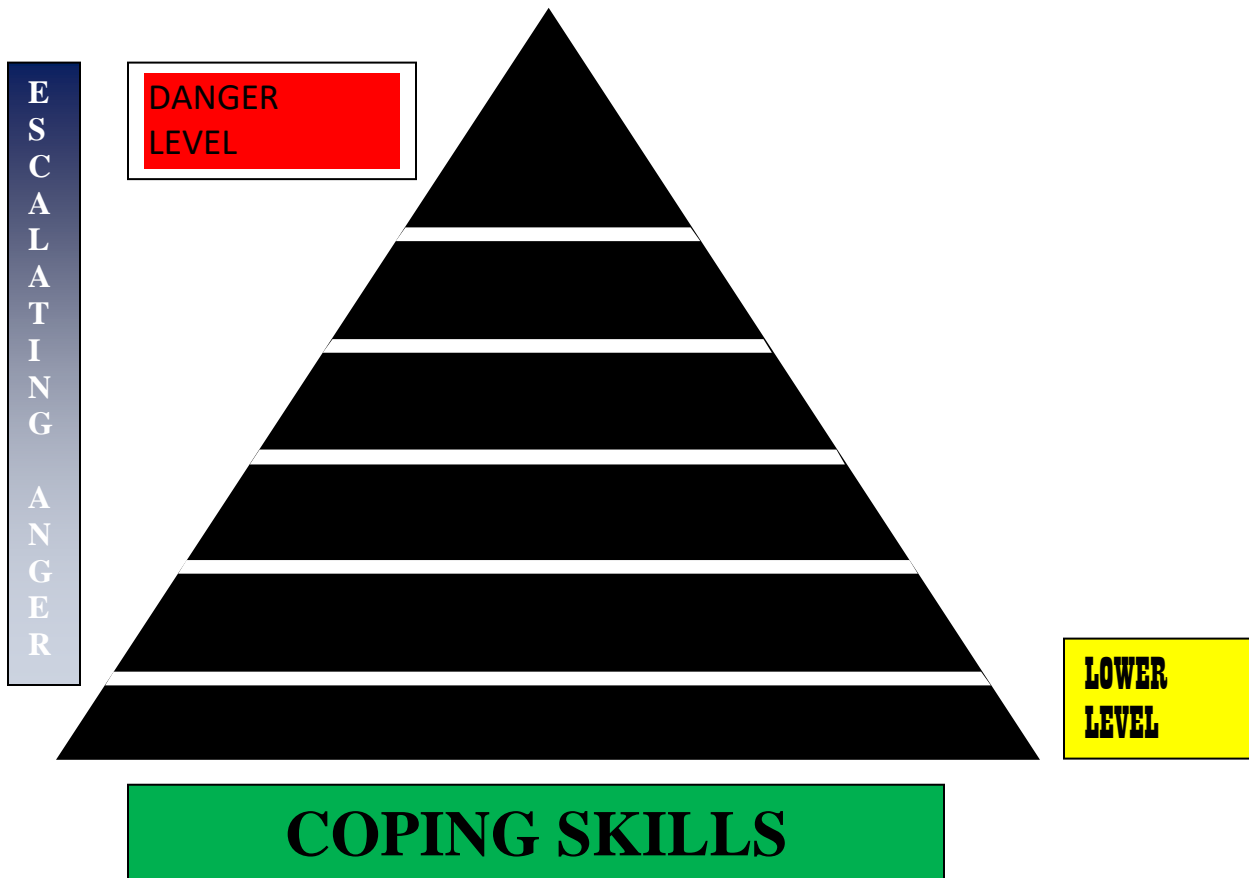
What consequences have you experienced due to your anger?

What events caused you shift stages?

What do you think it will take to shift you into the next stage?

ESCALATION OF ANGER

One of the characteristics of anger is that it is cumulative. It builds. Imagine that your anger looks like a triangle. In the lower levels of anger you have many varied coping skills to deal with your feelings, however, as it escalates, you have fewer and fewer skills available to handle things. If you allow yourself to get to the top of the triangle you have very few, usually one or two, coping skills to deal with your feelings. In general when your anger is at this level, whatever behavior you engage in will be insufficient to get your needs met, and will likely do damage to your relationships.



Irritated
Frustrated
Upset
Angry
Mad
Pissed off
Irate
Explosive
Homicidal
Boiling
Ballistic
Bothered
Annoyed
Aggravated
Disturbed
Perturbed
Discouraged
Fuming
Livid
Heated
Cross
Incensed
Enraged
Outraged
Infuriated
Distressed
Disturbed
Displeased
Disconcerted
Furious
Exasperated

Choose 10 words that exemplify the escalation of your level of anger, with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the angriest.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

IMPORTANT POINTS ABOUT THE ESCALATION OF ANGER:

1. Anger escalates if it is not resolved. If we have an argument with someone that ends in a screaming match, nothing has been resolved; it has just been temporarily tabled. This means that the issue will reappear again. When it does reappear, the argument usually starts at the level at which it ended the last time.
2. People can stay at the lower levels of anger for a significant period of time, but once the anger escalates, it does so at an increasing rapid rate.
3. Anger is cumulative, it builds. If one thing happens that creates an anger response, and then another thing happens, the anger increases in intensity. Even if by themselves, the events would produce feeling of frustration, the combination of events will increase the level at which the anger is experienced.

What do you notice about your list?

Based on your list at what level should you do something to deal with your anger in order to prevent the escalation?

Describe an incident when you have noticed your anger escalating. Describe the physical, emotional, cognitive and behavioral components.

What behaviors do you engage in at each level?

IMPACT OF PAST EXPERIENCES

Biological, cultural and environmental factors influence human behavior. Since birth people have been telling you how to think, and what to do. These influences create a core belief system. These are the rules that govern your life, and the primary way that you process events. Core beliefs are deeply engrained; they are absolute and they are resistant to change. Core beliefs are not always developed from outwardly expressed rules, sometimes they develop based upon the family dynamics and understood family rules.

One of the goals in anger resolution is to identify the association between the messages received from primary role models and the power that these messages have in defining your frame of reference for viewing life experiences. (Clancy, 1996) In other words, how does your view of the world contribute to your anger response, and is there another way to view things that would help you reduce or eliminate your anger?

Answer the following questions:

Who in your family handles anger the same way that you do?

How do you think that experience contributes to your behavior now?

Describe three things trigger the greatest anger response for you.

What do you tell yourself about these situations that increase your anger response?

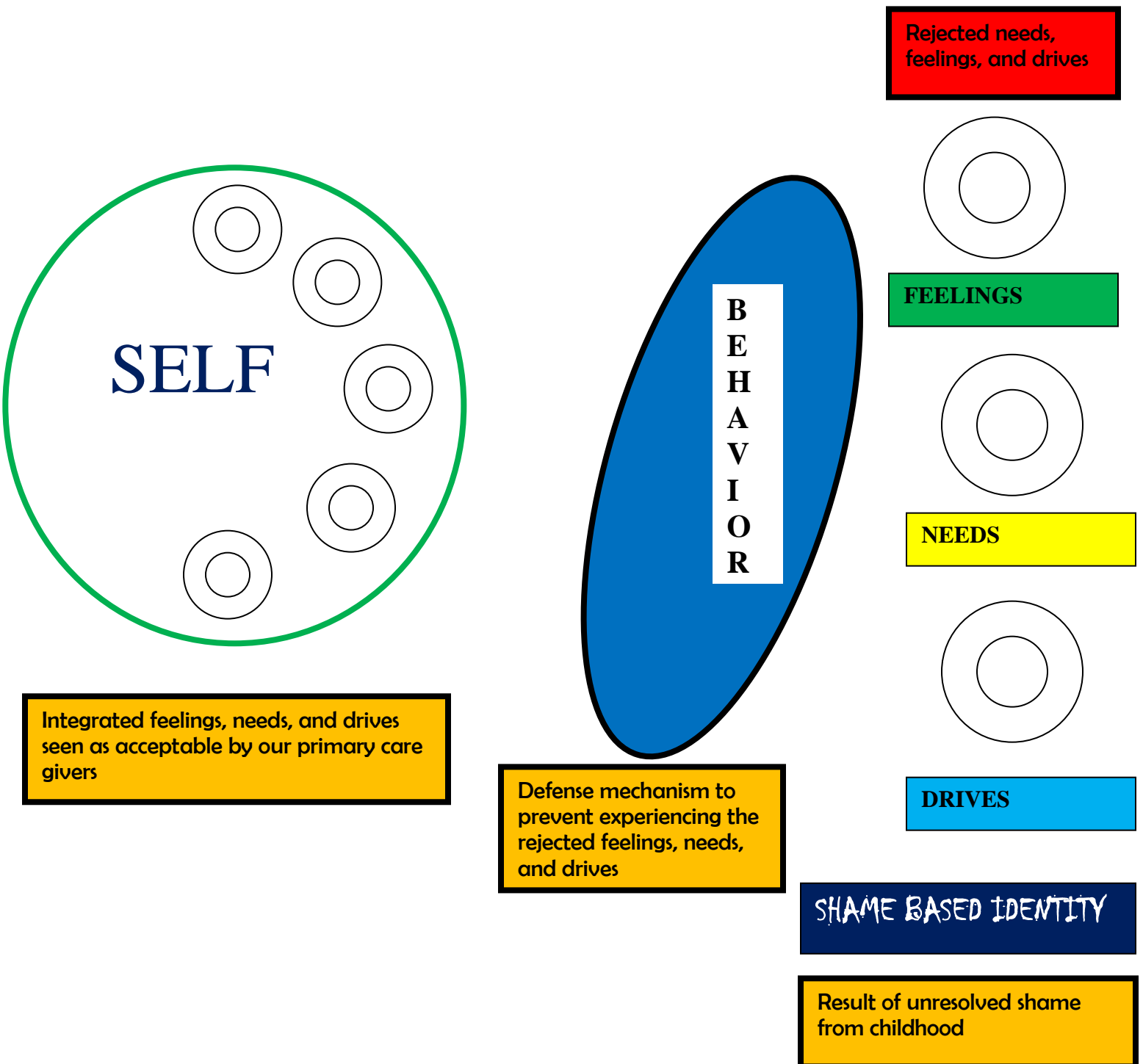
Where did this belief system come from?

What could you tell yourself that could decrease your anger response?

Identify one of the messages you received in childhood:

How does this message contribute to your anger?

SHAME BASED IDENTITY



We learn about ourselves by what our primary care givers teach us through modeling, reflecting, and expressing. These are the things that we integrate into our self image and into our behaviors. Often there are needs, feelings or drives that are normal, but are rejected by our care givers, and as a result are rejected by us. Because these are normal, they will manifest themselves. When this happens, it generates feelings of shame because we have been taught that they should not exist. (Kaufman, 1996)

Since children process the world in terms of “black/white” they internalize this shame and develop what is referred to as a shame-based identity. So, “if I fail I am a failure, if I disappoint, I am a disappointment”, etc. With a shame based identity the individual believes that they are in some way “not good enough”. If they stay stuck in this belief system they experience hopelessness, helplessness or worthlessness. Because the feeling of shame is so difficult to deal with, people will create defense mechanisms to distance themselves from this feeling. These can be addictions, eating disorders, depression, anxiety, anger or a multitude of other options, however these behaviors do not work, shame returns, and people end up experiencing negative consequences.

Healing a shame-based identity starts with changing the defensive behavior which is causing problems. Then the rejected feelings, needs, and drives need to be identified, and integrated into the self. In addition, one must learn to deal with feelings of shame without spiraling into feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness, and helplessness. Through this learning we heal the wounds from our family of origin, and create a self-affirming identity which replaces the shame based one that existed before. Once this healing has taken place, we no longer return to the ineffective defense mechanisms of our past.

An example of this is a little boy who is taught that “big boys don’t cry”. Instead of being taught that crying is a natural response to sadness, he learns to suppress his tears. If a situation occurs when he is unable to control this natural response he is ashamed of his tears. He then learns that sadness is unacceptable, so will suppress these feelings, or he will replace the tears with an anger response, which is seen as a more acceptable response. What develops as a result is someone who will express anger to deal with sadness; however anger does not help release the sadness, so sadness will continue at some level. He then will go to anger more and more frequently in a futile attempt to resolve this sadness. In order to change this cycle, he must first identify that he is sad and not angry. He must accept that it is normal to experience sadness. Finally he must do for himself that which his role models could not do for him: he must learn a more effective way to take care of himself when he is sad.

RECOGNITION OF TRIGGERS

Anger triggers come in many different forms. There are people, places, situations, experiences, and circumstances which can each trigger an anger response. Anger triggers are different for everyone. Why do some people get upset if someone tailgates them in traffic, while for others this doesn't bother them at all? Why can one person say something negative and it not generate a reaction, but if the same comment comes from our spouse, we react with anger?

List 10 situations that trigger an anger response for you

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Answer the following questions:

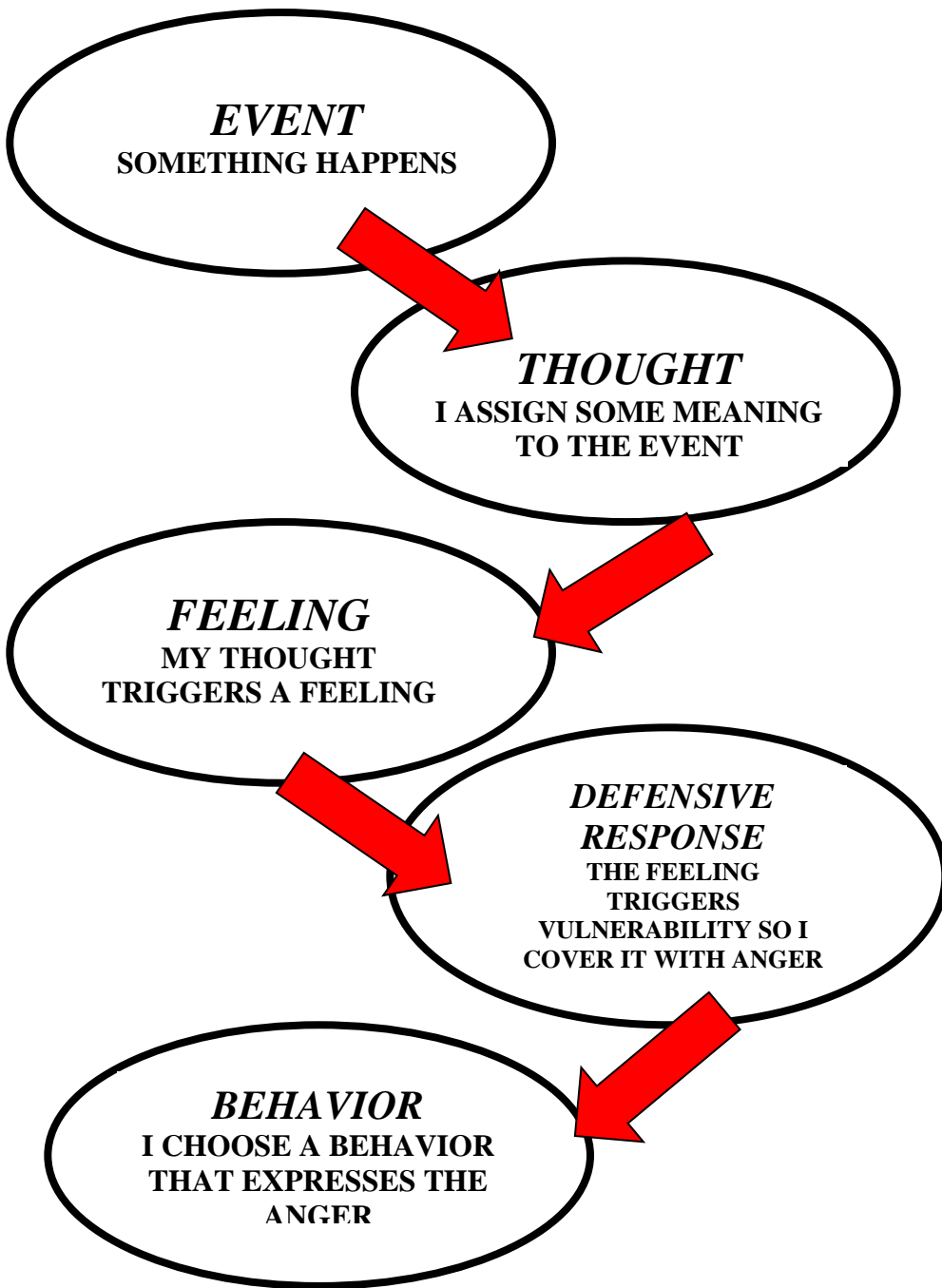
What recurring themes, patterns, or circumstances do you notice?

Why do these trigger anger for you?

Identify the underlying feelings for each situation. It cannot be anger, or any form of anger. Underlying feelings are usually: hurt, fear, shame, guilt, anxiety, sadness, disappointment, disrespected etc.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Anger is not triggered by the event. The event is actually neutral. If it were the event that triggered the anger, then everyone would always get mad if that event occurred. We know that people react differently, so therefore, it cannot be the event. So if it is not the situation, what triggers the anger? To understand this we need to understand how human beings process situations.



When an event happens, we immediately assess the situation, and assign some sort of meaning to the event. Based upon the meaning that we have assigned to it, we will then experience a feeling about the event. If the feeling is one which makes us feel vulnerable, a defensive response such as anger will be generated to decrease vulnerability and increase feelings of power and control. The behavior that we engage in expresses the defensive feeling instead of the underlying one.

EVENT: I call my best friend, and she doesn't call me back. I call her again, and she still doesn't call back. I call a third time, and she still does not return the phone call.

THOUGHT: She must be mad at me. Why would she be mad at me, I haven't done anything to her. I hate when she does this, it's so unfair. I can't believe that she would treat me this way, especially after everything I've done for her.

FEELING: upset, rejected, disappointment, hurt, disillusioned

DEFENSIVE FEELING: I don't need friends like her anyway: anger. Fine then, I won't talk to her either: indignant

BEHAVIOR: Ignore her calls, don't call again. When I finally answer, yell at her for being insensitive, and tell her that she's crazy for being mad at me.

Situations like this happen all of the time to us. Now think about this: She didn't call back because her phone broke, and she didn't get the messages....Many times when we have a thought about a situation, it occurs before we have all of the facts.

In order to effectively deal with anger triggers, we need to identify the meaning that we are assigning to the situation. Later we will address the types of self talk which contribute to the anger response. For now, just focus on paying attention to what you are telling yourself, and ask yourself the following questions:

What meaning am I assigning to the situation?

Is there another way to look at it?

What is the underlying feeling that I am experiencing?

Is there another way to deal with the feeling?

By identifying our thoughts and feelings and addressing those, we afford ourselves the opportunity to handle things in a different way (Clancy, 1996).

TIME OUT TECHNIQUE

Because our anger response feels so automatic, it is necessary to give ourselves time to re-evaluate situations in order to implement new response choices. The time out technique is a perfect tool for such a job. People know that time outs work, otherwise they wouldn't use them to discipline their children, and however they rarely see the benefit of using this tool for themselves.

What are some reasons that you have avoided time outs? Some common excuses are “if I don't say it now, I'll never be heard”; “I think it's more important to deal with the issues right then”, “time outs are for children, not adults”.

BENEFITS OF A TIME OUT:

- Effective time outs afford people the opportunity to consider multiple courses of action before engaging in any one course.
- Effective time outs lead to problem resolution without any damage to the relationship.
- Effective time outs are mutually respectful.
- Effective time outs allow the situation to be about the content, and not the context of what you need to say.

What benefits can you see to taking a time out the next time you get angry?

At what level of anger should you take a time out? (Refer back to the section on the escalation of anger)

What do you think is the most important part of an effective time out?

What could you do to ensure that the other person supports your decision to take a time out?

TIME OUT TECHNIQUE

As you learn to manage your anger more efficiently, it is imperative that you implement change as soon as you sense that your anger is escalating. Below you will see the steps necessary for an effective time out. Practice using the time out technique as often as is necessary to prevent the escalation of your anger (Clancy, 1996).

1. IDENTIFY THAT YOUR ANGER IS ESCALATING.

- a. YOU MUST BE ABLE TO IDENTIFY THE ESCALATION OF ANGER IN ORDER TO ALLOW OPPORTUNITY FOR APPLICATION OF THE TIME OUT TECHNIQUE AND AVOID EXPLOSIVE BEHAVIOR.

2. IDENTIFY YOUR NEED TO TAKE A TIME OUT.

- a. BASICALLY YOU ARE EVALUATING WHETHER OR NOT YOU FORSEE IMMINENT RESOLUTION TO THE CONFLICT. IF NOT, YOU SHOULD TAKE A TIME OUT.

3. LEAVE QUIETLY

- a. DO NOT MUTTER UNDER YOUR BREATH, STOMP OFF, SLAM DOORS, ETC.

4. ENGAGE IN SOME ACTIVITY THAT DECREASES YOUR ANGER RESPONSE.

- a. DEEP BREATHING
- b. WALK/EXERCISE
- c. CALL A SUPPORTIVE FRIEND
- d. USE POSITIVE SELF TALK

5. RETURN AND DISCUSS THE CONFLICT IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE RESOLUTION.

- a. FAILURE TO RETURN TO THE DISCUSSION AND RESOLVE THE ISSUE MEANS THAT THE CONFLICT WILL RETURN AT SOME FUTURE DATE.

REMEMBER:

- MORE THAN ONE TIME OUT MAY BE NEEDED IN ORDER TO MANAGE AND RESOLVE THE CONFLICT.
- THE QUALITY OF THE TIME OUT IS CRITICAL. YOU MUST ENGAGE IN ANGER REDUCTION AND NOT ANGER ESCALATION DURING THE TIME OUT.
- ANGER IS NOT LIMITED TO AGGRESSIVE RESPONSES, BUT ALSO INCLUDES SOCIAL WITHDRAWAL, SULKING, POUTING, AND OTHER PASSIVE RESPONSES. THESE CAN BE JUST AS DETRIMENTAL TO RELATIONSHIPS.

Over the next week, take a time out as often as you need to, in order to maintain control of your anger response. Remember that your anger response is always within your control. Practicing the technique is very important. It will probably be uncomfortable at first, but keep at it. Mastering the time out technique is one of the best tools for your anger management tool box.

THE ROLE OF SELF TALK

In a previous lesson we began to identify the things that contribute to our anger response. The most powerful contributing factor is our thoughts. Our thoughts are directly connected to our emotional responses. By identifying the types of self talk that contribute to our anger response, we have an opportunity to change these thoughts, and in turn change the way in which we respond to the situation.

THE BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF SELF TALK

1. Self talk is private. No one is privy to our thoughts, and people talk differently to themselves than they talk to others.
2. Self talk is almost always believed and rarely questioned or challenged. Our self talk is deeply ingrained and directly connected to our belief system.
3. Self talk provides us with direct, distinct and specific messages about events.
4. Self talk is usually brief in form, sometime it is just a word or even an image.
5. Self talk is learned. From the time you were born, people have been telling you how to think. As a result, our self talk can usually be traced back to one or both of our parents.
6. Self talk tends to be catastrophic.
7. Self talk thoughts act as cues for other thoughts: one thought triggers the next thought.
8. Self talk is impossible to turn off, our brain is constantly commenting on our circumstances.
9. Self talk can be changed through practice.

(Clancy, 1996)

Take the following scenario: You are running late for work. When you arrive, you park your car, gather your things, and just as you release the car door, you release that you have locked the door, and that your keys are inside. What would be the first thing that you would say to yourself in your head? Common responses are “Idiot!” Stupid!”
“\$%&*, Now look what you’ve done!”

What do you think of these responses? Is it the truth? Are you really a stupid person if you lock your keys in the car? Are you really an idiot? Did you really do something terrible? Think about how your initial response makes you feel? Upset? Embarrassed? Inadequate? The truth is that locking your keys in the car is very common; the truth is that you were distracted, not stupid. However no one yells “Distracted!”, even though that is the truth of the situation.

Frequently our thoughts are misguided. We often inappropriately assess situations. There are 4 types of distortions that contribute to the anger response.

IRRATIONAL: This occurs when we mind read or assign motive to another person's behavior. The goal of this type of self talk is to explain to your satisfaction the reasons for someone else's actions. The problem with this form of self talk is that it is often erroneous, or exaggerated. This triggers anger because we react to their behaviors as if the motive we have assigned is the truth, instead of reaction to what we know to be true. Think back to the example in the previous lesson where your best friend has not returned your phone call. In that example the assumption was that "she must be mad". What happens is that we react to the situation as if what we have told ourselves is the truth. The truth is that we have made the entire situation up until we are able to get confirmation.

MAGNIFICATION: This occurs when we exaggerate the significance of an event. Magnification distorts our thinking by making the situation appear worse than it actually is. The problem with this type of self talk, is that our body reacts as if what we have told it is the truth, and our anger response is then out of proportion with the actual situation. For example, if I am stuck in traffic, and I tell myself "I am NEVER going to get there. My body will generate an increased anxiety response. The truth is that you may be late, but you will eventually get there.

GENERALIZATION: This form of self talk occurs when we take one part of a situation and generalize it to the entire situation. The most common form of generalization is destructive labeling or name calling. This contributes to anger by focusing attention on negative characteristics at the expense of any positive ones. The problem with the form of self talk is that it is used to justify the level of our anger response. For example, if someone cuts you off in traffic, you may label them "a jerk". The truth is that you don't even know the person, but that you do not like his behavior. Once you have assigned the label "jerk" you justify no longer needing to treat him with respect.

IMPERATIVE: With this form of self talk we have a list of inflexible rules about behavior: how you and others should and should not act. This contributes to anger by triggering feelings of being betrayed, or violated in some way. This form of self talk implies that our view of the world is correct and that anyone who sees things differently is wrong. When our imperatives are violated we perceive an injustice and this justifies an anger response. (Clancy, 1996)

LIST THE TOP 3 SITUATIONS WHICH MAKE YOU ANGRY:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

FOR EACH SITUATION IDENTIFY WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT THE SITUATION WHICH GENERATES YOUR ANGER RESPONSE.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

IDENTIFY WHICH TYPE OF SELF TALK IS PRESENT FOR EACH SITUATION

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

COME UP WITH AN ALTERNATIVE THOUGHT WHICH DECREASES YOUR ANGER RESPONSE.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

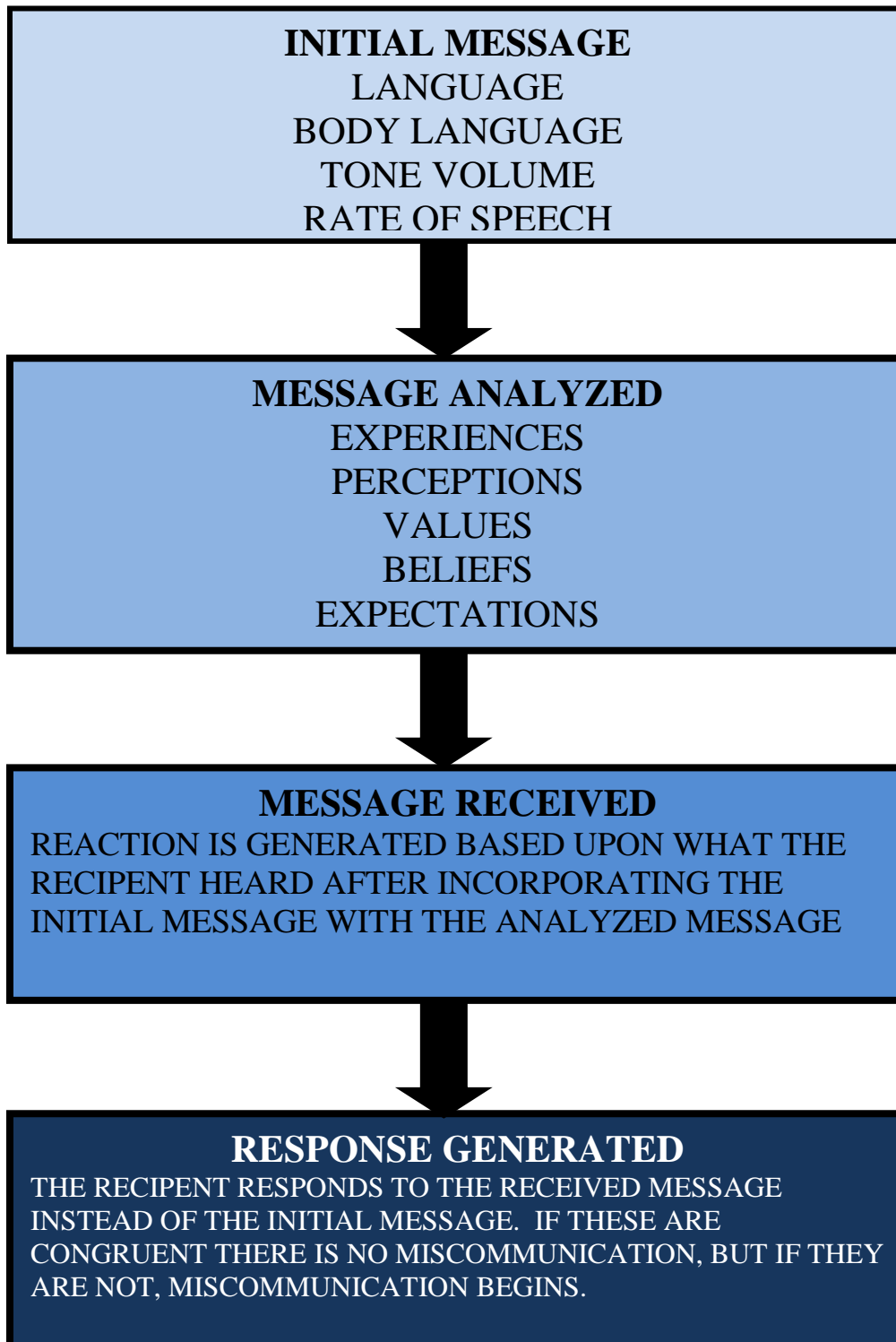
COMMUNICATION SKILLS (PART 1)

BASICS AND BARRIERS

The goal of communication is to understand and to be understood. This is a very basic concept, and yet effective communication skills are challenging, and difficult to master.

Developing effective communication skills is essential to anger management. Without these skills, one is unable to effectively resolve conflict. Without resolutions, conflicts recycle and escalate. There are several parts to effective communication: listening, assertive communication, problem solving, and communication styles. Over the next few chapters we will be addressing each of these in greater detail. Before we can start on these, there are some basic principles of communication that need to be understood.

Why is communication so difficult? Why do we frequently misinterpret others? Why are we often misunderstood? Have you ever had a conversation that “went south”? You started talking about some innocuous subject, and the next thing you know you are in a heated argument. What happened? How did things get out of hand? The answers lie in how we communicate.



When we initiate conversation with another person, we usually are not consciously choosing our words, we just talk. We also do not give much thought to our volume, our body language or how fast we talk, we just talk. While we may not be aware of these things, whoever we are talking to is aware of them. Have you ever had someone to tell you to stop yelling, and you weren't even aware that you were speaking in an elevated voice?

The recipient takes what we say, and how we say it, and processes it through their "filter". Everyone has an internal filter. This filter is the result of our life long experiences, our perceptions, our belief system, our value system, and our expectations. Once the recipient has processed the initial message through their filter, they then receive the message. If the message they receive is congruent with what the sender intended, then communication continues smoothly. If however, there has been some distortion to the message, then there is a break in the communication process and conflict can arise. There are so many ways in which a message can be misinterpreted; it's amazing that messages are ever understood.

It is essential to communication that we reduce the frequency of these “missed communications”. There are several roadblocks which obstruct this process. These are called barriers to effective communication. Barriers can be broken down into 3 categories: judgment, resolution, and avoidance.

JUDGMENT: A major road block in effective communication is our tendency to judge, approve or disapprove, the statements made by another. When we judge another our attempts at evaluation are not objective. When we judge we allow our feelings to become involved, and we fail to view things from the sender’s perspective. There are 3 types of judging that erect barriers to communication: criticism, labeling, and diagnosing.

Criticism: When we “fault find” with another person, this will usually trigger defensiveness in them. Once someone has become defensive most effective communication stops as the person will engage in behavior to justify, defend, or explain their position. This situation indicated that the recipient has not understood what the sender is saying, hence the “missed communication”.

Labeling: As we discussed in the chapter on self talk, labeling is a form of distorted thinking known as generalization. When we are referring to labeling here, what we are referring to is a pattern of classifying others. This pattern prevents us from being able to see things from the other person’s perspective which is an essential element in effective communication. In addition, if labeling takes on the form of “name calling” the sender will again become defensive, and effective communication will disintegrate.

Diagnosing: This is a close cousin to the form of self talk known as imperative, and it is also a form of labeling. When the recipient attempts to diagnose the other looking for motives, the recipient ignores the content of what is being said. Again communication becomes thwarted as the sender shifts to defending themselves and their motives. The content of the message is lost.

RESOLUTION: Another major road block to communication is the pattern of sending solutions to the other person. Solutions may take the form of giving advice, giving an order, making a threat, or moralizing.

Advice: There is only one situation in which giving advice is appropriate, and that is when it is solicited. If someone has not asked for your advice, giving it can hinder communication, and can even hinder the growth process of the other person. There is an underlying assumption when you give advice, and that is that you know what is best for the person. The problem with this is that rarely does the recipient understand the full scope of the situation.

Ordering: Ordering is described as “a solution sent coercively” This is a barrier to effective communication for 2 reasons. The first reason is that it insinuates that the recipient is “in charge” and that it is an unequal relationship. The second is that the result is resistance and resentment, on the part of the sender, and in turn on the part of the recipient if the order is not followed. Resistance and resentment break down the communication process, and stop the flow of dialogue.

Threatening: This is a solution that includes a punishment if not followed. The results are the same as with orders, but the resentment is increased, and retribution may even follow.

Moralizing: In this form of resolution, people back up their opinion with social or moral authority. Moralizing focuses on what one “should” do. This breaks down communication by thwarting the self expression of the sender, if they do not hold the same belief system. The conversation then becomes about changing the senders belief system as opposed to understanding their view point.

AVOIDANCE: Avoidance refers to ways in which we steer clear of the issue that is being addressed. There are 3 common means of avoidance; diverting, logic, and reassuring.

Diverting: The most common form of diversion is to switch the subject from the one the sender is discussing to one of the recipient's choosing. This is usually due to ineffective listening skills, but the message that is sent is that the recipient's concerns are more important than the sender's. The reasons for diversion are varied, but the most common is that the subject is triggering an uncomfortable situation for the recipient, and diversion is an attempt to gain control over the conversation.

Logic: Logic in and of itself is not necessarily a barrier to communication, but when it is used inappropriately, it becomes just that. Logical responses are barriers in situations when the goal of the sender is to communicate an emotional experience. If the recipient shifts into logic, the sender's message has been lost, and "missed communication" occurs.

Reassuring: This is another one that in and of itself is not necessarily a barrier to communication, but if used inappropriately it can cause the breakdown of the communication process. Reassurance is usually an attempt to comfort another person, but in reality it is an attempt to "talk them out of their experience". When the recipient shifts into reassurance, they have just unintentionally minimized the experience of the sender. When one feels as if their concerns are not valid, the communication process ceases. (Education, nd)

Certain responses have a tendency to break down the communication process. If the goal of communication is to understand and be understood, anything that detracts from this understanding is a barrier to communication. The outcome of responding with any of the above mentioned barriers is that the communication breaks down, anger and resentment are common, problems are not adequately addressed, and people do not feel understood.

Your co-worker Sandy comes to you to discuss an issue she is having with another co-worker Bob. Sandy tells you that Bob makes disrespectful comments to her. In addition he is frequently late to the office, does not complete his assignments, and expects her to pick up the slack caused by his behavior. Below are your responses to Sandy. Identify which barrier of communication is used in each response.

1. If I were you I'd tell your boss. _____
2. You're not handling this right. _____
3. You're doing this because you don't want confrontation. _____
4. If you don't tell your boss, I will. _____
5. I had a coworker like that once too. _____
6. Bob needs your help, and you should help him. _____
7. It'll be ok. _____
8. Don't do his work for him _____

- | | |
|---|-------------|
| 1. If I were you I'd tell your boss | ADVISING |
| 2. You're not handling this right. | CRITICIZING |
| 3. You're doing this because you don't want a confrontation | DIAGNOSING |
| 4. If you don't tell your boss, I will. | THREATENING |
| 5. I had a coworker like that once too. | DIVERTING |
| 6. Bob needs your help, and you should help him. | MORALIZING |
| 7. It'll be ok. | REASSURING |
| 8. Don't do his work for him | ORDERING |

COMMUNICATION SKILLS (PART 2)

LISTENING

Listening is the most important skill in effective communication. If we are unable to listen to what is being communicated, how is it possible to respond appropriately? The answer is that it isn't. Think about how often in your life someone has said to you, "You're not listening to me!" What do you think they meant by that? Usually it means either that you are not paying attention; or that you have not understood the message they are attempting to convey.

There are some guidelines for effective listening.

1. **Stop talking.** It is not possible to fully listen to another person when you are talking. Your brain is focused on what you are saying, and not what they are saying.
2. **Remove distractions.** It is very difficult to give someone your attention if there are distractions. Turn off the television, turn off your phone, put down the newspaper, etc.
3. **Create a permissive environment.** Putting the speaker at ease creates an environment conducive to communication and lets the speaker know that they have your attention. A permissive environment is created when you face the person, make eye contact, and act interested.
4. **Be patient.** Let the speaker finish, before you make a comment. Do not interrupt.
5. **Ask questions for clarification.** If you are unsure of what the speaker is saying, ask. It is important to do this before responding to ensure that you have received the intended message.

In addition to these guidelines there are some characteristics that make someone an effective listener; empathy, acceptance, congruence, and concreteness. These are taken from the work of Carl Rogers who created the theory of Person Centered Therapy. In this form of therapy judgment is suspended, and the goal is to understand and validate the experience of the other person. The benefit of this is that in addition to the recipient understanding the sender, the sender feels validated and the relationship improves.

EMPATHY: The goal of empathy is to understand the perspective of the other person, basically to “get inside” of the other person’s thoughts and feelings. Empathy can be expressed through phrases such as “I understand”, “I know what you mean” I follow you”. These communicate to the sender that the recipient is paying attention and attempting to understand.

ACCEPTANCE: Acceptance means having respect for the other person. Acceptance should be as unconditional as possible in effective listening. This means that the recipient must refrain from judgment, criticism, moralizing, etc. In other words, understand that this is the other’s person’s experience.

CONGRUENCE: Congruence is a reference to being authentic on the part of the listener. This requires openness on the part of the recipient to be in touch with their own experience, and willing to share this experience without reserve. Another word might be candor. The listener focuses on the speaker’s message, but is aware of their own personal response to it.

CONCRETENESS: Concreteness is the process of focusing on the specific situation rather on generalities. When there is a difficult or uncomfortable discussion, people may switch into generalization to avoid personalizing the experience. An example of this occurs when the word “you” is substituted for the word “I”.

After the speaker has finished expressing themselves, reflection is the appropriate first response of the listener. Reflection clarifies and restates the message of the speaker focusing on the content and feelings expressed. This is done prior to the listener responding to the content to ensure that the intended message is the message that was received. In other words, the listener is making sure that they understand before they respond.

PRINCIPLES OF REFLECTIVE LISTENING

- Listen more than talk
- Respond to what is personal not to what is impersonal or abstract
- Restate what the speakers has said, but in your own words
- Understand and express the feelings conveyed by the speaker
- Focus on understanding the other person's frame of reference instead of focusing on your own
- Respond with empathy and acceptance, not judgment, criticism or indifference

The goal of this process is to understand the other person, not to be understood...that comes later.

HOW TO USE THE REFLECTIVE LISTENING TECHNIQUE

1. Listen for total meaning; this includes both the content of what is being conveyed and the feeling or attitude underlying the content. Both are important to the full meaning.
2. Respond to the feelings. An effective listener remains sensitive to the total message, especially the feelings.
3. Note all cues. Paying attention to non-verbal cues is very important. Truly sensitive listening requires paying attention to inflections, pauses, facial expressions and body language.
4. Testing for understanding. Prior to responding, reflect back to the speaker what meaning you have received. The speaker's reaction will indicate whether or not you "got it right".

Your co-worker Sandy comes to you to discuss an issue she is having with another co-worker Bob. Sandy tells you that Bob makes disrespectful comments to her. In addition he is frequently late to the office, does not complete his assignments, and expects her to pick up the slack caused by his behavior.

Give 5 examples of responses that would illustrate the use of reflective listening.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Here are some examples of reflective listening:

1. Sandy, it sounds like you feel like Bob is taking advantage of you.
2. It must be difficult for you to have to work with Bob especially since he isn't treating you with respect.
3. You are having such a tough time at work due to Bob's behavior, and it's upsetting you.
4. I understand. It sounds like you are frustrated with the situation and you are trying to figure out a solution.
5. It must be hard to work with someone like Bob.

The focus is on Sandy's experience. The listener reflects back understanding for the content and reflects the feelings expressed by her. The listener's beliefs, values, experiences, expectations and perceptions are suspended, and the listener attempts to understand things from Sandy's perspective.

Over the next week, schedule a time to sit down with someone; spouse, parent, friend, co-worker etc. and practice this technique. Mastering reflective listening is one of the best skills for conflict resolution.

ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION

Anger is a normal human emotion that is at times suppressed or expressed inappropriately. One of the goals of this program is to teach effective ways to express your anger. Think about what you currently do to express your anger. People tend to handle anger in 1 of 3 ways; stuff it, explode, or stuff then explode. Stuffing anger is called passive behavior, and exploding is referred to as aggressive behavior. Stuffing then exploding is passive-aggressive behavior. What other options are there? If stuffing it doesn't work and exploding doesn't work, what does? With anger, appropriate expression of this feeling is referred to as assertive behavior.

PASSIVE BEHAVIOR:

With this style of communication the underlying thought process is that other people's wants and needs are more important than yours.

Examples of passive behavior would be:

Not standing up for yourself

Giving up your rights by not expressing your honest feelings, thoughts and beliefs.

Expressing yourself, but in an apologetic way.

Doing what you are told regardless of how you feel about it.

Saying "YES" when you really want to say "NO"

The goal of passive behavior is to avoid conflict, avoid rejection, and be liked by others.

AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR:

With this style of communication the underlying thought process is that your wants and needs are more important than those of others.

Examples of aggressive behavior would be:

Expressing feelings, thoughts, and beliefs but by blaming, threatening or fighting.

Yelling, demanding, demeaning, humiliating, name calling or threatening behavior

Expressing feelings in a way that violates the rights of others.

The goal of aggressive behavior is to win, dominate, or humiliate

ASSERTIVE BEHAVIOR:

With this style of communication, the underlying thought process is that each person's wants and needs are equally important, and that both parties should be treated with respect.

Examples of assertive behavior:

Standing up for yourself

Take other's feelings into consideration

Negotiation, compromise, problem solving and cooperation

Direct honest expression of wants and needs

Listening and understanding of the wants and needs of others without defensiveness

The goal of assertive behavior is to be heard and understood, and to understand the viewpoint of the other person.

EXAMPLE OF ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION

Requesting a behavior change is a great opportunity to use assertive communication. These situations are often the source of conflict in relationships, but use of this formula has the potential to reduce conflict, and improve the chances that the other person will be willing to make a change.

If someone engages in a behavior that we dislike, we would prefer that they discontinue this pattern. The way we approach the situation either increases or decreases the likelihood that the other person will be receptive to our request. Use of this technique has several benefits.

First, it puts the other person at ease by presenting the situation as your problem which you are asking for their help to solve. In other words, since it bothers you, it is your problem. If it didn't bother you, it wouldn't be a problem. The other person is not doing it "to you". When we approach things from this belief system, the other person is less likely to be defensive.

Second, this technique uses direct, honest communication so that there is less chance for misinterpretation.

Third, with this technique you have the opportunity to keep the listener focused on your point so that the conversation stays on the topic you intended and does not take off on a tangent before a solution can be reached.

Finally, with the use of this technique both parties feel respected and no damage is done to the relationship.

ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION

REQUESTING A BEHAVIOR CHANGE

1. ASK PERMISSION TO TALK TO THEM

By doing this you insure that the other person is available to have a conversation. This means that distractions should be at a minimum. By asking, you now have the other person's attention.

2. VALIDATION

This is showing consideration to the other person's feelings by giving them the benefit of the doubt or by affirming the nature of your relationship.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE BEHAVIOR

Be specific and as objective as possible when describing the behavior. Focus on the behavior and not the person.

4. EXPRESS THE FEELING YOU ARE EXPERIENCING

Be sure to use feeling words such as angry, upset, disappointed, irritated. Avoid saying "I feel that..." This switches from a feeling into a thought.

5. ASK FOR A SPECIFIC BEHAVIOR CHANGE

Describe how you would like for things to be different. Use phrases such as "I would prefer" or "I would rather"

6. ASK FOR AGREEMENT

After you have made the request it is important to find out if it is something that the other person is willing to do. Without directly asking, there is an assumption made, and this can lead to conflict in the future.

Example of this technique:

A client was having difficulty with her mother. Her mother would criticize her and it would upset her and make her angry. She would then avoid talking to her mother for awhile until she was no longer upset, but as soon as her mother said something critical, the client would be upset again. Here is the way that she addressed the situation with her mother:

Client: "Mom, do you have a minute? I have something I would like to discuss with you."

Mom: "Sure dear, what's on your mind?"

Client: "I know you don't mean to, but when you criticize me it upsets me and hurts my feelings and it makes me not want to spend time with you. I was wondering if you would be willing to stop criticizing me."

Mom: "You are just too sensitive."

Client: "Actually Mom, that's an example of criticism, and when you do that it upsets me, and it hurts my feelings. It makes me not want to spend time with you. So I was wondering if you would be willing to stop criticizing me?"

Mom: "Well, I only want what's best for you."

Client: "I know you do Mom, but when you criticize me it really upsets me and hurts my feelings, and I just don't want to feel this way. Would you be willing to stop?"

Mom: "I don't know when I'm doing it."

Client: "If this is something you are willing to work on, I would be happy to point it out to you when it happens."

Mom: "Of course Honey, I never mean to hurt you."

Client: "I know Mom. Thank you for listening, and for being willing to help me with this."

By using the assertive communication technique the client was able to keep the conversation about the specific issue until she felt as if she had a resolution. She was able to keep her emotions in check and stay respectful. She focused on validating her mother, and then reiterating the specific behavior change that she wanted.

By using this technique we have a better chance of getting the person to hear our request. This does not always mean that they will be willing to change. If they say “no”, that is ok. It is still your responsibility to take care of yourself in your relationships. In the above conversation, the client expressed to her mother what would happen if her mother was unwilling to make the change. The client said “it makes me not want to spend time with you.” If her mother had been unwilling to change her behavior, the client would have reduced the frequency of the contact with her mother.

You have the right to let others know if their behavior bothers you.

You have the right to ask someone to modify their behavior.

Others have the right to say yes or no to your request.

If they say no, you have the right to set a boundary with the other person in order to prevent yourself from continuing to be upset by their behavior.

If you do not ask the other person to change, there is no chance that things will change. If you ask, then there is a chance for change. This must be done in a mutually respectful manner, or it will result in increased conflict.

Think of a current situation in which someone you know engages in a behavior that you do not like. Using this technique, write down what you would say to the person if you wanted to address the behavior.

1. ASK PERMISSION TO TALK TO THEM:

2. VALIDATE THE PERSON OR RELATIONSHIP:

3. DESCRIBE THE BEHAVIOR:

4. DESCRIBE YOUR FEELINGS:

5. ASK FOR A BEHAVIOR CHANGE:

6. ASK IF THEY ARE WILLING TO MAKE THE CHANGE:

PROBLEM SOLVING

It seems as if people do not have a lot of conflicts in their lives, instead they have the same conflicts over and over. Why do you think this is? Take the following scenario:

A couple argues regularly over their finances. Partner A believes that they should be saving more money, and Partner B believes that they should be able to buy what they want. When partner B buys something that partner A believes to be unnecessary, they have an argument.

Partner A: What is this \$40.00 charge at Shoeworld?

Partner B: I bought a new pair of black shoes.

Partner A: You have 7 pairs of black shoes, you don't need another pair.

Partner B: You always say that, I make enough money, and I should be able to buy what I want.

Partner A: We need to cut back on our spending in this economy, anything could happen. You are going to send us to the poorhouse with your reckless spending.

Partner B: What about you? You bought that new belt last week. Why is it ok for you to spend money and not me?

Partner A (Elevated voice) I don't buy anything unless it's necessary, and in the budget. You just spend whenever you want to without any consideration to our situation. You are selfish and irresponsible.

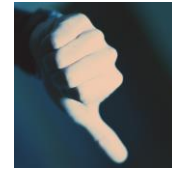
Partner B: Well, you are a tightwad, and you need to loosen up.

As you can see, this conversation has deteriorated, and nothing will be solved at this point. Does this type of conversation sound familiar? Many people express frustration that nothing ever changes in their relationships. There is a reason for this: people don't solve the problem!

Think of a conflict that you have had repeatedly with someone in your life. What if you could find a way to Never, Never, Never have to have that argument again...there is a way, and it is by using the problem solving technique.

PROBLEM SOLVING

The reason that people do not solve their problems is that they tend to approach conflict from with is referred to as a win/lose perspective. In other word, one person is going to get what they want, and the other person isn't.



This works out great for you if you are the person that gets what they want, but what if you are the person that doesn't. Well, usually this is why the conflict comes up again. If you were not happy with the outcome, you will probably not "drop it". With the problem solving technique the approach to conflict is different; instead of win/lose we focus on win/win. In other words, both people have to get what they need. How is this possible? Take the previous scenario, how could they both get their needs met when they seem to want opposite things?

To understand how this works, we need to understand the nature of conflict. Problems of this sort are always a conflict of needs. One person needs one thing, and the other person needs something else. However, we rarely talk about things from a "needs perspective". When we approach conflict we have a tendency to provide a solution to the problem that we think will meet our needs.

In the previous example, what do you suppose Partner A's need is? What about Partner B? In order to get to what the need is, you have to ask the other person "WHY do you want things to be that way?" Identifying the "why" identifies what need the person is trying to get met. This is called identifying the problem. Problems are always a conflict of needs.

Partner A wants to curb spending in order to insure that they will be ok financially if something were to happen to change their current financial situation. (security) Partner B seems to want to be able to buy without conflict when a need arises. (flexibility) So in order to solve the problem they need to come up with a solution whereby both partners' needs are met. In other words, a solution where they have sufficient reserves to reduce the anxiety of Partner A, and the flexibility to allow Partner B to make needed purchases.

Once the needs are identified, there are a multitude of solutions to the problem.

The next step would be for each person to "brainstorm" as many solutions to the problem as they can. It is not necessary to evaluate the solutions at this point, that comes later. The purpose of this step is to generate as many possible solutions, no matter how outrageous it may seem. Getting creative with solutions increases the probability of solving the problem.

The next step is to evaluate the solutions. The first part of this is to eliminate any solutions that would not work for BOTH partners. If it will not work for both, then it is not a solution. Remember, we are focusing on a win/win solution. After those choices have been eliminated, we identify two things about each remaining solution. This first is "what is the likelihood that this solution will solve the problem?" The Second is "Are both parties willing to do it?" Even if it is a great solution, if one of the parties is not willing to do it,

then the solution will undoubtedly fail. After this discussion, the parties agree on a solution. Many times this is a combination of solutions from both sides.

The next step is developing an action plan. Who does what by when. Solutions should always be time limited. For example, Partner A and partner B decided to create a saving account and a spending account. They agreed to each put a certain amount of money into each every month. The savings account was not to be touched unless there was an emergency. The spending account was to be discussed each month as to how best to spend the money, or if it would be set aside and put towards a larger purchase. Partner A sets up the accounts and Partner B sets up automatic withdrawals from their checks into each account every month. They decided to try this for 60 days. By setting a time frame to the solution, the final step can be accomplished. The final step is evaluation. Both parties sit down together at the end of the “trial period” and decided how well the solution worked for each of them. This provides an opportunity to modify the solution and make improvements to it. If the solution did not work at all, usually this means that the parties did not adequately identify their needs, so they begin back at step one.

PROBLEM SOLVING

1. IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM
2. BRAINSTORM SOLUTIONS
3. ELIMINATE ANY SOLUTIONS THAT DO NOT WORK FOR BOTH PARTIES
4. EVALUATE THE REMAINING SOLUTIONS
5. DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN
6. IMPLEMENT THE PLAN FOR A TIME SPECIFIC PERIOD
7. EVALUATE THE SUCCESS OF THE PLAN

By following these steps, people can learn to appropriately resolve conflict. Resolution of conflict is only possible when a cooperative approach is taken, otherwise the conflict will continue to resurface, and damage can be done to the relationship.

BOUNDARIES

Personal boundaries are limits that we set to protect ourselves, our time and our energy. They are our personal rules that help us define who we are, what we will do, what we won't do, and what is acceptable to us from others. Well-defined, established and enforced boundaries help to reduce conflict in our relationships. Others are clear about what we will and will not accept in our personal relationships. Setting boundaries is crucial to emotionally healthy relationships. They help to maintain balance, created interdependence. Boundaries that are too rigid lead to isolation and loneliness. Boundaries that are too flexible decrease our sense of value in our relationships and can lead to resentments when others cross our boundaries.

TYPES OF BOUNDARIES

PHYSICAL: Physical boundaries include our personal space and our personal property. We have the authority to express who gets to touch us and in what way, and who has access to our personal property and for what purpose.

EMOTIONAL: Emotional boundaries include our feelings beliefs, behaviors, choices, relationships and responsibilities. In other words, we are fully responsible for all of these in our lives.

RELATIONAL: Relational boundaries determine who we create and maintain relationships with in our lives. In other words, who are the “safe” people with whom we interact?

UNHEALTHY BOUNDARIES: Unhealthy boundaries exist whenever we fail to honor, express, or enforce our boundaries, or when we refuse to honor the boundaries of others.

HEALTHY BOUNDARIES: Separate our thoughts, feelings and behaviors from those of other people. Allow us to appropriately share personal information in a way that is comfortable. Protect our physical space from intrusion. Have equal partnership in our relationships. Healthy boundaries respects that others people's wants and need are important, my own wants and needs are important. However it also realizes that other people's wants and need are not more important than mine, and mine are not more important than theirs. Healthy boundaries show a sense of respect for self and for others. This is the same belief that is addressed in the lessons on assertive communication and problem solving.

HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

Healthy boundaries help us know who we are. They help us understand our separateness from others. They define who we are, and who we are not; what we believe and what we do not believe; what we think, feel, prefer, desire, etc. To understand the basics of boundaries, complete the following:

I am a (list as many as you can come up with)

Things I like are (list as many as you can come up with)

Things I don't like are (list as many as you can come up with)

STAYING IN YOUR OWN YARD



YOU

THOUGHTS

FEELINGS

BEHAVIORS

OTHERS

THOUGHTS

FEELINGS

BEHAVIORS

Your thoughts, feelings and behaviors are uniquely yours. There is no one else in this world that thinks, feels or acts exactly the same way that you do. While these do not entirely define you, they make up a huge part of who you are. They are based upon a myriad of factors such as age, race, gender, religion, nationality, and birth order. Every experience that you have ever had in your life contributes to how you think, feel and act. This is your yard, and it is what you are responsible for. **THIS IS YOUR YARD.**

The same goes for every other person in your life. They are unique and no one else thinks, feels or acts exactly like they do. It does not define them, but makes up a huge part of who they are, and it is what they are responsible for. **THIS IS THEIR YARD.**

Healthy boundaries are all about STAYING IN YOUR OWN YARD!!!

When we try to control how other people think, feel or act we have left our yard, and are trying to control their yard. When another person tries to change how we think, feel or act, they have crossed over into our yard. Instead of trying to change what is in someone else's yard, people with healthy boundaries focus on what is within their own yard. To clarify, if someone does something that upsets you, the tendency is to try to get them to discontinue the behavior. In other words "You be different so I feel better". Usually this is met with resistance from the other person. Instead focusing on changing the other person, someone with healthy boundaries will focus on changing their thoughts or behaviors in order to resolve the feeling.

One day several friends were meeting for lunch. Denise has a big project due the next day and decides that she should skip lunch and focus on the project. She sends the same text message to all of her friends to cancel. She receives responses from each. Joann replies “Ok”. Suzanne replies “Good luck, let me know if you need any help” and Mary Ann replies with “That why we don’t ever count on you”. This example illustrates that the response are about the friends, and not about Denise. If it was about Denise she would have received the same text message from all of her friends. Their responses are about them. Joann is the laid back one in the group and takes everything in stride. Suzanne is a caretaker, and Mary Ann takes everything personally. Mary Ann’s response upset Denise and hurt her feelings. Her first instinct was to text Mary Ann back to further explain so that Mary Ann would not be upset with her. This would be focusing on changing Mary Ann’s yard. Denise decided not to reply and instead to re-evaluate her relationship with Mary Ann and no longer make plans with her. Denise realized that she wanted friends who would support her decisions instead of friends that would blame her for them. This was Denise focusing on what was in her yard; her thoughts, her feelings and her behaviors, instead of trying to control those of Mary Ann.

Describe a time when you tried to change someone's thoughts, feelings or behaviors

[illegible]

How could you have handled that situation differently so that you were “Staying in your own yard”?

Describe a time when someone tried to change your thoughts, feelings or behaviors

How would you have preferred that they handle the situation?

HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

Healthy boundaries help us build positive relationships with others. Some relationships are not our choice, but we are still responsible for our behavior within these relationships. It is our responsibility to set limits within each of our relationships. We get to determine how much of ourselves, our time, and our energy we will invest in our relationships. Sometimes our relationships demand more of our time or energy than we would prefer to invest. It is in these situations where we have allowed someone else to determine our boundaries instead of setting them ourselves. When we take care of other people's needs at the expense of our own it will lead to resentment. It is our responsibility to take care of ourselves first, and take care of others second. This goes against what many of us were taught, however failure to make yourself the priority in your own life increases anger and resentment.

Healthy boundaries decrease the need for defensiveness. We use defense mechanisms as a form of protection and to create emotional distance in our relationships. When we have healthy boundaries we rely less on defensiveness and more on assertiveness to do this. As a result, we establish and maintain healthier relationships. When a person becomes defensive in a conversation or argument the chances of understanding greatly diminish. Once we become defensive we stop listening to the other person's point of view. With healthy boundaries, we can listen to the other person without reacting defensively, and we can maintain the connection.

List some ways you act when you become defensive:

What are some things you can do if you notice yourself becoming defensive?

What are some things you can do if you notice the other person becoming defensive?

Who are some people in your life that you need to set healthier boundaries with?

What can you do to set and enforce these boundaries?

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Stress is the body's reaction to any real or perceived threat. When we experience stress, the fight/flight/freeze response is activated. Most people with problematic anger are prone to the "fight" option of the stress response. Stress effects every system in the body, effects mood regulation, and effects behavior. By implementing strategies to identify and reduce stress, we are better able to emotionally regulate and decrease the frequency and intensity of the anger response.

SOME EXAMPLES OF THE EFFECTS OF STRESS

On your body

On your mood

On your behavior

Headache

Anxiety

Overeating or undereating

Muscle tension or pain

Restlessness

Angry outbursts

Chest pain

Lack of motivation or focus

Drug or alcohol misuse

Fatigue

Feeling overwhelmed

Tobacco use

Change in sex drive

Irritability or anger

Social withdrawal

Stomach upset

Sadness or depression

Exercising less often

Sleep problems

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Which of these do you notice in yourself when you get stressed?

What are your early warning signs that your stress is building?

What do you notice about your anger response when you are stressed?

What things, experiences, circumstances, etc trigger your stress?

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Stress and anger are closely related. As stress increases, it becomes more difficult to regulate emotions, and anger can be one of the emotions which is especially challenging. There are some basic techniques to help manage stress. The first is physical activity. When the fight/flight system has been triggered, the body expects some sort of physical activity. It expects us to either fight or run away. Without physical activity the body does not always know that the stressor has passed and does not get the signals to reset. Just taking a walk can often be enough physical activity to calm down the central nervous system and help reset the stress response. Building regular physical activity into your day can help keep your stress levels within a healthy range. If you stress increases, so should your physical activity.

In addition to physical activity, we must also focus on the other physical needs of our bodies. We need to eat (as healthy as we can), drink water, and get enough sleep. Insufficient amounts of any of these can make it more difficult to manage our stress and therefore our anger.

These are the basics of stress management, and without these: food, water, sleep and exercise, nothing else will be as effective. In addition to these basics, additional stress management is often helpful to keep our stress within a healthy range. Stress management activities are ones that calm down the central nervous system, increase life enjoyment and satisfaction, improve our social connections, and improve mood. They vary from person to person. By identifying what methods work for you, you can implement changes to better manage your stress, thereby making it easier to manage your anger.

There are some activities which may seem to help with stress, but often are inefficient or ineffective. Sometimes they have the opposite effect. When stressed, it is best to refrain from the use of alcohol, drugs, tobacco, and caffeine. While initially these may seem to help, they only provide a temporary solution and do nothing to reset the stress response. In addition, tv, video games, and surfing the web can increase stress, instead of reducing it.

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Complete the following worksheet with activities that you think would help you manage your stress.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____

ABSTAIN FROM THESE BEHAVIORS WHEN **ANGRY**

There are certain behaviors that can increase the anger response. Below is a list of things to stop when feeling angry. Once we have reached a certain point in the anger response, certain behaviors are no longer effective for de-escalating the situation. Instead, employ the Time Out technique described previously.

- 1) STOP SPEAKING
- 2) STOP STAYING (TAKE A TIME OUT)
- 3) STOP STARING
- 4) STOP INTERRUPTING (NO MATTER WHAT)
- 5) STOP CURSING
- 6) STOP NAME-CALLING
- 7) STOP THREATENING
- 8) STOP POINTING
- 9) STOP YELLING OR RAISING YOUR VOICE
- 10) STOP TALKING IN A “MEAN TONE”
- 11) STOP BEING SARCASTIC
- 12) STOP MOCKING
- 13) STOP THROWING THINGS
- 14) STOP SLAMMING DOORS OR BANGING WALLS
- 15) STOP ANY NON-AFFECTIONATE TOUCHING
- 16) STOP SIGHING
- 17) STOP ROLLING YOUR EYES
- 18) STOP CRITICIZING
- 19) STOP LECTURING

SELF ESTEEM AND ANGER

Self Esteem is a sense of personal worth and ability that is fundamental to an individual's identity. Family relationships during childhood are believed to play a crucial role in its development. Parents may foster self-esteem by expressing affection and support for the child as well as by helping the child set realistic goals for achievement instead of imposing unreachably high standards. Low self-esteem leads to the development of a personality that excessively craves approval and affection and exhibits an extreme desire for personal achievement. According to personality theory, low self-esteem leads people to strive to overcome their perceived inferiorities and to develop strengths or talents in compensation.

There are 3 basic principles of self-esteem:

1. It is better to like yourself than to dislike yourself.
2. It is better to have a realistic view of yourself rather than an unrealistic (overly positive or overly negative) view of yourself.
3. It is better to be aware of the beliefs you hold about yourself rather than to be unaware of how you view yourself.

People with lower self-esteem engage in several behaviors that contribute to and perpetuate the reduction of feelings of self-worth:

Belittling yourself or your accomplishments

Not taking care of yourself, abusing or neglecting yourself

Being overly critical and not allowing room for mistakes

Depriving yourself of fulfilling wants and needs because of feelings of unworthiness or inadequacy

Which (if any) of these behaviors have you or do you engage in:

People with appropriate levels of self-esteem engage in vastly different behaviors:

Approaching situations with an optimistic attitude, believing that they will be accepted as themselves

Confidence in their own thoughts and opinions and able to trust their judgment and reactions

Ability to be assertive with others, set appropriate boundaries, and have healthy friendships and relationships

Ability to risk with their creative ideas and in their relationships

Which (if any) of these behaviors have you or do you engage in:

There are 3 core beliefs that are present in those with appropriate levels of self-esteem:

1. I am responsible for my own choices and actions
2. I expect to succeed in my endeavors and I have realistic expectations of my abilities
3. No one is perfect and everyone make mistakes

Role of Self-Esteem in Anger Response

The research has shown that individuals with unreasonably high self-esteem (narcissistic characteristics or personality) are more prone to problematic anger due to the belief that they are right and everyone else is wrong. They perceive any disagreement with their opinions as a personal slight or a direct attack, and will defend their position, sometimes aggressively. In other words, they cannot tolerate being wrong, or having someone think that they are wrong. On the other end of the spectrum, those with low self-esteem can also experience problematic anger. When there is a lack of self-confidence or de-valuing of the self, one is more likely to take situations personally and to experience criticism and judgment (regardless of whether or not it is actually present). People with lower self-esteem react to these situations either in anger, or by withdrawing.

Mary has a tendency to be 10-15 minutes late for work every day. Her boss has talked to her about her tardiness on several occasions, and has instructed Mary to make a better effort to be on time.

How do you think Mary would respond if she has unreasonably high self-esteem?

How do you think Mary would respond if she has unreasonably low self-esteem?

How do you think Mary would respond if she has an appropriate level of self-esteem?

The situation is the same, but Mary's reaction will vary depending on her perception of the situation. Mary's view of herself is crucial to her ability to analyze and understand the situation, and can compromise her objectivity.

Your attitude towards yourself affects everything in your life. Take a few minutes to complete this evaluation. Read each of the following statements and decide how often each would be true of you. The more honest you are with your answers, the more benefit you will get from the results.

NEVER	4
RARELY	3
OCCASSIONALLY	2
USUALLY	1
ALWAYS	0

- _____ 1. I AM A HAPPY PERSON
- _____ 2. I CAN TAKE PRETTY GOOD CARE OF MYSELF
- _____ 3. I LIKE WHERE I LIVE
- _____ 4. I FEEL GOOD ABOUT THE WAY I DRESS
- _____ 5. I FEEL THAT I AM INTELLIGENT
- _____ 6. I ENJOY FACING EACH NEW DAY
- _____ 7. I FEEL THAT PEOPLE GENERALLY ADMIRE ME
- _____ 8. I AM AN OPTIMISTIC PERSON
- _____ 9. I LIKE TO GO OUT AND BE SEEN AT PARTIES
- _____ 10. I FEEL THAT I AM A UNIQUE PERSON
- _____ 11. I FEEL THAT PEOPLE APPRECIATE ME AND DO NOT TAKE ME FOR GRANTED
- _____ 12. IF I REALLY SET MY MIND TO IN, I CAN DO ABOUT ANYTHING
- _____ 13. I AM ASHAMED OF VERY LITTLE IN MY LIFE
- _____ 14. I FEEL GOOD WHEN I LOOK AT MYSELF IN A FULL LENGTH MIRROR
- _____ 15. I FEEL THAT I AM IN CONTROL OF MY DESTINY
- _____ 16. I AM AN ENERGETIC PERSON
- _____ 17. I WORRY VERY LITTLE ABOUT MY ACTIONS
- _____ 18. PEOPLE THINK OF ME AS A KIND PERSON
- _____ 19. I AM REASONABLY PLEASED WITH MY WEIGHT
- _____ 20. MY FRIENDS WOULD DEFINITELY HELP ME IF I WERE IN TROUBLE
- _____ 21. I AM CONTENT WITH MY ABILITIES
- _____ 22. I FEEL THAT I AM STILL GROWING AS A PERSON
- _____ 23. I AM IMPORTANT TO THE LIVES OF OTHERS
- _____ 24. I FEEL COMFORTABLE IN CONVERSATION
- _____ 25. I USUALLY FIND IT EASY TO FORGIVE THOSE WHO HAVE WRONGED ME
- _____ 26. IF I HAVE A PROBLEM WITH SOMEONE, I CAN TALK TO THEM ABOUT IT
- _____ 27. IT IS DIFFICULT TO DISCOURAGE ME
- _____ 28. I AM GENERALLY PLEASED WITH ME LIFE
- _____ 29. I AM AN OPEN MINDED PERSON
- _____ 30. I FEEL COMFORTABLE MEETING AND TALKING TO NEW PEOPLE
- _____ 31. IF I WERE TO DIE TODAY, REPLACING ME WOULD BE HARD
- _____ 32. I FEEL COMFORTABLE OPENING UP TO OTHERS
- _____ 33. I AM PLEASED WITH MY PHYSICAL APPEARANCE
- _____ 34. IF A GENIE OFFERED ME THE CHANCE TO GREATLY CHANGE MYSELF, I WOULD TURN HIM DOWN
- _____ 35. I FEEL BETTER OFF THAN MOST PEOPLE I MEET
- _____ 36. OTHER WISH THEIR LIVES WERE LIKE MINE
- _____ 37. I AM PLEASED WITH MY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- ____ 38. I FEEL COMFORTABLE AROUND THOSE OF THE OPPOSITE SEX (OR SAME SEX IF GAY)
- ____ 39. NOTHING IS TOO GOOD FOR ME
- ____ 40. I ENJOY WEARING NEW CLOTHES
- ____ 41. PEOPLE VALUE MY OPINION
- ____ 42. I CAN MAKE A MISTAKE WITHOUT IT RUINING MY WHOLE DAY
- ____ 43. I AM WILLING TO STAND UP FOR WHAT I BELIEVE, IN SPITE OF PRESSURE FROM OTHERS
- ____ 44. IF I WERE A MEMBER OF THE OPPOSITE SEX, I WOULD ASK ME FOR A DATE (OR SAME SEX IF GAY)
- ____ 45. IF I HAD A CHANCE TO BEGIN AGAIN, I WOULD NOT CHANGE MUCH IN MY LIFE
- ____ 46. I AM WELL LIKED BY OTHERS
- ____ 47. I AM A GOOD FRIEND
- ____ 48. SPECIAL IS A WORD THAT DESCRIBES ME
- ____ 49. I AM CONTECT WITH BEING MYSELF AND WOULD NOT CHANGE PLACES WITH ANYONE ELSE IN THE WORLD.
- ____ 50. IF I WERE SOMEONE ELSE, I WOULD WANT ME AS A FRIEND
- ____ TOTAL SCORE

0-50 OVERLY HIGH VIEW OF SELF, UNREALISTIC POSITIVE EXPECTATIONS.
HIGH PROBABILITY OF PROBLEMATIC ANGER

51-100 HEALTHY LEVEL OF SELF-ESTEEM, THINK HIGHLY OF SELF, BUT WITH
REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS. LOW RISK OF PROBLEMATIC ANGER

101-150 BORDERLINE LOW LEVEL OF SELF-ESTEEM, OVERLY PESSIMISTIC VIEW OF
SELF, BUT STILL ABLE TO SEE POSITIVE QUALITIES.
POTENTIAL RISK OF PROBLEMATIC ANGER

151-200 OVERLY LOW VIEW OF SELF, UNREALISTIC NEGATIVE EXPECTATIONS OF
SELF.
HIGH PROBABILITY OF PROBLEMATIC ANGER

Ways to build self-esteem:

Our view of ourselves is fluid. It can change depending on many different variables and the importance of these variables in our lives. Think about a time when you were happy at work and how that contributed to feeling better about yourself. Now think about a time when you disliked your job or work situation, and how that contributed to your feelings about yourself. We cannot always immediately change our circumstances, but we do have the ability to improve our self-esteem no matter what is going on in our lives.

There are several proven ways to enhance self-esteem:

- 1) Make a list of 10 of your strengths or things that you like about yourself. Write these down on index cards and review the list every morning when you wake up, and every night before going to sleep.
- 2) At the end of each day, write down 1 thing that you feel you handled well, even if it is a small thing and reward yourself for this accomplishment.
- 3) Take better care of yourself through appropriate nutrition, exercise, stress management, and rest.
- 4) Take time to play, do things that you enjoy, and pamper yourself on a regular basis.
- 5) Use positive affirmations to change negative self-talk.

I am a lovable and capable person

I am unique and special

My feelings and needs are important

I trust and respect myself, and am worthy of the respect of others

I am able to ask for help when I need it. Asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness.

List your own affirmations below:

[illegible]

MANAGING RESENTMENTS

Chronic Anger is due to a fixation on painful or humiliating memories from the past. These memories are stockpiled and generate hostile reactions when individuals are confronted with situations that remind them of the past. **Chronic anger** is the result of poor coping skills. When individuals lack skills necessary to express and resolve angry feelings emanating from emotional pain and loss. Anger becomes a mechanism for controlling other, creating emotional distance and defending against shame.

Transforming Anger to Resentment

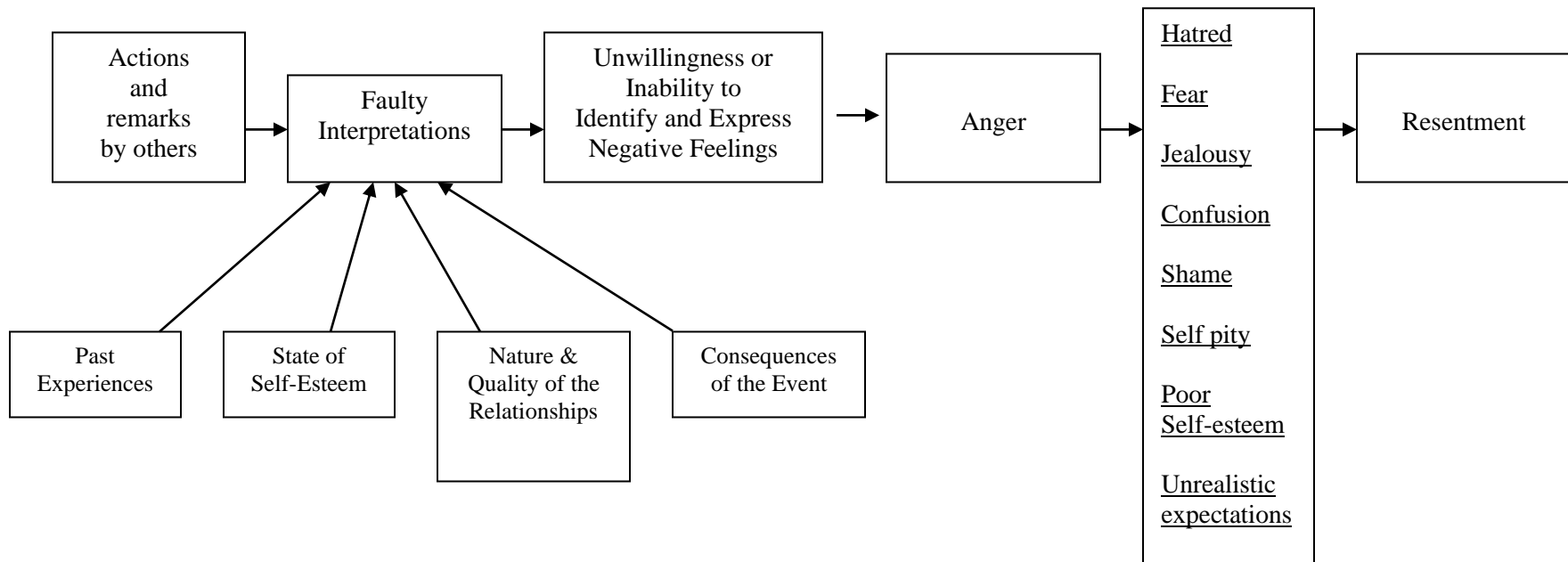
1. **Fear of Abandonment:** Belief that open and honest expression of feelings will lead to rejection.
2. **Feeling Threatened:** Fearing the vulnerability that self-disclosure creates.
3. **Learned helplessness:** Belief that we are powerless over our lives and there is no hope for change.
4. **Secondary Gains:** Resentments provide payoffs. Example: (Not responsible for your actions) (Get Attention)
5. **Unresolved anger** turns into resentments.

Factors that contribute to the development of resentment.

1. The person develops **automatic negative thought patterns** that lead to a mood altering state. What are some of the thoughts people tell themselves that contribute the feeling of resentment?
2. A person's **self-esteem** plays a role in how he/she interprets a situation. (The lower the self-esteem, the more likely a person will take a given situation personally.)
3. Another factor the influences resentment is the **nature and quality of the relationship**. (the closer the relationship, the deeper the hurt, and the more likelihood of resentment.)

Understanding Resentments

(Clancy, 1996)



TYPES OF RESENTMENTS

SELF DIRECTED:

This is hostility that is focused on the self, also known as self-recrimination. We continually focus on our past mistakes and blame ourselves for the choices that we have made. This manifests itself with many “should” statements. “I should have driven slower” or “I shouldn’t have yelled at my daughter”.

How to heal self-directed resentments:

- a. Identify negative self-talk
- b. Explore feelings
- c. Develop strategies to discontinue pattern of negative self-talk
- d. Work to forgive self

OUTWARDLY DIRECTED:

This type of resentment is based upon negative perceptions of others’ intentions. We blame, project or shift responsibility for our actions onto others. This manifests itself with many “would” statements. “I wouldn’t have to yell if you didn’t make me so angry” or “I wouldn’t have hit you if you hadn’t yelled at me first”

How to heal outwardly directed resentments:

- a. Learn to take responsibility for your own actions
- b. Work to give others “the benefit of the doubt”
- c. Use “I” statements
- d. Strive to let go of the past

OTHERS DIRECTED TOWARDS YOU:

This type of resentment is directed towards us by others as a result of our past behaviors. This is especially difficult because we cannot change the past. Part of this type of resentment contains an element of entitlement. This manifests itself with “ought” statements. “I ought to get that promotion but the boss hates me”.

How to heal others directed resentments:

- a. Be non-defensive by challenging the tendency to “mind read” or assign motive to others
- b. Make amends
- c. Modify behavior
- d. Take steps to move forward

You are responsible for directing energy toward a positive end. Blaming yourself or others for past behaviors is unproductive, keeps you stuck, and leads to anger relapse.

Life Law: There is Power in Forgiveness

Hurt, hate, anger, frustration, and bitterness are some of the most powerful experiences you'll have. They are so powerful that when they are present, they absolutely change who you are and push all other feelings and emotions into the background.

Turning Forgiveness Into Action:

The first thing you have to understand is that forgiveness is not a feeling; it is a decision.

Forgiveness is for us, not the person that hurt us!

Now, let's make sure we're on the same page here. Anger is a fact of life. It is an emotion that should not be stifled. If you have been wronged, you should feel wronged and you should say so. It's important that you correct someone who needs correcting, but then it's important to do one other thing: to let the anger go.

Think about a time in your life when someone said something truly ugly about you. Didn't that hurt go on for a long time?

If you really get hurt, and if you get hurt enough, then you'll start withdrawing emotionally. You'll withdraw on in one of three ways:

- 1. You'll live behind an emotional safety wall, keeping yourself away from others so they can't hurt you again.** You simply won't let yourself care or feel. You will get emotional when you read a book or watch a sad movie, maybe, but you're too scared to take the real-life risk of needing or wanting anyone. **You will shut people out and keep those who care at a distance.**
- 2. You'll become sarcastic, a master of the put-down, thinking that's better to get others before they get you.** You're thinking is that if you can reject people first; then you won't be hurt. **"I pushed them away from me, so it was my choice, not theirs."**
- 3. You will become like a robot and turn off your feelings.** Good or bad. Your theory to life becomes: **"If I don't care, I don't hurt. If I don't want, I don't lose."**

When we choose not to forgive, we are choosing to allow the person that hurt us to continue hurting us.

We put ourselves in an emotional prison.

We become angry, resentful, and bitter.

We cannot control another person's actions, but we can choose how we will react to each situation in our lives. We can find the strength to forgive and say, "I will not hate you another day. I will not invest any more energy into this. I will forgive you so I can be free."

When you forgive a person, you thrive in spite of him or her. You blossom. You realize that as good as it feels to hold a grudge and to be righteously angry, overcoming a grudge can be a much better feeling.

- ✓ Realize that emotional wounds scar like physical wounds.
- ✓ Remember that withdrawing emotionally can affect you physically
- ✓ To hold on to previous hurts poisons all potential relationships.
- ✓ Forgiveness is a choice that you are entitled to.
- ✓ No matter who you are, you are worth it.

12. Managing Resentments

This worksheet will help you identify and work through personal resentments affecting your recovery. Please answer the following question.

1. What is your greatest personal resentment?

2. What person(s) does this resentment involve? (Remember, resentments can be directed toward yourself.)

3. How long have you held this resentment?

4. Have you attempted to resolve it? YES _____ NO _____

5. If the answer is unresolved, what negative consequences has it created?

What secondary gains have you realized?

6. Having completed this exercise, can you think of alternative strategies you might use to resolve the resentment? YES _____ NO _____

If you answered YES, what action can you take?

Worksheet for Forgiveness

Below are five steps that if followed will allow you to achieve emotional closure and take your power back.

- 1. Search your mind and heart and identify all of those people who, in your opinion, have hurt you in some way that has filled your heart with negative emotions. List these people below. If there are more, list them on the side of the page.**

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

- 2. Now describe specifically what it is they have done to you and therefore, what you must forgive to get emotional closure on.**

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

- 3. Now search your mind and heart and identify your resolution for the hurt they have caused. Do you need to confront them? Or can you handle this entirely within you? Do you need to write them a letter? Do you need to call the police? What is the least thing you can do that will allow you to say. "This is it, it is all over."**

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

- 4. Now write the words you need to say to yourself to claim the freedom that comes from forgiveness.**

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

- 5. Last, take just a moment to write down how you will feel once you are free of the negative emotions that have locked you in a bond with this person.**

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Congratulations! If you have managed to complete all of the exercises in this book, you now possess some very powerful information. You have a full toolbox of ways to better manage your anger response, improve your health, and repair your relationships. For those of you who would like to continue their healing and growth, we have a master level program. The 5 Antidotes to Anger is the continuation of this text and a guide for those of you who would like to move beyond anger management into actual anger resolution. I wish to leave you with the following:

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS FOR MANAGING ANGER

1. FOCUS ON TAKING CARE OF YOUR PHYSICAL SELF. EAT REGULARLY, GET ENOUGH SLEEP, DRINK PLENTY OF WATER AND GET SOME REGULAR EXERCISE. WHEN OUR CONSTITUTION IS STRONG (WELL RESTED, WELL FED, LOWER STRESS) WE ARE BETTER ABLE TO EMOTIONALLY REGULATE.
2. AVOID ANY SITUATIONS THAT MAKE YOU ANGRY IF YOU CAN. FOR THOSE HIGHER RISK SITUATIONS HAVE A PLAN FOR HOW YOU WILL HANDLE IT. BY THINKING AHEAD YOU CAN AVOID SOME SITUATIONS THAT CATCH YOU BY SURPRISE AND YOU CAN FOCUS ON BEING PROACTIVE VERSUS REACTIVE.
3. PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR ANGER RESPONSE. IF YOU NOTICE YOUR ANGER ESCALATING, BE WILLING TO TAKE A TIME OUT.
4. FOCUS ON PROBLEM RESOLUTION AS OPPOSED TO BEING RIGHT. COMPROMISE, NEGOTIATION, AND MEDIATION ARE STRENGTHS NOT WEAKNESSES THAT IMPROVE INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS.
5. LISTEN FIRST WITH THE INTENTION OF UNDERSTANDING THE OTHER PERSON. MAKE SURE THAT YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT ANOTHER PERSON IS REALLY SAYING TO YOU BEFORE YOU RESPOND. THE RULE IS THAT WE SHOULD LISTEN TWICE AS MUCH AS WE SPEAK.
6. IF YOU NEED TO RESPOND, FIRST TAKE A DEEP BREATH, EXHALE FULLY AND PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR VOLUME AND TONE. USE "I" STATEMENTS INSTEAD OF YOU STATEMENTS.

7. WHENEVER POSSIBLE FOCUS ON EMPATHY, COMPASSION AND UNDERSTANDING. THESE HELP REDUCE THE ANGER RESPONSE.
8. IN ADDITION TO AN ANGER MANAGEMENT JOURNAL, KEEP A GRATITUDE JOURNAL. IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO BE ANGRY AND GRATEFUL AT THE SAME TIME.
9. WORK TO FORGIVE OTHERS FOR THEIR MISTAKES AND WRONG DOINGS. HOLDING GRUDGES LEADS TO RESENTMENT. UNRESOLVED RESENTMENT BECOMES HOSTILITY. HOSTILITY DESTROYS RELATIONSHIPS.
10. MAKE YOURSELF A PRIORITY IN YOUR OWN LIFE. TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF, BUT NOT AT THE EXPENSE OF OTHERS. BRING THINGS INTO YOUR LIFE THAT CREATE JOY FOR YOU, WHEN WE ARE JOYFUL WE ARE LESS PRONE TO ANGER.

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