

# ANGER MANAGEMENT HANDOUT

## RECOGNISING ANGER

### Triggers and Warning Signs

One of the first steps in managing your anger is to identify what types of situations usually trigger your anger. Make a list of the things which usually set you off, for example:

- being cut off in traffic
- running late for an appointment
- other people running late
- your son/daughter leaving their schoolbag in the hall
- your partner not putting away the dishes
- a colleague falling behind on a project

### How much control do you have over situations?

Some of these situations you may be able to avoid, such as planning ahead to avoid running late. Other situations are less in your control, such as being cut off in traffic, but what you can control is your reaction.

### List your warning signs

Once you have finished listing your common trigger situations, make a separate list of the warning signs for your anger.

What is it that usually happens in your body when you get angry?

Becoming aware of your body's alarm bells helps you to spot anger early on, which gives you a better chance of putting other coping strategies into practice. Some common warnings are:

- tightness in chest
- feeling hot or flushed, sweating
- grinding teeth
- tense muscles or clenched fists
- pounding or racing heart
- biting your nails

### Why Am I Angry?

When you notice these warning signs, stop and ask yourself what it is that is making you angry. Often there will be something going on that is quite reasonable to feel angry about, so allow yourself to acknowledge this. But it is also important to be clear about the cause of our anger so that we don't respond in a way that is out of proportion (e.g. staying angry all day about someone else using up the last of the milk) or take out the anger on the wrong person (e.g. getting angry at family members when it is your boss you are angry with).

# **ANGER MANAGEMENT HANDOUT**

## **ANGER MANAGEMENT COPING STRATEGIES**

Here are a few techniques you can try when you notice the first signs of anger.

### **Time Out**

Physically remove yourself from a situation by walking away for a period of time. This will give you a chance to 'cool down' and give your rational/ logical brain a chance to process things through before you act.

Example:

If you notice yourself becoming angry during an argument with your partner, say "I need to take time out, let's talk about this calmly when I get back" and then go for a walk.

### **Distraction**

If you feel you have no control over a situation it can be useful to distract yourself from it. To do this try the following or anything else you can think of:

- Count to ten
- Listen to music
- Call a friend and chat about something else
- Do some housework

Example:

If you are stuck in traffic and getting angry, put on the radio and try to find a song you like, or count the number of times the chorus is sung.

### **Silly Humour**

Although it is not always possible to just 'laugh your problems away,' you can often use humour to help you to take a step back from your anger.

Example:

If you are angry with a colleague and refer to them as 'a stupid clown,' think about what this means literally. Imagine or draw them dressed in a clown suit, with big shoes and a red nose. If you picture this image every time they do something which bothers you, it will be much easier to keep things in perspective.

### **Relaxation**

Just as our bodies are strongly affected by our emotions, we can also influence our emotional state with our physical state. Relaxation techniques, such as taking slow deep breaths or progressively tensing and relaxing each of your muscle groups, can help to reduce anger.

## **ANGER MANAGEMENT HANDOUT**

### **Self-Talk and Positive Thinking**

How you are thinking affects how you are feeling, so focussing on negative thoughts such as “this is so unfair” will maintain the angry feeling. Make a list of more balanced statements you can say to yourself before, during and after difficult situations.

Example:

Before: I know I can handle this, I have strategies to keep my anger under control and can take time out if I need to.

During: Remember to keep breathing and stay relaxed. There is no need to take this personally. I can manage this.

After: I handled that well. Even though I felt angry I didn't raise my voice too much and I think I got a better result

### **Assertiveness and Practice**

Another key strategy in managing anger is to learn to be assertive. Assertiveness means expressing your point of view in a clear way, without becoming aggressive.

Finally, because anger is often an automatic response, all of these techniques require a lot of practice.