

*Big Brothers Big Sisters*  
*Abbotsford Mission Ridge Meadows*  
**Mentor Learning Series**

4



***Anger & Self-Management***

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This module provides the learner with the opportunity to enhance their understanding of anger, its role in conflict, and ways to identify what triggers us and how we can manage our selves when we experience anger.



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## Introduction

Human beings have emotions, plain and simple. We all experience anger in varying degrees, depending on the situations we find ourselves in. Anger is generally experienced as a negative emotion, even though it is normal and healthy. It is how we or others behave when we are angry that is often destructive, uncomfortable and even frightening.

We learned about anger from our family of origin – our mom, dad, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and siblings. Through experience and observation, we each collected messages about anger – these beliefs play a big role in how much we allow anger to influence our lives.

Some common beliefs that people have about anger:

- ❖ Being angry means you are out of control
- ❖ It's not ok to be angry
- ❖ Emotions are childish and should be hidden
- ❖ Bodies and feelings get hurt when people get angry
- ❖ Nice girls don't get angry
- ❖ Showing emotion means that you are weak
- ❖ If someone bugs me, I have a right to be angry and in their face
- ❖ Anger gets me what I want
- ❖ Don't get mad, get even

**Activity: Reflection**

With a partner, finish these two sentences and discuss your responses. Use these two sentences to recall the messages you learned about anger and how people behaved when they were angry.

1. *"Something I learned about anger when I was growing up was..."*

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2. *"When people got angry, they..."*

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Anger is a normal, affective emotion. It is a self-preservation system. Anger signals us that there is a problem – it is an informer. It serves to help us block more painful emotions such as guilt, humiliation, fear, and sadness. It causes us to react when we perceive a threat, either physically or emotionally.

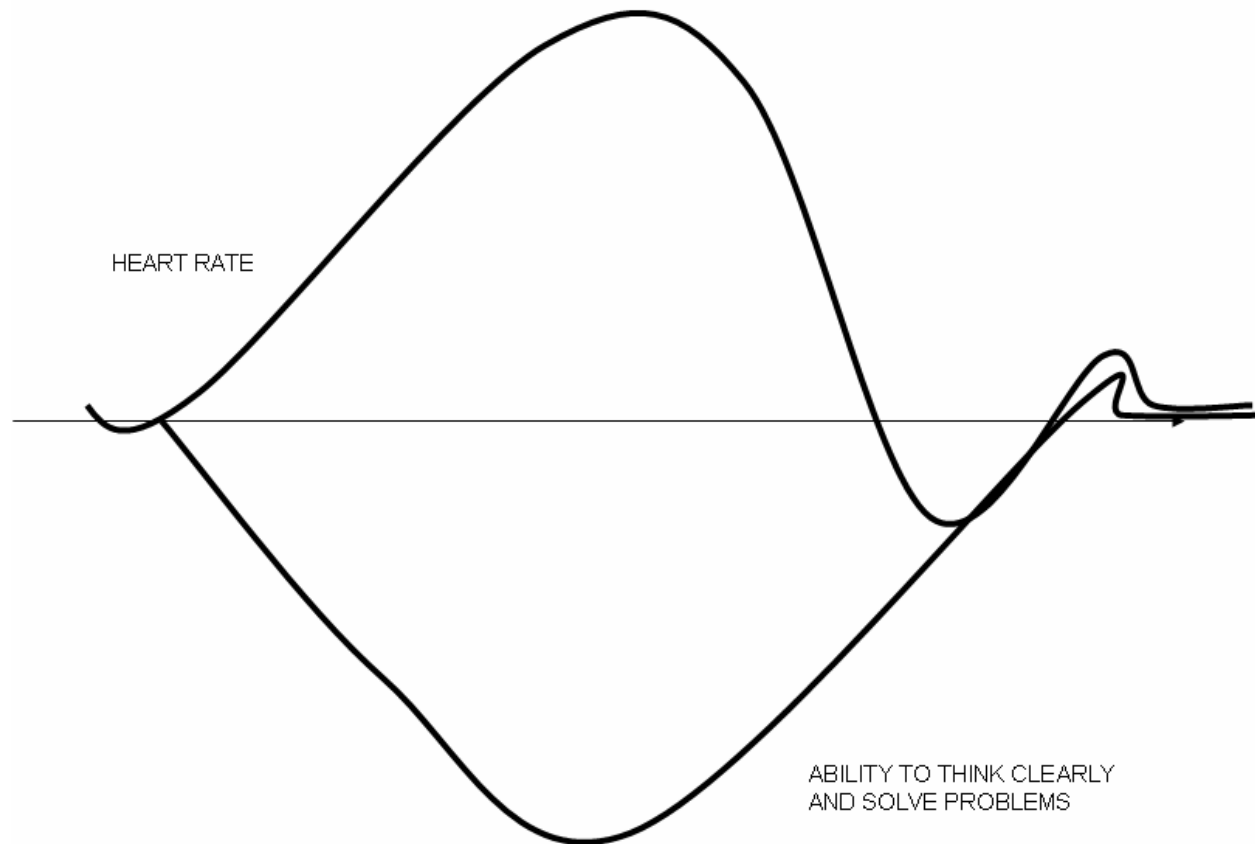
When used constructively, anger can assist us in working through differences. It is important to recognize that we can have strong emotions and not act on them.

**Ways People Deal With Their Anger**

- ❖ **Stuffing it**  
Some keep their anger inside and “implode”. Sometimes they do not even have an awareness that they are angry
- ❖ **Hiding it**  
Some hide their anger from others and seek revenge later, or use passive-aggressive actions
- ❖ **Venting it**  
Some dump their anger on others without regard for the other person's feelings. They explode like a volcano and often apologize afterwards
- ❖ **Displacing it**  
Some hide their anger from the legitimate source and take their anger out inappropriately on others or objects
- ❖ **Expressing it**  
Some tell others how they feel what the problem is

<p><b>Activity: Self-Analysis</b></p> <p>Think of three situations with three different people where you were angry. How did you deal with your anger? If your style was different in each situation, what factors influenced how you reacted?</p>

## Emotional Arousal Cycle



- ❖ When we feel challenged, our minds and bodies respond in a very primitive way called the “fight or flight” response.
- ❖ As our heart rate increases, our thinking becomes impaired, and we become less effective at problem solving. At the height of extreme arousal, we become highly egocentric, extremely emotional and are prone to impulsive acts where we say and do things that we likely wouldn’t dream of doing if we were calm.
- ❖ Once the crisis has passed and our heart rate returns to normal, we feel tired and often remorseful about our actions in the heat of the moment.



# Self-Talk

## Themes

Self talk is our inner voice. It is private and is what drives our feelings and behaviours. Self talk is what helps us to manage ourselves and resolve the conflict, or escalates us to a highly emotional state and distorted thinking. We can think at 450 words a minute. We speak at approximately 125 words a minute. We are capable of having a dialogue inside our heads at the same time we are having a conversation with another person.

There are common self-defeating self-talk themes:

### ❖ Self-righteous

- *"I don't need to take this kind of crap!"*
- *"I'll get her for this"*
- *"How dare he talk to me like that"*

### ❖ Judgmental/Blaming

- *"What an idiot"*
- *"How stupid can he be?"*
- *"This is all her fault"*

### ❖ Fix-it

- *"Maybe if I... or ...."*
- *"I've got to do something fast!"*

### ❖ Frightened Child

- *"I can't deal with this"*
- *"Get me outta here!"*
- *"This is a disaster – I'm doomed"*

### ❖ Victim/Martyr

- *"Why does this always happen to me?"*
- *"Here we go again.."*
- *"No matter how hard I try, nothing works"*
- *"I always get dumped on"*

### ❖ Self-Doubt

- *"I really blew it"*
- *"Maybe I don't know what I'm talking about"*
- *"I have no right to feel this way"*
- *"I must be out of line here"*



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Coping self talk scripts are useful to change your usual responses to being triggered. With practice, this process can become automatic and happen immediately (even if someone is yelling at you!)

**❖ Impulse**

What you feel like doing

- *"I feel like screaming... hitting..."*

**❖ Feeling**

Identify your own feelings

- *"I am frustrated... angry..."*

**❖ Cue**

Give yourself a verbal or visual cue

- *"Stop... hang on... whoa...see red..."*

**❖ Physical**

Prompt yourself to let go of the anger in your body

- *"Breathe...plant your feet...relax your jaw..."*

**❖ Reassurance**

Positive self talk

- *"I can handle this...be curious...one step at a time..."*

**❖ Shift**

Your judgement to curiosity

- *"What is going on for this person?"*

**❖ Take Action**

Get information, defuse, confront, disengage

- *"What are you upset about?... I stop listening when I'm sworn at..."*



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<b>Activity: Create Your Own Script</b>	
Impulse	
Feeling	
Cue	
Physical Prompt	
Reassurance	
Shift/ Take Action	



# Triggers

Triggers are thoughts and events that we perceive as a challenge, annoyance or threat

<b>Activity: Triggers</b>
List some of the words you hear that can trigger anger in you
List some of the behaviours you've experienced that can trigger anger in you
List some of the thoughts or memories you have that can trigger anger in you



## Managing Your Anger

<p><b>Activity: Reflection</b> Think of a time when you got angry with someone, and answer these questions...</p>
<p>1. What do you remember feeling like doing at the time? If you were to finish the sentence, "I was so mad, I felt like...", what would come next?</p>
<p>2. What do you remember feeling at the time? You were probably angry, but can you recall any other emotions, like guilt, fear, embarrassment?</p>
<p>3. What did you notice happening in your body? What happened to your heart rate, breathing, skin, hearing, etc.?</p>
<p>4. If you turned up the volume on your inner voice, what were you saying to yourself? What was your self-talk?</p>



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How useful were your responses at the time? What could you have said to yourself that might have been better? If you could do it all over again, what would you do differently?



## Final Reflections

1. Think back to a time when you used your anger in a destructive way? What was the outcome? After reviewing this module, how might you have handled it differently?

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2. What is your definition of anger?

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3. How do you think you can incorporate an awareness of your self talk in future situations? What are some positive self talk phrases that you can start to use?

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4. What alternatives can you think of to reacting in anger when you are triggered?

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5. How will you be able to use these skills to work effectively with your Little?

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## Taking It Back: Working with Your Little

Specific ideas to incorporate this module in your work with your Little:

### **Manage expectations and disappointments**

If you react strongly to something your Little does or says, you will run the risk of alienating him/her. Using self management skills will allow you to respond to the situation rather than react.

### **Manage conflict**

You can use the skills to work through disagreements or misunderstandings with each other. You can also model the skills to help the Little learn how to handle challenges in a more constructive way.

### **Encourage self management and reflection**

By modeling and role-playing with your Little, you will be able to assist him/her to respond to difficult situations in a more productive manner. Talking about events after the fact and reflect with him/her on impulses, thoughts and emotions, will help your Little to develop future self-management strategies.



## References and Further Resources

### **Books**

The Anger Workbook. L Bilodeau, 1992, Minneapolis: Campcare Publishers

Emotional Intelligence. D Goleman, 1995, New York: Bantam Books

Working with Emotional Intelligence. D. Goleman, 1998, New York: Bantam Books

How to Keep People From Pushing Your Buttons. A Ellis, A Lange, 1994, New York: Carol Publishing Group

Anger: The Misunderstood Emotion. C. Tavis, 1989, New York: Simon & Schuster Inc.

When Anger Hurts: Quieting the Storm Within. M. McKay, P.D. Rogers, J. McKay, 2003, Oakland CA, : New Harbinger Publications

When Anger Scares You. J. Lynch, 2004, Oakland CA, : Charles Scribner's Sons

### **Websites**

Here to Help BC  
<http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/helpmewith/wellness5.shtml>

Get your Angries out – Constructive anger management techniques for kids and adults  
<http://www.angriesout.com/>

6 Ways to Help Kids with Anger  
<http://www.babybag.com/articles/mborba2.htm>

Getting Along: When I'm Angry (Teaching Kids about Anger)  
<http://www.nccc.org/Parent/ga.angry.html>

