



Anger Management: Digging Deeper and Using Basic AM Skills

A big part of successful anger management is having a good understanding of what sets you off. However, it doesn't end there. To really understand your anger sometimes you need to honestly search inside yourself to learn your core values and then practice basic anger management skills. This can be very challenging to do for individuals who are not ready to learn more about themselves and to try different ideas. The following exercise will guide you through this process:

1-Surface Level Anger – Start by thinking about ten things that can trigger your anger. List them below. It can involve people, stressful situations, frustrating circumstances, etc. (Discuss your answers when done)

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.



2-Values – What does it really mean to you? – This is where things start to get tricky. Pick one thing on your list above and try to really think about and identify what it is about that person, situation or circumstance that gets you upset. Consider the following example”

Anger trigger from list: *Being stuck in traffic*

What does this really mean to me? – Consider some possible deeper reasons why someone may feel angry in traffic

- Desire for Fairness- The feeling that “it’s is just not fair that there should be traffic in my way’
- Fear of Goal Interruption – If you are on the way to work for example, traffic could mean you are late, lateness means you are messing up at work, messing up at work could mean a feeling of failure

Because this can be challenging, consider another example:

Anger trigger from list: *My Aunt Mary’s nagging*

What does this really mean to me? – Consider some possible deeper reasons why Aunt Mary’s nagging may be so upsetting

- Everyone should be Nice to me – It is not uncommon to come from an inner belief system that can set the expectation that everyone should always be nice and supportive. This is especially true with family so it can feel extra hurtful that her nagging is not so nice.
- The Truth Hurts – Maybe some of the things that Mary nags about like finding a better career and taking better care of the house, have some truth in them. As annoying as Mary’s nagging is, when she hits on true points it can be that much more anger inducing.

Now try to do this with a few of your own anger triggers from your first list. Try to be honest and insightful and look at the deeper reasons why you get angry. It can be helpful to look at feelings of hurt, shame, or fear to try to understand and also consider your core values – what is most important to you

Discuss as a group two of your own examples:

1a. Anger trigger from list:

1b. What does this really mean to me?

2a. Anger trigger from list:

2b. What does this really mean to me?



3 –USING ANGER MANAGEMENT SKILLS - Now that you understand your anger a little better it may be easier to manage. It is important to have an arsenal of coping skills for anger management so if one isn't working you can try another. Consider the following list of anger coping skills

Positive Self-Talk – Knowing what to say to yourself to calm yourself down is so important. Be prepared to have some calming phrases that you know work for you

Breathe – Learn how to breathe to calm yourself when angry. Proper breathing slows things down so you can relax and concentrate when you are feeling like you are losing control

Pick up the Phone – Can you find an “anger sponsor” – Someone you can call when you are upset who knows how to help you chill out

Distraction – Music, television, internet, taking a walk, all can be ways to distract yourself

Stop Yourself from Playing the Victim – If you find yourself thinking things like “I can't believe this is happening again” or “this is so unfair!” it can be important to derail those thoughts because they usually only make things worse (even if those thoughts are true)

Empathize – If another person is involved, try to see things from that person's point of view. It can really help in some situations when someone else gets you upset.

Give others the Benefit of the Doubt – If someone cuts you off driving for example, tell yourself” Maybe that person is on the way to the hospital to visit a sick family member” or “That person must be having a really bad day, I am glad I am not in their shoes right now”

Check Yourself for Hypocrisy – Ask yourself if you are getting mad at something that you do sometimes too. Again using the driving example, if someone cuts you off, ask yourself have you ever cut someone off? (It is possible that you have in the past, maybe by accident)

Delay Your Reaction- Tell yourself: “I am angry now but I am not going to act out but if I am still angry later I will do something about this”- Hopefully when “later” arrives you are in a better space mentally to make a good decision about your actions instead of being impulsive when angry

Text Yourself- This may sound crazy but it can be helpful to text yourself your feelings when you are angry and you can read and process what you felt later when you are in a better space. Texting yourself is better than saying something that you will later regret

Humor- If you can look at the funny side of things in an upsetting situation a little bit of laughter can totally diffuse an angry situation before it gets worse



Put things in Perspective- It can be so helpful to look at the big picture. For example, are you angry because someone cut in front of you? Think about people who cannot even walk. Angry because you dropped your milkshake? Think about the millions of people in the world who wait all day for a bowl of rice and sometimes don't even get that. Taking a "global" perspective can really help you to "stop sweating the small stuff"

Play the Story to the End – Feelings Included – This is an old addiction recovery tool that works great with anger. Before you act out and punch that wall or smash your phone in a fit of anger, or before you tell off someone like your boss or your significant other, really think about how you are going to feel later. Although it can feel like a rush to lay into someone or break something when angry, once the anger resides often you may find yourself with regret and guilt for going overboard. Often you can't fix something broken in anger and you definitely cannot take back mean words said in anger either. If you think first about those feelings possibly you can keep yourself from acting out in the first place

Acceptance – Getting yourself to really believe that "it is what it is" when it comes to unfortunate anger inducing circumstances, you can avoid anger build up. Stuff happens, and often without warning but you still have the choice to get angry and fight over it or just accept the negative circumstance and move on. For example, you could get a flat tire on the way to a job interview and fly into a rage over how unfair it is, or just accept the fact that sometimes bad stuff happens in spite of your best intentions. Accept the fact that there will be other opportunities if you stay positive

Prayer – If this is something you believe in, it works.