

SESSION 1

Introduction

1. Explain the goals of Anger Control Training and “sell it” to the group.

In the first session, the leader introduces the program, “sells it” to the group members, and gets their commitment to participate. The basic introduction involves talking with the group about how being angry and aggressive can lead to trouble for them with authorities (police, school), with peers, and even with regard to how they feel about themselves.

To communicate to participants that learning to achieve greater control of anger is a worthwhile task, the leader can give examples of people participants admire who have excellent self-control. Giving real-life examples and stressing that these people would not be successful if they were out of control helps make the point that having more self-control does not mean participants will be pushed around or be viewed as weak.

After providing these examples, the leader explains how greater self-control means greater personal power: Group members are more powerful when they are in control of their reactions to others despite the attempts of others to provoke them. By being aggressive, group members allow others to control them.

2. Explain that anger is a feeling or emotion.

The group leader discusses the following points:

- What is a feeling or emotion? A feeling is an internal reaction. This physical reaction is caused when certain chemicals are released into the body. When the body releases endorphins, for instance, a sensation of contentment and well-being results. People recognize this physical reaction as happiness or gladness.
- The “re” in reaction indicates that the chemicals and the sensation are a response to something, usually to an external event or stimulation.
- Feelings may occur without an external stimulus when a chemical imbalance is present. This imbalance can be minor, perhaps caused by hunger, which produces an anxious feeling, or something major, like bipolar disorder, an illness that can cause extreme mood swings.
- Sometimes emotions can be caused by memories of past events or projections of future events. The mind plays “the movie” in a person’s head, which then causes the chemical reaction. The mind tells the body that the “movie” is a real-life experience.

- Feelings are also instinctive or primal in nature, used in times of immediate danger, when physical survival depends on immediate action without thought.
- What separates animals from humans is the ability to abstractly process, differentiate, and label various internal reactions. This skill is learned and needs to be taught and practiced.
- Definition of anger: Anger is an internal reaction that an individual learns to associate with an external event.

3. Explain the rules for participating and the group procedures.

It is essential to describe how the group works and what is expected of each participant at the outset of the program. The leader begins by explaining that meetings last about an hour and are held for 10 sessions at a specific day and time. At these meetings, each group member is expected to participate actively and cooperatively and to show respect for the other group members.

Homework will be given and used as the material for the next session; therefore, completion of homework is required for success in the program. The homework requires each participant to complete one or more Hassle Logs each session. The Hassle Logs are used to record details about conflict situations in which participants are involved.

The leader next explains that a sequence of different techniques for anger reduction will be taught by (a) explanations and demonstrations by the leaders and (b) practice in the form of role-playing by participants. Participants will role-play the anger control techniques for the situations on their Hassle Logs so that the next time the situation or a similar one occurs, they will have the choice to do something other than get angry.

4. Explain the A-B-Cs of Anger.

The leader writes the following on the easel pad or whiteboard:

- A = A is the antecedent or action. What triggered the problem? What led up to it?
- B = B is the behavior. What did you do (the actual response to A)?
- C = C is the consequence of the behavior. What were the consequences (to you and to the other person)?

The leader then gives examples of how he or she has handled some personal conflicts, being sure to point out the A, B, and C steps. Finally, group members give examples by using the Conflict Situation Worksheet. The leader helps them identify the A, B, and C steps operating in these situations.

5. Review goals, procedures, A-B-Cs, and entire sequence.

A brief review of the reasons for developing self-control, the rules and procedures of the group, and the A-B-Cs ends the meeting. The leader provides a brief overview of the entire Anger Control Chain, including an explanation of all the terms participants will be learning. In doing so, the leader may provide copies of the handout provided on page 40.

Conflict Situation Worksheet

Name _____ Date _____

Describe the incident:

Identify the A-B-Cs of anger:

A. What led up to it?

B. What did you do?

C. What were the consequences?

Anger Control Chain

