

2010

A brief introduction to Anger Management

What is Anger? Is it all bad and ugly?

Do you have an anger problem? This is a must read about what anger is in simple terms and talks about two methods commonly used to manage anger.

Morgan Hayward
RelationshipsMen



A brief introduction to Anger Management

Table of Contents

What is Anger	3
Types of Anger.....	4
How to handle Anger	5
Group or Individual Anger Therapy	6
Group-based Anger Therapy	6
Questions to ask when joining an anger group	7
Individual Anger Therapy	8
Conflict Resolution and Anger Management.....	9

Information presented in this document is for information purposes only and not intended to provide psychiatric, psychological or medical advice.

For further information contact
Morgan Hayward
RelationshipsMen

www.relationshipsmen.com
info@relationshipsmen.com

Written correspondence to
RelationshipsMen
PO Box 267
North Richmond NSW 2754
Australia

A brief introduction to Anger Management

What is Anger

Anger is not good or bad. It can have positive or negative consequences depending on how it is handled. Much like getting into a Shelby Cobra V8 whilst still on a learners permit, if we don't have the experience or knowledge to handle that super car we will eventually end up crashing it and perhaps even injuring ourselves or worse.

Anger is an emotion that arises in reaction to certain kinds of stress. There is a continuum of anger that ranges from calmness through irritation, annoyance, frustration and resentment, to anger as fury and rage. As we move along the continuum the emotion becomes more intense and we become less capable of rational thinking, less likely to behave reasonably and less able to control the situation. At this end of the continuum aggression and violence are more likely.

Aggression is a behaviour based on anger directed towards another person and violence is the harm or injury that results from aggression. The harm or injury can be psychological, physical or both.

Four main types of provocation or situations in which an angry response can occur are:

1. **Frustration** – when you are trying to do something or do something and are prevented, blocked or disappointed.
2. **Irritation/annoyance** – when minor accidents occur or things “get on your nerves”
3. **Abuse** – when you are assaulted verbally or physically
4. **Unfairness or injustice** – when you are not treated fairly or do not receive what you deserve.

Managing anger is the key to being in control of this emotion.

A brief introduction to Anger Management

Types of Anger

Anger is anger isn't it? Yes it is however let's look at it in a different context and then bring it across into a behavioural context.

I like motor shows and remember seeing a Shelby Cobra GT500, a fine motor car. Now, this motor car is a supercharged 5.4 litre V8 and has awesome power and acceleration. Driving this car on the open road would have a completely different feel to the next car that caught my eye, the Lexus IS F, a 5 litre V8. Later on I saw a Mercedes CL 600. The Mercedes CL 600 has power and luxury and a different driving experience to the others. If I had to choose which one to buy I would know I was not just looking at a car to get me from point A to point B – I was looking at a car that satisfied my inner need.

My wife on the other hand was enjoying checking out other motor cars, not so 'blokey'. The Mercedes C350 CDI, the Lexus LS 600hl (with parking assist of course) and the BMW Z4 Roadster. These cars are nice to say the least and who would not like to own one! Bye the way, would I drive one? You bet! They would satisfy my inner need (sometimes).

The point I'm making is that we have individual choices of how we would like to travel, a car is not just a car and it satisfies us in some way. We like driving them, they are our means of transport, and they are us!

Later that day, we enjoyed a great meal at one of Sydney's finest restaurants. Did we have the same meal? No we did not. I like to really indulge when dining out – a five course meal is just fine. My wife on the other hand is more selective, more refined than I and carefully chooses meals that make me wish I ordered them (some of the time). The point I'm making is that we have individual choices of what we like to eat; it satisfies our hunger in some way.

Anger is a bit like motor cars, fine meals and anything else we like. It is a tailor made emotion, engineered if you like, based on our needs at the time and what we believe and value. Just like motor cars are an important part of getting around and meals are essential to living, anger too has its place in our lives. And, like motor cars and fine meals there are various kinds of anger. Let's take a brief look at some of them.

A brief introduction to Anger Management

- **Anger avoidance.** People who avoid anger tend to deny, ignore and minimize their anger.
- **Passive aggressive.** People who feel powerless and dominated by others and think others are trying to control them.
- **Paranoia or distrust-based anger.** These individuals project anger onto others and defend themselves with anger and aggression.
- **Sudden anger.** This is a type of explosive anger. This type of anger comes out rapidly, is intense and usually short lived.
- **Shame based anger.** This is a type of explosive anger where individuals convert feelings of shame into rage and attack those who are shaming them or planning to do so.
- **Excitatory anger.** This is a type of explosive anger where individuals become irate which triggers feelings of excitement and intensity.
- **Deliberate anger.** This type of explosive anger is purposely displayed to intimidate others and for them “anger works”.
- **Habitual anger** is a chronic anger style displayed by people who continually perpetuate their anger and is their default emotion.
- **Moral anger** is another chronic style of anger where individuals perceive their anger is justified and righteous even for a cause greater than their own interests.
- **Resentment/hate anger** is a chronic anger style where individuals tend to store up incidents in which they feel maltreated and in time become rigid and inflexible.

How to handle Anger

A good start is to identify what kind of anger a person has. This is usually done by a professional in an interview or clinically-administered questionnaire or both. The other way is to identify our anger ourselves. Let me draw something really important to you at this stage.

Remember the meal my wife and I enjoyed at one of Sydney’s finest restaurants? I can tell you for a fact, I just love a well cooked steak; it really hits the spot. So, do I know how to cook a great steak? No I don’t! I cannot satisfy my taste buds with a

A brief introduction to Anger Management

steak I cook myself because I do not know how to cook one just to my liking! Think about that a while. How good are you at identifying, yet alone handling something like your own anger? I'm not saying you do not know, I'm asking you if you are as good and proficient as a having a professional on your side.

When you handle anger yourself, and it is possible, it can take longer to manage the emotion than you would like. And yes, you can do it yourself – you may just need someone to point you in the right direction – and that's fine.

Group or Individual Anger Therapy

This is dependent upon you. Some people work well within a group environment, others do not. The anger issue itself may limit your choice of group or individual therapy opportunities so it is important to know a little bit about both group based and individual therapy programs.

Group-based Anger Therapy

Group-based work is a goal-directed activity usually with small treatment and task groups. The goal is to meet the needs of the group members; receive mutual support from the other group members, provide education, allow personal growth, provide therapy by behavioural change, skill development and socialization.

Group participants can gain from:

- Instillation of hope
- Universality (a sense that they are not the only ones with their problems)
- Imparting of information
- Imitative behaviour (learning from others)
- Interpersonal learning
- Altruism (mutual cooperative aid)
- Family recapitulation (relation of unfinished family business to how members function in group)
- Catharsis/corrective emotional experience
- Cohesiveness (greater caring and bonding with others)

A brief introduction to Anger Management

- Socializing techniques (improving social skills)
- Existential factors (more choices about how to love authentically)
- Development of improved reality testing
- Improved problem solving skills
- Improved self-concept

Questions to ask when joining an anger group

One thing we hear often is that group work does not work. Group work *does* work – it depends on the facilitator/s, the program, the location, the time and the group members and you. When these are well matched, the group will work very effectively.

When considering joining an anger management group you need to be sure that you will fit into the group. Make no mistake here, groups work best when members share similar problems, lifestyles, education level, motivation for change, culture, religion, sex, gender, age group and other demographic considerations. Group facilitators usually carry out some form of demographic determination for the group before it starts, so it is a good to check with the group facilitator as to your suitability for the group and ask questions about:

- **The facilitators:** Who are they? What are their qualifications and experience? Male or Female (yes, it can make a difference)?
- **The program:** Ask for a program overview. This is available by way of brochure or other media and covers things such as how many weeks or days it runs for. Is it live-in or drop-in? Can you join at any time or only at registration? How much does it cost? What happens if you drop out? Does it include catharsis (some cannot handle this)? Is there a written contract? And so on.
- **The location and time:** Seriously ask yourself if you can attend the group at the set time and at the designated location. You need to feel safe and comfortable with when and where the program is being held. Will you have the time to attend the program without worrying about things such as time off work or your wife or partner wondering where you are, and so on.

A brief introduction to Anger Management

- **Other group members:** Ask for a demographic profile of who the group is intended to serve. You may find you do not wish to participate with a particular group of people which may lead to your eventual retraction from the program.

Individual Anger Therapy

Group work is efficient and reasonably effective in the area of anger management. The greatest advantage of individual anger therapy is that each client is assessed separately and a tailor made program is developed and discussed with the client. Individual programs encourage more specific goals and methods to be implemented. Let's return to the motor show and restaurant to demonstrate this.

My wife raised a great argument for the BMW. "BMW allow you to build your own car!" she said, "So what?" I said, "The Shelby Cobra has all I would want", I said. "Yes, I'm sure it does" she replied, "however, if you wanted to customise it further, could you?" This made me think. I probably couldn't do much to it if there was anything I wanted changed. Then I thought more on the possibility of customising. Customising does have its advantages – I would get the exact car I wanted. In fact, other motor car manufacturers now let customers customise their vehicle at time of order.

When the waiter at the restaurant asked me how I wanted my steak, I told him and I enjoyed my steak. In fact, the more I thought about it, we customise our lives a lot. From the food we eat, to the cars we drive, to our audio system and television, to our choice of computer, to the furniture in our house, the layout of our garden and so on. We feel good when we customise, or individualise ourselves.

It may seem as if I am an advocate for individual anger management programs. The truth is that much of what happens in an anger therapy group happens in individual therapy; it's just that the focus changes to what is really needed. How do you know what you really need? At RelationshipsMen we take care to find out what your needs and goals are, formulate them into a package and discuss it with you and fine tune it before engaging in the program. This way you get what you want.

A brief introduction to Anger Management

Questions to ask about Individual Therapy

As a guide, it is good to ask questions about:

- **The counselor or psychologist:** Is the Counsellor or Psychologist suitably qualified and experienced. See our eBook “Things you should know when seeing a Counsellor” available from our website.
- **The methodology:** How is this problem going to be handled? At RelationshipsMen this includes an interview or clinically-administered questionnaire or both. Determining your needs from your discussions with the counsellor aids in formulating an action plan.
- **The location and time:** For results, regular consultations are vital. It keeps the momentum going and helps you focus.
- **Duration of the program:** This depends upon what your needs are and how deep the anger lies. The advantage of an individual program is that it may be extended to fit your needs.
- **Cost:** This is usually based on a per hour basis. In some instances, program prices may apply depending upon the degree of customisation.

Conflict Resolution and Anger Management

Conflict resolution and anger are cousins; however they do not always go hand in hand. That is to say if you are not angry you can still be in conflict. If however, you are angry then conflict resolution is more difficult if not impossible. Therefore, to be effective in resolving conflict it is best that anger be effectively managed.

Managing anger whilst resolving conflict is not only about managing one's own anger, in fact, you may not be angry at all but the other person is. The following story demonstrates this:

On day Fred (not his real name), a night shift worker, awakened after his sleep to find he had no electricity. He checked his fuse box and all was fine. There were no fuses blown and all circuit breakers were in the 'on' position. He lived in the country where electricity supplies were not as reliable as in the city and he asked his neighbour if there were any problems with the electricity supply. His neighbour said all was fine and advised him to check his fuse box, which he had already done.

A brief introduction to Anger Management

Fred rang the electricity company and spoke to the accounts clerk who advised him that he had not paid his latest electricity bill. Fred was furious (sudden anger); he told the accounts clerk he had paid the bill on-line a week ago. He went into a rage damning the accounts clerk and the electricity company for not processing the bill on time. Did the accounts clerk care? No, she did not. She referred him to another accounts clerk "to investigate further". The other clerk told Fred his account will be checked and if payment had indeed been received, his electricity will be reconnected. This was not good enough for Fred. He remained angry. Fred became more and angrier with whoever he talked to – and nobody at the electricity company cared a hoot about Fred. The conflict was not resolved until one person – the Account Manager talked to Fred. The Account Manager recognised that Fred was angry and was not being co-operative. He used anger management and conflict resolution techniques to quiet Fred, got his receipt number, validated the payment and put an immediate request through to get Fred's electricity reconnected.

Clerks at the electricity company didn't care about Fred's problem; they were not inconvenienced by the disruption in electricity. They were affronted by Fred's behaviour, did not care about it and simply bumped him off. The clerks were not angry – they were affronted by a hostile customer and didn't know how to handle it other than follow company policy to refer the client on to someone else for service. The manager on the other hand, was not angry, realised that Fred was angry, applied anger management and conflict resolution techniques to resolve the conflict and did so.

I'll leave you with two quotes that you may find contemplative in regard to anger management and conflict resolution:

Move out of your comfort zone. You can only grow if you are willing to feel awkward and uncomfortable when you try something new.

Brian Tracy

"If there is any one secret of success, it lies in the ability to get the other person's point of view and see things from that person's angle as well as from your own."

Henry Ford

A brief introduction to Anger Management

RelationshipsMen are here to help resolve anger management issues. For further information, visit www.relationshipsmen.com or call 02 4567 7719 (within Australia) or +61 2 4567 7719 (International).

Yours sincerely,

Morgan Hayward
Principal
RelationshipsMen