

Anger Management Booklet



Name;

.....

Staff Member (Optional);

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It is important to remember that everyone feels angry at times. However, some people find it difficult to control their anger and this gets in the way of everyday life. Anger becomes a problem when it happens **too often**, lasts **too long**, **impacts on relationships** and especially if it leads to **violence** or **aggression**.

Aims of the Booklet

At times you may think that you can do little to control your anger. However, there are things that you can do to make a difference. This booklet aims to help you cope with your anger by understanding the physical effects of becoming angry, recognise your warning signals, reactions and triggers and by discussing various coping strategies.

There is a lot of information in this booklet so it may help to complete just one section at a time. You can either complete this booklet alone or with the help of an adult.

Please try to complete all the exercises in the booklet.

Understanding Anger and Its Causes

You have probably already noticed if you have a problem with anger, which is why you will be completing this booklet 😊 However, listed below are some signs which may suggest you have difficulty controlling your anger. Please circle those signs which you experience regularly;

How You Think

Poor concentration
Mind goes 'blank' when angry
Thinking the worst of people
Everything seems like a big problem
Others seem unfair to you

Physical Symptoms

Heart beat goes faster
Chest feels tight
Upset stomach
Tense muscles
Go very hot/sweating
Headaches

What you do

Shout and argue
Hit out
Leave the situation
Throw/hit an object/slam door
Attack someone
Say something you don't mean
Become upset
Do nothing/bottle it up

How You Feel

Anger or rage
Irritable at the slightest thing
Restless or on edge

**“They have
ruined
everything”**

**“They have
let me down”**

**“I can’t trust
anyone”**

Common Thoughts

**“It is all
their
fault”**

**“If I don’t do
something I’ll
explode”**

**“They deserve
this”**

What is Anger?

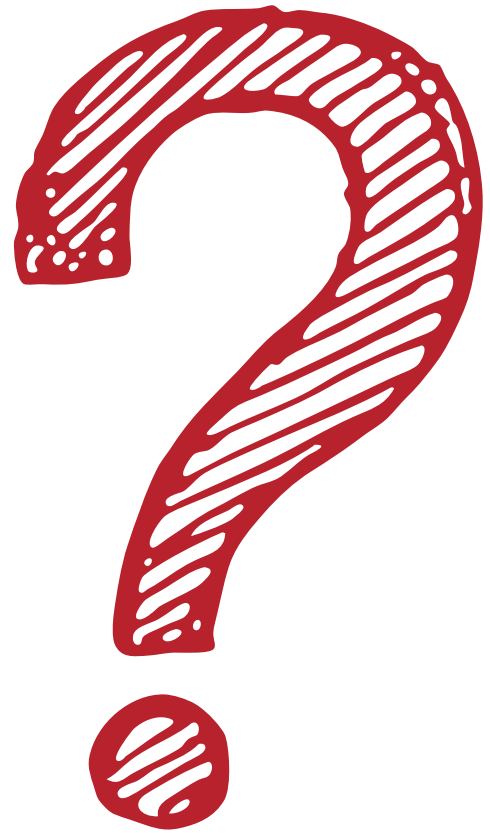
Anger is an emotion just like happiness, sadness or guilt. Anger can often mask other emotions and is frequently termed a 'secondary emotion'. For example, someone may show behaviour which suggests they may be angry but in reality they may be trying to hide the fact that they are really upset about something.

Often when we are angry the main thing we are aware of is our angry mood. Our mood can vary in strength from a mild irritation to a white hot rage. When it reaches its strongest it is unlikely that we will be aware of anything else. This is when it is most difficult to change any angry thoughts and we often fail to listen to the good advice from others. When we are intensely experiencing anger then we usually aren't using the area in our brain where thinking occurs. We need to do something to move our brain back into the thinking mode.

When we look for causes of our anger we often direct our attention outwards, for example to events or people in our surroundings.

Although it is important to recognise that our mood is a key part of the anger, it is not the only part. In order to fully understand the causes of anger we need to look at the other parts and see how they influence each other.

It is helpful to separate anger into our mood, thoughts, physical symptoms and behaviour. The other part we need to consider is the outside world or our surroundings. We need to look at how changes in this affect us, and how we in turn may influence our environment. The diagram on the next page may help you to make sense of this and is an example of this;

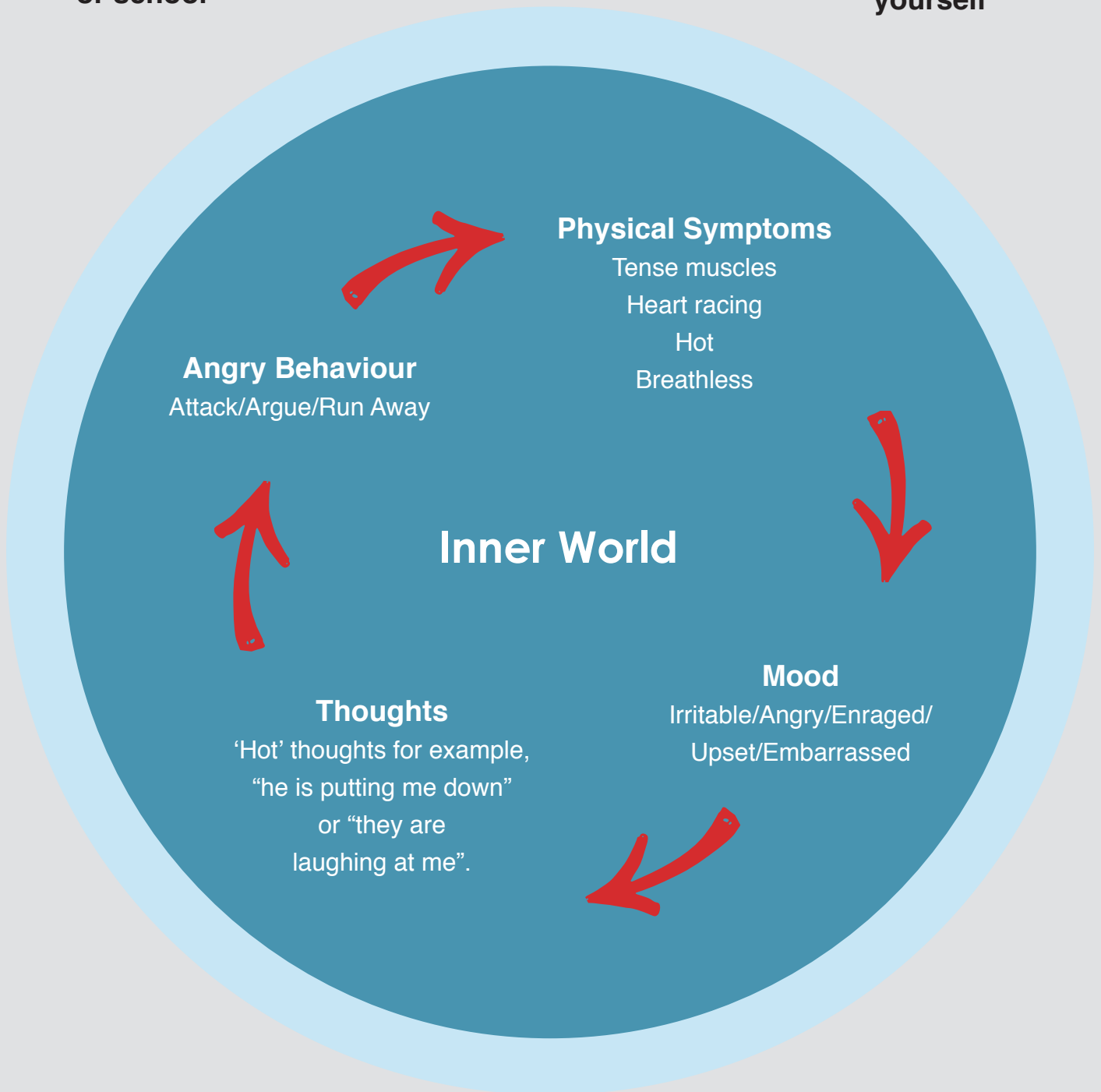


Vicious Circle of Anger

Outside World

Problems at home
or school

Stress- no time for
yourself



Frustrating events or
situations

Problems with others

All of these parts of anger can affect each other and anger can quickly spiral out of control. Angry behaviour can then cause an angry response in others. Physical symptoms of anger can lead us to feel out of control and consequently make our mood worse. 'Hot' thoughts can make us feel even angrier.

Does a similar vicious circle of anger happen to you? How do each of the areas affect each other?

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Try and draw it out in the space provided below.

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What Causes Anger?

As with all emotions, physical symptoms occur alongside anger –heart rate increases, blood pressure goes up, muscles tense as our body is prepared for ‘fight or flight’ (to either attack or run away from whatever it is making us feel angry). These bodily changes also move the brain function from the thinking mode to a strictly survival mode. These warning signals allow us to recognise when our mood is changing and prepares us. This consequently enables us to try to do something about it before we lose control.

Anger can be caused by reacting to things outside us such as other people or events, or by worrying over our own personal problems. Upsetting memories from the past can lead to angry thoughts and feelings. **It is important to note that it is not people or events that make you angry but your reaction to them.**

Triggers; What things tend to trigger your anger? Make a list of them in the boxes below.

Outside (other people, events)

Inside (thoughts, worries, memories)

Some people tend to be angrier than others. Research has shown that they have a low tolerance for frustration. It may be that some people are naturally more like this from birth, but it may also be that they have not learned to handle anger and to express their feelings in other ways.

Getting very angry is **never helpful** and anger can easily become out of control. Being angry means that you do not learn to handle the situation so you will be unlikely to cope with similar situations in the future. It is best to begin to understand your anger and gain control over it.

It is important to note that anger can build up over time. You may have an argument with a parent in the morning to find that numerous things irritate you on the way to school, such as a car driving past you and splashing you with rain. When you arrive in school your poor teacher may end up being on the receiving end of your anger! By recognising your warning signals you may be able to prevent your anger from escalating and stop it being directed at the wrong person!

Summary

Anger affects the way we **feel**, think and **behave**. It causes a number of symptoms in our body. It can be caused by our reactions to things happening around us or by our own thoughts and worries. We may be more likely to be angry because we are born this way or because we have never learned to control our anger and express our feelings more helpfully. However, this does not mean that you cannot change the way you deal with your anger!



Controlling Anger

Angry Thoughts

We have seen that our thoughts can make us feel angry and usually make the situation worse. However, people who have a problem with anger often do not recognise these angry thoughts. In trying to gain control over anger it is important for us to notice and challenge these thoughts.

'Hot' Thoughts

'Hot' thoughts are angry thoughts that flash into your mind and make you feel even worse. People tend to have similar thoughts happening again and again, for example "They are making a fool out of me" or "I hate this place".

Please note any similar angry thoughts that you have;

These 'hot' thoughts are often backed up by ways of **negative thinking**. It may help you to decide if you are making any of the following **thinking errors**;

Taking things personally

People who are angry often take things personally and feel hurt by it. They look for and expect criticism from other people. If, for example, someone does not speak to them in school they may feel that person dislikes them, when in fact it may be that he or she is shy or worried. If someone looks over at them after making a comment in class they may think “they’re staring at me because I’m stupid” when in fact the person is just glancing over without such thought.



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Do you think you sometimes take things personally and feel angry when in fact it may have little to do with you? Please try to think about and write down some recent examples.



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Ignoring the Positive

People who get angry easily tend to focus their thinking on negative or bad events and ignore positive or good events. If they had a good time or if nice things happen then they will still find the things that went wrong or that weren't quite good enough. For example, you may have had a really fun day out with friends, but on your way home you lost your wallet with some loose change in it. When your parents asked if you'd had a nice day you reply by saying "No, I lost my wallet".



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Do you sometimes ignore the positive? Please write down some recent examples. recent examples.



Perfectionism

People who become angry often expect too much from themselves or those around them. If these high standards are not met then they feel badly let down and hurt. This hurt can quickly become anger. For example, John had a friend who had agreed to go to a party with him but let him down at the last minute. John thought that his friend had failed him and so decided he did not want to be friends with him anymore. This is despite the fact that his friend has been good to him on many other occasions.



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Do you sometimes expect perfectionism from yourself or others? Try to write down and examples you can think of.



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Black and White Thinking

Thinking in black and white, or all or nothing terms is common in people who get very angry.

This is particularly a problem when it comes to knowing how firm to be with people. Sarah had a friend who had borrowed some clothes from her. Sarah was quite happy to lend Rebecca the clothes as

she thought of her as a good friend who she could trust. Rebecca was only going to be wearing the clothes for a party she was attending at the weekend. After a couple of weeks Rebecca had still not mentioned returning the clothes and Sarah did not really want to mention it. Sarah began to think badly of her friend and became angry. She thought “Rebecca is taking advantage of me and she no doubt thinks she can keep the clothes”. The next time Sarah saw Rebecca she shouted at her to return the clothes immediately and said she would never lend her anything again. It may have been better if Sarah had taken a middle approach and firmly just asked Rebecca to return the clothes. She would then have also realised that Rebecca had intended to return to the clothes but just kept forgetting to get them out of her locker!



Thinking Errors

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Do you sometimes think in black and white or all or nothing terms? Please write down any examples you can think of.



If you find yourself making any of the thinking errors mentioned above, it can be helpful to try and think more balanced thoughts.

Listed below are two columns; one for angry thoughts and one for more balanced thoughts. Two examples have been provided for you. **Please write down some of your own angry thoughts and try to think of as many balanced thoughts as you can to replace these.**



Angry or 'Hot' Thoughts

“He is looking over here and thinks I am stupid”.

“They always let me down”.

Balanced Thoughts

“He is looking over here but I do not really know what he is thinking”.

“They sometimes behave badly but most of the time they are really ok”.

The aim is to become quicker at catching these ‘hot thoughts’ as and when they come into your head. You need to answer back and challenge these thoughts straight away. It takes a lot of practice but really does work!

Beliefs about Anger That Can Be Unhelpful

Some people hold beliefs that make it harder for them to bring their anger under control. The beliefs sometimes excuse anger or make it seem the only response. These beliefs are sometimes held because of life experiences and people may have lived with them for so long that they accept them without question. However, it is important to question these beliefs to help you to overcome your problems with anger.

Listed below are some examples of these unhelpful beliefs and ideas on how to challenge and question them.

I cannot control my anger; I am angry because my parent(s) were angry and it is something I inherited from them.

This is the idea that anger is something you can't change- it is something you were born with. We know that some people are born with tendencies to be more emotional or angry but the way we react to these emotions is learned. We can deal with our own angry behaviour by changing the way we respond to events and people.

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My anger is something people are scared of and it stops them taking advantage of me.

Someone with this belief sees anger as a way of protecting them. Although this belief may have been correct at some time in your life, it can cause problems to continue to think this way. Good friendships are not formed on fear and you will be unlikely to have good relationships because of your angry behaviour. It is also likely to backfire, where others with problems with anger will see you as threatening and possibly pick fights with you.

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I have good reason to be angry because of things other people have done to me.

Anger is a natural reaction when we are mistreated or taken advantage of. However, if this anger continues into all areas of your life then it will cause difficulties for you. You need to try to control your anger and ensure it does not affect your relationships with other people.

We all would like life to be fair- we want good things to happen to good people and bad things to bad people. However, often this is not always what happens and we need to learn to be able to control our thoughts and reactions towards these situations.

Summary

We need to look carefully at the 'hot' angry thoughts we have and try to see if we are making errors in the way we view situations. It can help to try and have more balanced thoughts. We also need to examine long held beliefs about our anger and challenge these unhelpful beliefs.



Controlling the Physical Symptoms of Anger

The increased energy found from being angry needs to be directed into something positive, such as physical activity. Discuss with a friend/family member different physical activities that you could possibly try to release this energy when angry.

Relaxation and calming methods can help to reduce angry feelings. You need to learn to use the following approaches automatically if you are in a difficult situation.

Reducing Physical Symptoms

In order to reduce the severity of physical symptoms it is useful to recognise your 'warning signals' early on. Once you recognise these early signs of tension you can prevent anger becoming too severe by using relaxation techniques, physical activity or other calming methods.

There are many different ways to relax and people find different methods useful at different times. Some people relax through exercise, listening to music, watching TV, reading a book or socialising with family or friends. Alternative ways of relaxing include muscle relaxation (a series of physical exercises which involves tensing and relaxing each of the large muscle groups) and visualisation (thinking in pictures and images). This helps to distract your thoughts from whatever is making you feel angry. Relaxation tapes have also been found to be helpful. If you would like more detailed information on relaxation then please speak to the staff member supporting you.

Remember that relaxation is a skill like any other and takes time to learn.

Try keeping a note of how angry you feel before and after relaxation, rating your anger from 1-10.

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Controlled Breathing

There will be times when you suddenly feel angry and you may not have time to go through any of the relaxation exercises. When someone becomes angry it is very common for changes in their breathing to occur. They can begin to breathe really quickly, which is called over-breathing. It has the effect of making someone feel dizzy and therefore more tense. Try to recognise when you are doing this and slow your breathing down. Getting into a regular rhythm of breathing in for four seconds, holding it for one second before breathing out for four seconds. This will help to slow down your breathing and make you feel calmer.

Controlling Angry Behaviours

If we look again at the vicious circle of anger it becomes clear that we can challenge our angry thoughts and reduce the physical symptoms of anger. However, no one is perfect and at times we may still get to the point where we behave angrily!

It is a good idea to have ideas of how to tackle the angry behaviours we sometimes show. We can do this in three stages;

Stage 1

Be very clear about what your angry behaviours are- what comes before them and what happens afterwards. It can help for you to keep a diary over a short period to help you understand this and an example is listed below;

Before My Anger	Initial Thoughts and Feelings	Behaviour	What Happened Afterwards
Monday 19th March Someone said something negative about my girlfriend at school.	Feel angry; "How dare he say that about my girlfriend?" and "Who does he think he is?"	Shouted at him "to shut his face" and went to hit him. Fortunately a teacher intervened.	Everyone staring at me in the hall at dinner time. Got in trouble with my teachers and my girlfriend was angry with me.

Stage 2

Make a list of all the things you can do instead of behaving angrily. When you have done this choose the best new approach(es) to try in difficult situations. Examples could include excusing yourself and leaving the situation for a short while to calm down or trying to understand what the person has said by calmly asking them to explain.

Write down all the different things you could do instead of behaving in an angry way;

Stage 3

Try to adopt the new behaviour in situations where you feel angry. You could try keeping a diary of how it went to try and see what happens when trying this new behaviour.

Helpful ideas for changing angry behaviours can be;

- Use a quick relaxation and/or breathing exercise.
- Try distracting yourself or use visualisation as previously discussed.
- Do something positive with the increased energy found when being angry, such as physical activity. Try out different physical exercises to discover which one you most enjoy.
- If possible then try to avoid known triggers to making you feel angry. For example, if you don't like one of your girlfriend's friends then try to avoid being around when she's there.
- Try to remove yourself from the situation by going for a quick walk or run. However, this is not possible in school and please make sure you speak to your teacher before ever leaving class.
- Ask yourself at the time "Why is this making me angry?" and "Is this worth getting angry about?". Identify any thinking errors you may be making.
- Use self-calming statements in your head. For example "getting mad won't help", "just forget it as they are trying to get a reaction out of me" or "calm down before things become even worse".
- If you tend to get angry with certain people then try behaving more positively around these people. You will no doubt find that their behaviour will change in response to yours.

Please note that this list is by no means exhaustive and there are numerous different ways of changing or replacing angry behaviours. It is important to try out as many strategies as possible in order to discover which one works best for you.

Summary

In order to try to control angry behaviours you need to;

- Know what your angry behaviours are.
- Decide what other behaviours might take the place of your angry behaviour.
- Try out these new behaviours and see what works for you!




Controlling the Physical Symptoms of Anger

Everyday stress and worries make us more irritable and angry. A problem-solving approach may help with this.

You need to begin by writing down your problem and describing it as clearly as you can. You then need to write down as many possible solutions as you can. It does not matter how silly you think the solutions are, the point is to think of as many as you can. Try to think of how you have solved similar problems in the past. Another good idea is to ask a friend what they might do, or to think to yourself what you might advise a friend to do if they came to you with a similar problem.

Discuss any problem(s) that you may be currently worrying about and write possible solutions to these in the box below;



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Choose what seems like the best solution and write down all the necessary steps it would take to achieve the solution. Who might help you? What may go wrong? Sometimes it is helpful to consider the worst thing that could happen and how you would cope with this. This consequently may help to reduce your anxiety about the problem.

Nowadays life can be very stressful and it is easy for pressures to build up. We cannot often control outside stresses or stress caused by other people. However, we can try to reduce the pressure we put on ourselves and we are able to control our reactions to these outside stresses. Make sure you take good care of yourself by making sure you get enough sleep, eat a well balanced diet, take regular exercise and learn to relax. It will also be useful to identify situations that you find stressful and try to discover and overcome what it is about these situations that you find stressful.

Communication

From the thinking errors section of this booklet we have learned that angry people tend to take things personally and will often jump to conclusions. It is therefore important to try and improve communication skills so that misunderstandings that lead to anger are less likely to happen. Here are a few tips on improving communication skills.

- **Slow down and listen** to the other person- try not to rush in and say the first thing that comes to mind when you are angry.
- **Don't jump to conclusions** about what the other person or people are saying or thinking. Rather than mind-reading, ask them to explain more about what they are trying to say.
- If someone is sounding critical of you then don't immediately fight back. Try and understand any feelings behind what the other person is saying and about how you feel. Do either of you feel afraid, upset or frustrated which is hiding behind these angry thoughts?

If you can keep calm and try and find out more about how the other person is also feeling then an argument may be avoided. It is difficult to reason with someone who is angry and has lost control therefore it is important to try to prevent this from happening.

Try and talk to someone about how you really feel rather than getting into arguments and fights. If you find it difficult talking to someone then try to express your feelings in other ways, such as by writing things down or through art and music.

Long Term Beliefs

Sometimes people have long held beliefs about themselves that are very self-critical- for example "I am not a loveable person" or "I am not a clever person". These beliefs are often a product of past experiences, especially if there has been a lot of anger or criticism in our lives. It helps to stop this self-criticism as these beliefs can lead to more anger towards ourselves and others.

Try not to put yourself down and focus on the good things about yourself rather than the bad. Everyone can make mistakes and everyone has the ability to change any behaviour they are not happy with- it just takes hard work and determination!

Summary

How can I help myself overcome anger and aggression?



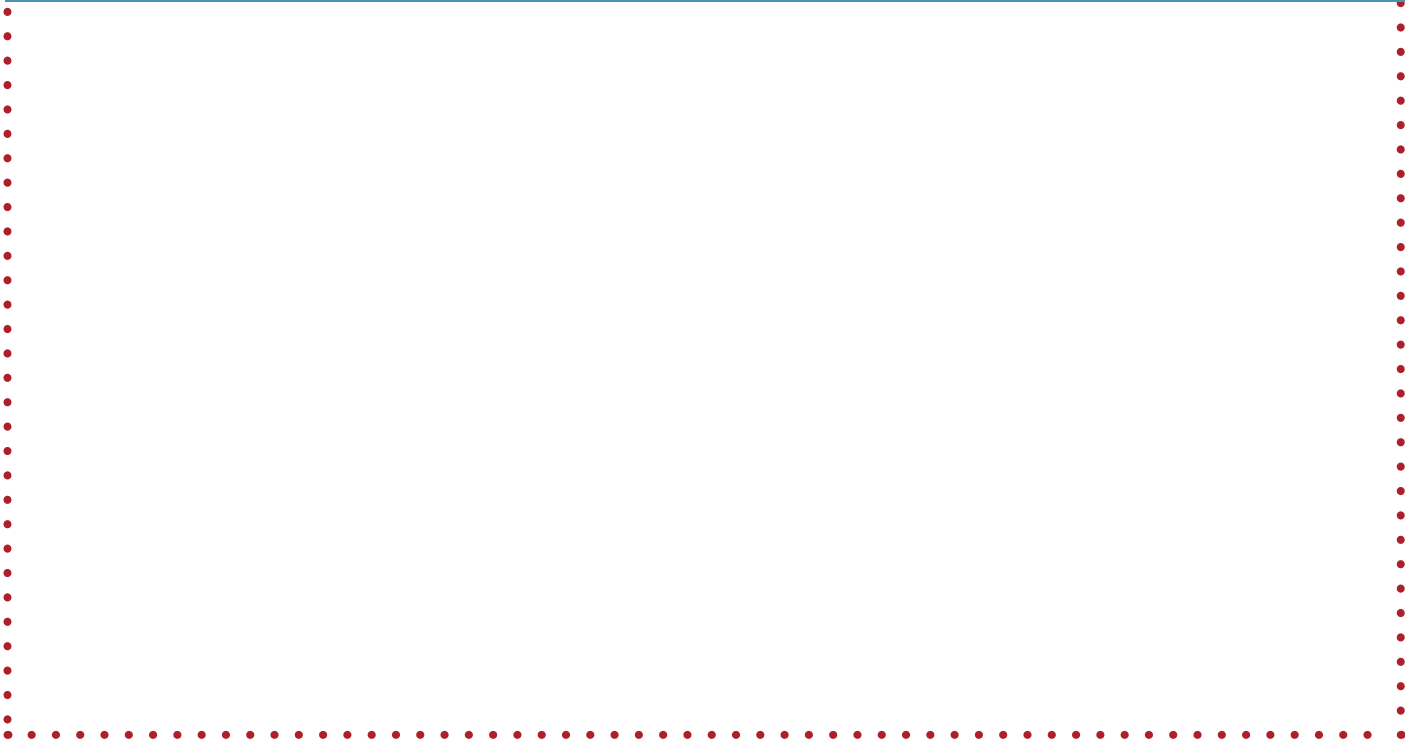
- Identify and recognise your warning signals and triggers to becoming angry. Recognise your angry thoughts and begin to challenge them.
- Understand and try to control your angry behaviour by replacing it with alternative behaviours. Use relaxation, sport and other ways to control these physical symptoms of anger.
- Improve communication and problem-solving skills.
- Do not allow yourself to continue with long-term critical beliefs about yourself.

Action Plan

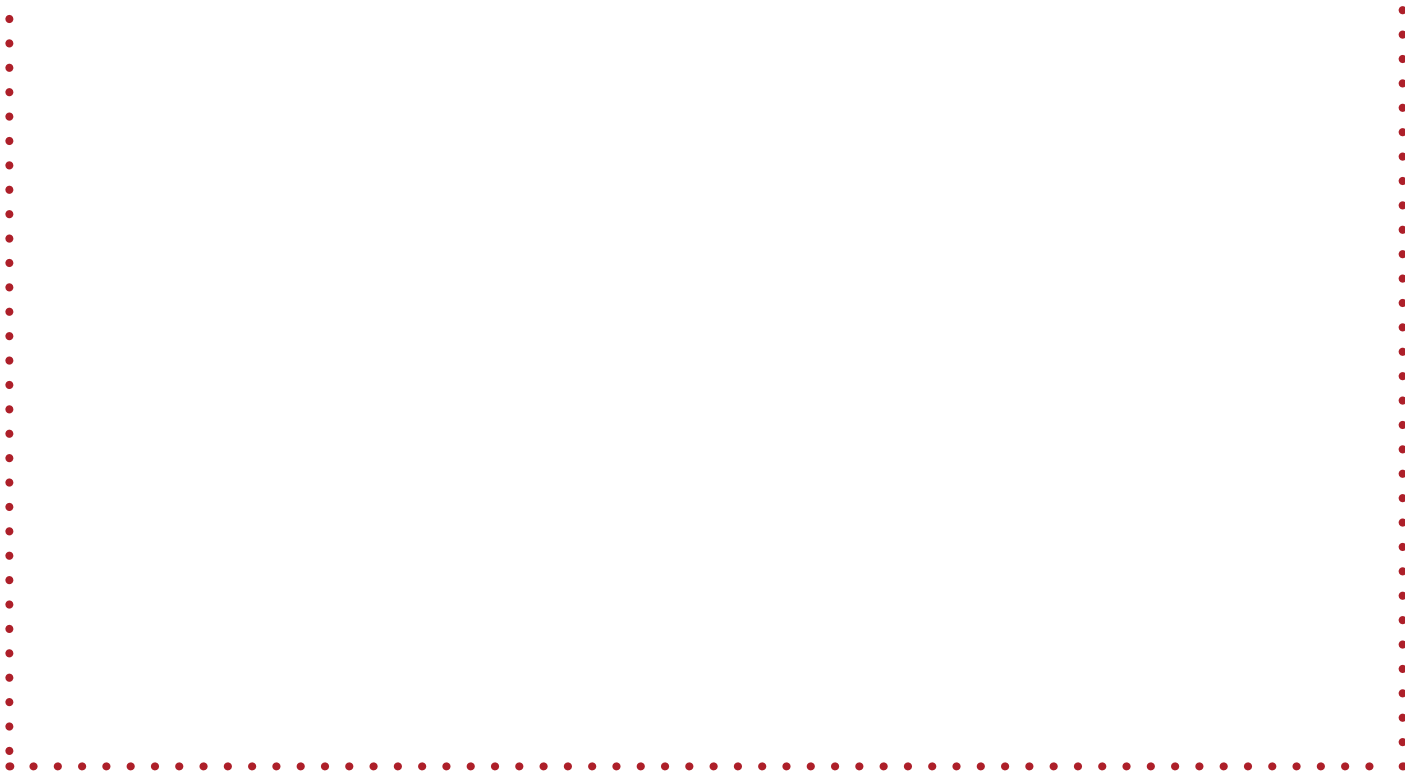
The next time I get angry I think my triggers are likely to be;

I will try to avoid these triggers and prevent myself from getting angry by recognising my warning signals. These are;

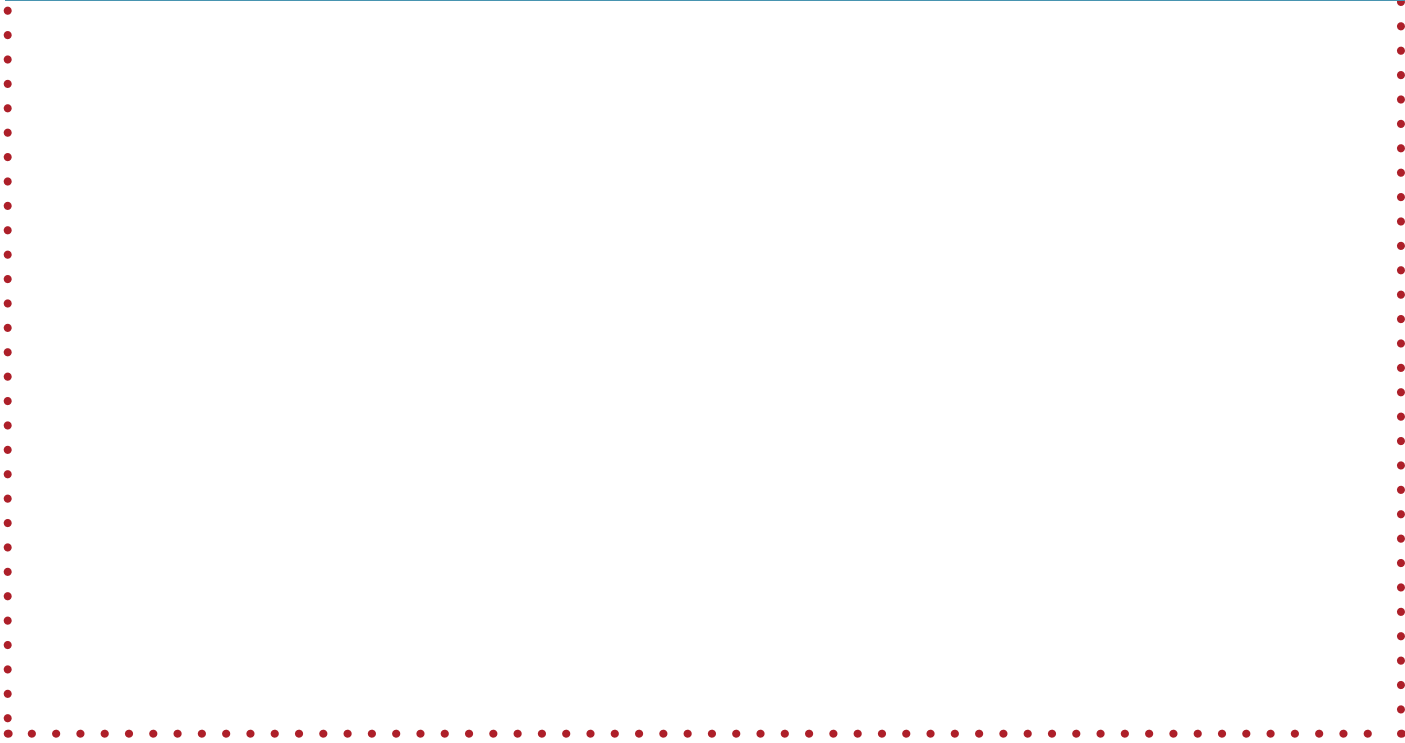
I will try to keep calm by;



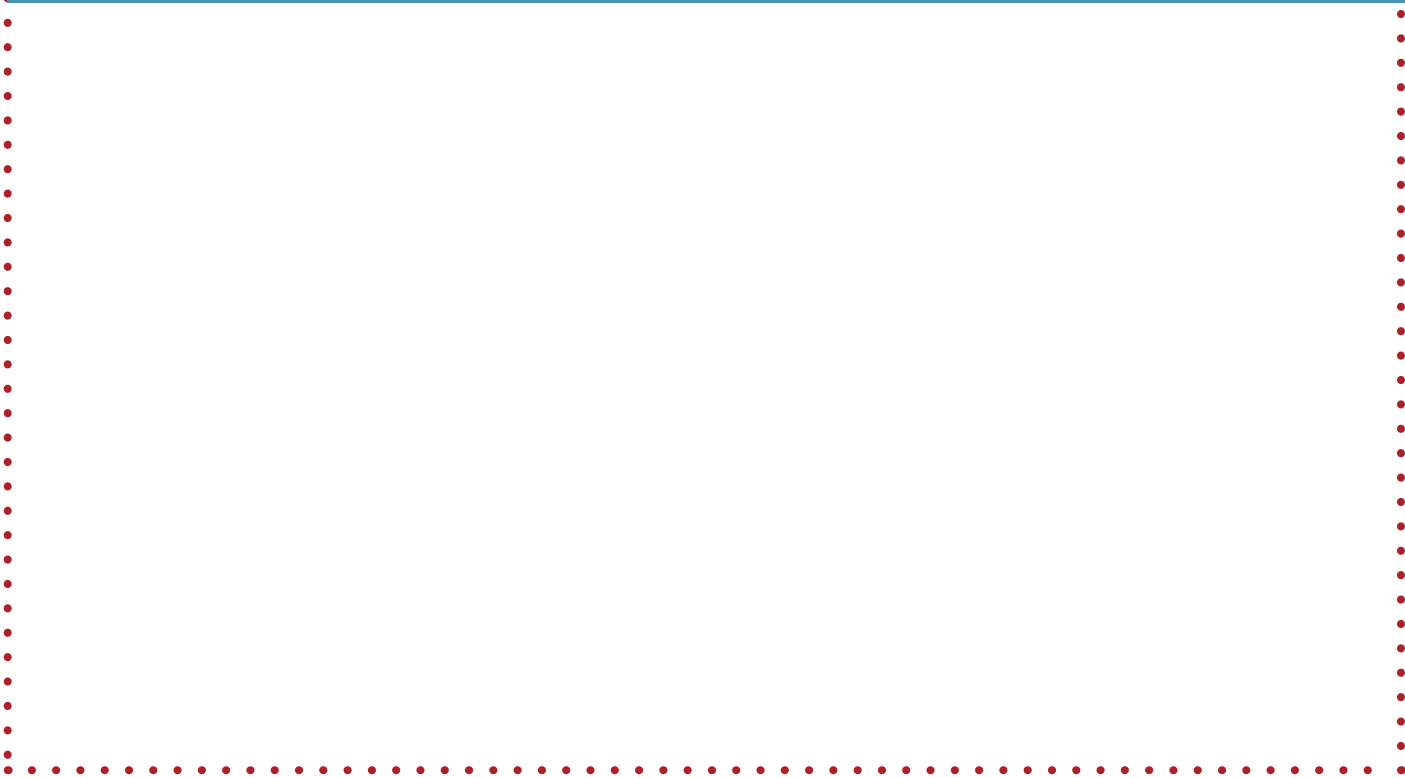
If I cannot avoid my triggers then I will try to think differently about them. my thoughts will be;



I will replace any angry behaviours with alternative behaviours such as;



The people I will need to help me succeed with this plan are;



Further Help

We hope that you think carefully about the points raised in this booklet and try to use the exercises to help you overcome your problem with anger. However, if you feel that you still need further help or have made little progress after completing this booklet then please speak to the member of staff who has supported you.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this booklet. Everyone can learn to control their anger. However, it just takes dedication and hard work in order to achieve this control. Remember that everything becomes easier with practice 😊