# **Train the Trainer Course, Day 2**

# **Exercise “Make a plan!”**

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| **Before – during – after an anger outburst** | |
| **Before anger stage** | |
| **Mindmap and play the witness strategy game** | * Use dialogue to help student reflect on signs predicting the outburst of anger – make a mindmap * Discuss it together and encourage him/her to develop an inner witness role to identify signs and inner dynamic * Use questions (see description above) * Recognise physiological and emotional signs * Pay notice to associated gestures |
| **Start a diary** | Start an anger diary to help you predict what situations are likely to set you off |
| **During anger stage** | |
| **Time out** | Take a 'time-out' when you start getting upset; to temporarily remove yourself from the situation that is provoking you to provide yourself with a space in which to calm down. |
| **Change topic** | Move the conversation away from what is bothering you and towards a more neutral topic |
| **Controlled Deep Breathing and Muscle Relaxation** | Focus on breathing, use a personal mantra.  *Your breathing rate and heart rate both increase when you become emotionally aroused. You can learn to reverse* these increases by **deliberately slowing your breathing** and/or **systematically relaxing your tense muscles**. Relaxing in this manner will help you to maintain control.  You may find yourself *breathing quick, shallow breaths when you are upset*. Allowing this shallow *chest-only breathing* to continue *will only exacerbate your anger*. Instead, **take action to redirect your breathing and relax your muscles so that you will calm down**. Set aside at least 15 minutes in which to do this exercise. Less time than this will not likely be beneficial! |
| **Slow Breathing** | 1. **Start your relaxation efforts by taking several slow and deep breaths in a row, each time taking care to *exhale for twice as long* as you inhale.** 2. **Count slowly to four as you breathe in, and then breathe out slowly as you count to eight.**  * As you do this, notice where the air in your lungs is going. Open your lungs and breathe deeply across the lung's full range. * Your breath should enter your belly first, then your chest, and finally your upper chest just below your shoulders. * Feel your ribs expand as your lungs expand. * Pay attention to how your ribs return to their original location as you exhale completely. * Continue this breathing pattern for several minutes, returning immediately to normal breathing if at any time you feel odd or out of breath.   Slowly, deliberate and controlled deep breathing in this manner will help return your breath to a more normal, relaxed pattern. Because all things in the body are connected to each other, it is very likely that as you control your breath, you will also cause your heart rate to slow down, and some of your muscular tension to abate too. |
| **Anger frequently manifests in the form of muscle tension** | *This tension can collect in your neck and shoulders* which may remain tense long after your anger is gone. *If your neck is tense,* continue with the exercise by slowly and gently (and we mean GENTLY) roll your head toward one shoulder and then towards the other. Coordinate your head role with your breathing. Roll your head gently to one side as you exhale, back to the centre as you inhale and to the other side as you exhale again. Carefully repeat this technique several times until you feel the muscles in your neck relax a little.  You can work out some of your shoulder tension by deliberately and carefully shrugging your shoulders and releasing them several times. Shoulder rolls backward and forward can also help. Using these techniques together will help you to relax.  As your face, neck, and shoulders become more relaxed, see if you can identify tension in other parts of your body (Your anger diary can help you to identify areas to focus on). |
| **Progressive Muscle Relaxation** | If relaxation techniques alone don't work, try the opposite:   1. Tighten and tense the stressed muscles for a slow count of ten and then release them. Be sure to release your tightened muscles immediately if you feel any pain! 2. Move from one muscle group to the next until you have treated each section of your body to a cycle of tension and release.   With a little practice, you can work your way down your entire body in a few minutes. Tensing and then relaxing your muscles can sometimes help you to achieve a better-quality relaxation than relaxation alone.  All in all, you should give yourself 20 to 30 minutes to calm down. Keep your breathing very deep and very regular during this time. Tell yourself that you are calming yourself down and soon you will be feeling much calmer.  Relaxation techniques such as described just above can help you to relax and have the positive side effect of helping you to stop focusing on being angry. They also give you time to think about the situation that has upset you; time that will help you generate fresh solutions to the problems you are facing. |
| **Work to control your response to triggers** | Anger-triggering thoughts occur automatically and almost instantaneously, so it will take some conscious work on your part to identify them and to substitute something more to your liking.  For example, imagine you have just been cut off while driving on the freeway. Take notice of the physiological anger signs that tell you you’re upset. **Take a deep breath and try to look at the situation rationally instead of going with your first impulse to attack**. Instead of automatically assuming the driver that cut you off did it deliberately (which might be your first thought), consider the possibility that the other guy did not see you. If you can consider that the provoking action was not aimed at you personally or was a mistake, it will be easier for you to tolerate.  When you feel justified in your anger, you are giving yourself permission to feel angry, whether it makes sense for you to feel that way. The faster you stop justifying your anger, the sooner it will begin to recede. While all anger you feel is legitimate in that it is the reality of how you feel at a time, this does not mean that your choosing to act on your anger feelings is always justified. Remember that being angry is quite bad for your health, and destructive towards your important relationships with others. |
| **After an anger outburst** | |
| **Avoidance strategy** | Avoid for a while provoking situations if you can |
| **Awareness raising and reflection through writing** | Make daily entries into your diary that document the situations you encounter that provoked you. To make the diary most useful, there are types of information you’ll want to record for each provoking event:   * What happened that gave you pain or made you feel stressed? * What was provocative about the situation? * What thoughts were going through your mind? * On a scale of 0-100 how angry did you feel? (Rage Rating) * What was the effect of your behaviour on you, on others? * Were you already nervous, tense, and pressured about something else? If so, what? * How did your body respond? Did you notice your heart racing, your palms sweating? * Did your head hurt? * Did you want to flee from the pressure or perhaps throw something? * Did you feel like screaming or did you notice that you were slamming doors or becoming sarcastic? * What did you do? * How did you feel immediately after the episode? * Did you feel differently later in the day or the next day? * What were the consequences of the incident? |
| **Observation** | After recording this information for a week or so, review your diary and look for reoccurring themes or “triggers” that make you mad. Triggers often fall into one of several categories, including:   * Other people doing or not doing what you expect them to do * Situational events that get in your way, such as traffic jams, computer problems, ringing telephones, etc. * People taking advantage of you * Being angry and disappointed in yourself * A combination of any of the above |
| **Awareness** | Prepare yourself with ways to minimize the danger of your losing control prior to entering your dangerous situations |
| **the maze game** | Look for patterns.  You’ll also want to look for anger-triggering thoughts that reoccur again and again. You can recognize these thoughts because they will generally involve one or more of the following themes:   * The perception that you have been victimized or harmed. * The belief that the person who provoked you meant you deliberately harm. * The belief that the OTHER person was wrong, that they should have behaved differently, that they were evil or stupid to harm you. |
| **Recording** | Use your anger diary to identify instances when you felt harm was done to you, why you thought the act was done deliberately, and why you thought that it was wrong. Tracking your thought patterns will help you begin to see the common themes in your experiences. Here are some examples of trigger thoughts to get you started:   * People do not pay enough attention to your needs; they do not care about you. * People demand/expect too much of you. * People are rude or inconsiderate. * People take advantage or use you. * People are selfish; they think only of themselves. * People criticize, shame, or disrespect you. * People are cruel or mean. * People are incompetent or stupid. * People are thoughtless and irresponsible. * People do not help you. * People are lazy and refuse to do their share. * People try to control or manipulate you. * People cause you to have to wait. |
| **Context** | And here is a list of situations where these themes are likely to occur.   * When stating a difference of opinion * While receiving and expressing negative feelings * While dealing with someone who refuses to cooperate * While speaking about something that annoys you * While protesting a rip-off * When saying “No” * While responding to undeserved criticism * When asking for cooperation * While proposing an idea   At the base of all trigger thoughts is the notion that people are not behaving properly and that you have every right to be angry with them. Most people find a few thoughts that frequently trigger their anger. Look for instances of situations that trigger your anger and see if you can’t identify the set of triggering thoughts that really do it for you.  The purpose of your diary is to help you identify patterns of behaviour and specific recurring elements that really “push your buttons”. The more accurately you can observe your feelings and behaviours and the more detailed your anger diary, the more likely you will be able to identify anger triggers and how you react to them. Understanding the ways in which you experience anger can help you plan strategies to cope with your emotions in more productive ways.  The purpose of your diary is to help you identify patterns of behaviour and specific recurring elements that really „push your buttons”. The more accurately you can observe your feelings and behaviours and the more detailed your anger diary, the more likely you will be able to identify anger triggers and how you react to them. Understanding the ways in which you experience anger can help you plan strategies to cope with your emotions in more productive ways. |
| **Tips** | Mediate on a mantra |
| **Controlled thinking** | People stop thinking clearly when they are angry. Angry people tend to make up their minds about a situation right away, and then spend so much time focusing on how they feel and how the situation affects them that they forget to pay attention to anything else. You have a much better chance of keeping yourself under control if you can manage to keep your attention from turning completely inward towards your hurt and/or angry feelings, and instead keep yourself focused on understand the situation you're faced with.  Do what you can to 'squeeze the meaning' out of your angry impulses. Ask yourself what the anger is telling you and what you can learn from it. What about this situation is making you angry? How can you improve the situation and improve your anger at the same time? Then, use your relaxation techniques to reduce your arousal.  Importantly, do not believe that you must respond to the anger-provoking situation right away. Most situations are flexible enough for you to take some time to gather yourself together, calm yourself down and really think about the situation before you must act. You might even take time to talk a troubling situation over with trusted advisers. The more you can approach a troubling situation in a prepared and relaxed manner, the greater are your chances of getting what you want from that situation. |
| **Reality testing** | Angry people blame others (or themselves) for things that have gone wrong. Underlying this blaming is an attribution that angry people make, which is that the target of their anger has caused things to go wrong. But this is not always the case!  (...) In order to better manage anger, then, it is important for angry people to slow down and not simply act on their aggressive first impulses, and instead do some reality testing to know whether their anger is truly justified or not. |