

Session 5

Anger and Resentment: The Myth of Power

Session 5 covers material in Chapter 5

Session Rationale: Sessions 5 and 6

For many prisoners, uncontrolled anger and reactive aggression are chronic problems that undermine their ability to get along in the world and often are at the root of their involvement in the criminal justice system. The prison environment including crowded conditions, restricted personal freedom, and fellow inmates struggling with anger management issues themselves can result in an individual being primed for anger on an almost continual basis. While the consequences of uncontrolled anger are undoubtedly damaging to the individual, the fallout to those around him or her can be devastating. In the United States alone, 1.3 million women yearly are the victims of a physical assault by an intimate partner, as are 835,000 men (U.S. Department of Justice, 2000). Each year, approximately 3.3 million reports of child abuse involving close to 6 million children are filed (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010). These incidents stemming from unregulated anger leave countless victims, locking many in intergenerational cycles of violence and setting the stage for a new generation of offenders. Until the skills to effectively manage explosive and destructive emotions are developed, there can be no real freedom.

By using these reappraisal strategies, participants' anger is reduced and a positive upward spiral of self-regulation and feelings of competence is launched.

For the past three decades, the dominant model of anger has been one put forth by Novaco (1977) which contends that anger is influenced by cognitive processes, physiological arousal, and behavioral reactions. These three interacting components determine how an individual experiences and expresses anger. Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) has long been recognized as the most effective approach to treating anger (Beck & Fernandez, 1998). Drawing from Novaco's model, HOH integrates CBT's change components such as modifying automatic and irrational thoughts, teaching problem solving skills, and guiding individuals in modifying hostile and negative beliefs to improve their anger management skills. Despite the proven effectiveness of CBT, some argue that its usefulness may not be as effective for those with limited emotional awareness and extremely impulsive reaction styles. In a sense, their emotions "hijack" them before they can enlist more adaptive response strategies.

Recently, mindfulness meditation has emerged as a promising intervention for reducing anger across a variety of settings with diverse populations including those in prison (Vannoy & Hoyt, 2004). Because its underlying mechanism is to increase self-

awareness through non-judgmental observation and acceptance of thoughts, feelings, and body sensations, mindfulness meditation may fill the gap left by more traditional cognitive-behavioral anger interventions (Wright et al., 2009). As participants gain practice sitting through uncomfortable body sensations, thoughts, and feelings without escaping or avoiding them, distress tolerance skills are increased. Through meditation, participants' relationships to their thoughts shift and a greater flexibility in response to anger provoking situations develops. In short – their anger fuse lengthens. What used to be an automatic cycle of anger triggers and reactions becomes a more intentional process. A gap emerges in which alternate ways of perceiving a situation can arise, which promotes new ways of responding to old cues. One participant told a story of being in the yard and having a basketball from a nearby game spill hot coffee over his legs. In the past, this startling experience would have provoked him to automatically respond by assaulting the younger man. However, as a result these new skills, he was able to notice the sensation of the coffee on his skin as well as the thoughts that were running through his mind. Instead of lashing out, he decided to use “Break...Breathe... And Choose”. Using this strategy enabled him to walk away and approach the younger man at a later time when he was calmer.

In the anger sessions, participants continue to develop emotional competence skills such as identifying anger triggers, rating the intensity of these emotions, exploring the feelings that exist beneath their anger, and developing alternative strategies to anger triggers. New ways of seeing and handling old situations are practiced through role play and guided visualizations. We have found that aspects of the program that are not specifically designed to address anger also contribute to reducing aggressive reactions. For example, studies have found that many inmates with insecure identities and low esteem will respond to perceived threats with violence as a means of self protection. Others react with aggression believing that in prison, one's self respect or “pride” is the only tangible asset they possess. As participants gain exposure to the Core Self model, they come to understand that the fundamental nature of the Self cannot be diminished or damaged through attacks of disrespect. Forgiving on neutral territory enables them to see the actions of others as misguided attempts to gain respect, power or control. By choosing to see in this new way, participants' anger is reduced and a positive upward spiral of self-regulation and feelings of competence is launched.

Session Goals:

- Reinforce emotional regulation skills by giving participants the opportunity to practice the body scan, 7-breath count, mindfulness meditation, and “Break... Breathe...And Choose”
- Review self-work from previous session.
- Introduce and explore concepts related to anger including anger styles, inter-generational transmission of anger, anger as a masking emotion, and the pay-offs and consequences of anger.
- Assign self-work for following session.

Exercises in Session:

- 5.1 Body Scan, 7-Breath Count, and Meditation
- 5.2 Review Self-Work
- 5.3 Thinking About Your Anger
- 5.4 Introduction to Anger Styles
- 5.5 Anger Style Group Game
- 5.6 Anger in Your Family
- 5.7 Dealing with Someone Else's Anger Role Play
- 5.8 What's Under the Anger?
- 5.9 The Last Word – Anger Goal Setting
- 5.10 Self-Work Assignment

Materials Needed:

- HOH book for each participant
- HOH video series: Week #7 DVD, Part 1
- TV with DVD player
- Whiteboard, chalkboard, or large poster paper
- Markers/chalk
- Pencils or pens
- Blank paper

Hand Outs/Worksheets:

S5H1: Anger Styles

S5H2: Self-Work

S5H3: Emotional Weather Report

Exercise 5.1 Body Scan, 7-Breath Count, and Meditation

- Facilitate the body scan, 7-breath count and meditation.
- From time to time at the end of the meditation, finish with a poem. Two poems are offered at the end of this session.

Observing Urges

Remind participants that during the meditation they are encouraged to sit still through the urge to move (to scratch or to move around) and just observe the urge instead of acting on it. In meditation we learn that we don't have to react to every urge that comes our way. Through meditation we gain the power to have an urge – the urge to do drugs or the urge to act in a way that we will regret later - without necessarily having to act on it. We gain increasing power to just see our urges without being a slave to them. We “don't have to bite the hook”. Each of us is more powerful than the urges that arise. And every urge that arises will pass away on its own.

Body Scan Script

Sit with your feet on the floor, your back straight but not rigid, and your body balanced and at ease. Imagine your head like a balloon with a slight tendency to float upwards... Close your eyes or put your gaze downward if you're not comfortable closing your eyes...

If you have a tendency to fall asleep, keep your eyes open but focus your gaze downward.

Starting with your feet, turn your attention to your body now. Feel the weight of your feet against the floor. Pay close attention to sensations in your feet.....

Move your awareness to your ankles then slowly up to your lower legs including your calves... Now become aware of your knees... and now your upper legs or thighs... If you notice any tension in your feet or legs, as you breathe out, let the tension go, let it melt away.....

Now move your awareness onto your back and slowly up your spine... If you are leaning back on a chair, notice the places on your back that have the most contact with the chair...

Now put your attention on the belly. Feel it rise and fall with each breath..... Notice how the chest expands and contracts as you breathe in and out..... Let any tension ride out on your out breath.....

Now bring your full attention to your shoulders. If you notice any tension in the shoulders, imagine it melting away as you breathe out... Let your shoulders relax..... Put your awareness into your upper arms, then lower arms, wrists, hands and fingers. If you notice any tension, let it go. Feel these areas relax.

Then bring all of your awareness back up to your shoulders and neck... now your jaw. Notice if your jaw is clenched. If it is, imagine your jaw muscles relaxing as you exhale...

Move your awareness to your face. Let your facial muscles relax. And then to your scalp and whole head..... Bring your awareness now to your body as a whole...

7-Breath Count Script

Bring your full attention to your breathing now. Don't try to change your breathing in any way. Begin by silently counting each in breath and each out breath, counting down from seven to one. If you lose count, no problem, just start where you think you were. Put most of your attention on your breathing and let the counting be like a soft whisper in the background. Again, put your attention on your belly and lungs expanding and contracting – the counting should be like a soft whisper in the background. Here is an example of how it will sound – you can do this now:

In breath 7
Out breath 7
In breath 6
Out breath 6 (notice the movement in the body)
In breath 5
Out breath 5
In breath 4
Out breath 4
In breath 3
Out breath 3
In breath 2
Out breath 2
In breath 1
Out breath 1

Mindfulness Meditation Script

Now we're going to move into the meditation practice. To do that, bring your attention to the rising and falling movement in your belly as you breathe in and out... Don't try to control your breathing in any way. Just breathe naturally and feel the movement of the breath and the changing sensations in your belly. Sometimes your breathing may be deep; sometimes it may be shallow. Your "job" is to simply be aware of it as it is, feeling the changing sensations of the entire rising movement and the entire falling movement... Just ride the waves of your breathing, moment to moment.....

Your mind will naturally wander from its focus on your breathing. That's just what the mind does. As soon as you notice that your attention has wandered from the breath, gently let go and return your awareness to your breathing again..... Let go of thoughts of the past or the future and return to the present – to the breath. Put all your attention on the sensations in your body as you breathe in and out... Let your breath be an anchor to the present moment.....

Sometimes our attention will move onto strong body sensations when we meditate. Rather than giving into the urge to scratch or cough or move, just observe what's happening in your body. What do the sensations feel like? Ride out the urge to move and then, bring your attention back to the breath.....

Every time you notice that your mind has wandered off into thoughts or daydreams, gently bring your attention back to your breath. Whether it is a subtle thought or a big drama that is going on in your mind, once you notice that your mind has wandered, just bring your attention back to the breathing. Feel your breath. Ride the waves of your breathing.....

When a sound, a thought, or a strong body sensation pulls your attention away from the breath, treat it with a “no big deal” attitude. Just let it go. You might imagine the sound or thought like a cloud floating through the vast open sky of awareness. The pure awareness of the Self is like a super Teflon. Nothing sticks to it. Let it go. Bring your attention back to the breath time and time again. Ride the waves of your breathing.....

You can stay focused on the belly rising and falling, expanding and contracting... Or, you can expand your awareness to the breath throughout your body as you breathe in and out. Get a sense of the whole body breathing, however that is for you..... Ride the waves of your breathing, aware from moment to moment to moment.....

Or, instead of the belly or whole body, you can focus your awareness on the sensations in your nose as the air moves in and out of your nostrils. Here the sensations are more subtle. If you focus on the nose, you might notice that the air is cooler as it enters your nostrils and warmer as you breathe out. Notice the changing sensations as you breathe in and out.....

Again, it's natural that you'll find yourself lost in thought from time to time. Each time you notice that your mind has wandered from your breath, without judging the meditation or yourself, simply let go and return your awareness to the breath again.....

When you practice meditation on your own, wherever you choose to focus – be it the belly, whole body, or nose - put your attention on the changing sensations there... When the mind wanders as it naturally will, as soon as you notice that it has wandered, gently let go and bring your attention back to the breath again. Let the breath be your anchor back to the present moment.....

Whenever you are ready, taking the time you'd like, you can return your awareness to the room once again ready to go on with the day.

Invite participants to ask questions or comment on the meditation.

Reference the log at the bottom of their self-work assignment where they keep track of the number of minutes they meditate each day. Ask how many days they meditated during the week, how long, and how it is going for them.

Explain:

It is natural in life for resistance to new things (like meditating) to arise. See if you can have your resistance (*I don't feel like it.... I'm busy now.... I can't do it.... this isn't working for me....etc.*) **AND** do the meditation anyway.

- **Ask:** Are you noticing any of your reactions to people and circumstance changing in your daily life? What are you noticing?

Exercise 5.2 Self-Work Review

A. Invite someone to share an Emotional Weather Report from the past week. Then have participants who completed the assignment form groups of 3 and share their EWRs.

If there are not enough facilitators to meet with each small group, it can be useful to ask for a volunteer within each group to do the job of keeping the exercise moving forward.

If you have sufficient facilitators and if participants have not completed an EWR, have them meet together in one group with a facilitator to complete their EWRs.

If reading or writing is difficult, they can respond verbally to the questions. (If a facilitator is not available, PALs (Peer Assistant Leaders) can be valuable resources in facilitating this process.

Facilitator Note: If you are allowed to take self-work assignments outside the classroom (i.e. home if you are a volunteer or staff), invite participants to pass in their EWRs so you can offer comments and affirmation.

B. Invite participants to share the sentences that they chose from Chapter 5 and explain why these sentence were meaningful to them.

Exercise 5.3 Thinking about Your Anger

Explain:

In today's and the following session we're going to explore the topic of anger.

Anger is a natural emotion that everyone experiences from time to time. There is nothing wrong with feeling angry. Often it's a signal that something in our lives is wrong, unfair, or unsafe.

Anger only becomes a problem when it gets out of control. Or if we find ourselves becoming angry all the time and staying that way.

Anger also becomes a problem when we know only unhealthy ways to deal with it such as temporarily soothing ourselves with drugs or alcohol or using violence.

Understanding our anger and learning strategies to deal effectively with it not only gives us more control over our emotions but over our lives as well.

- Read through the following questions titled "Thinking about Your Anger" and give participants an opportunity to write their answers on a blank piece of paper or the back of a handout.

Thinking about Your Anger

- 1) Generally, how angry are you? (Rate yourself on a scale of 1-10) _____
1= almost no anger 10= extremely angry
- 2) What do you do when you are angry? How do you express/show it?
- 3) Does your typical response to anger usually lead to some kind of healthy resolution or does it seem to lead to more problems?
- 4) Do you hold onto anger for long periods of time?
- 5) Is there anything about the way you express anger that you would like to change? If so, what?

- Ask some participants to share their responses, with an emphasis on question #5.

Exercise 5.4 Introduction to Anger Styles

Explain:

People have different anger styles. Some people fly off the handle easily, while others let their anger simmer for a long time until finally they explode.

Or maybe you know someone who deals really effectively with their anger by expressing how they feel in a mature way and then moving on.

Understanding our anger style is an important step in helping us manage how, where, and when we express our anger.

Being aware of our personal anger styles is an important step in helping us take control of our lives and keep our real power.

Changing our anger style might feel strange at first and it may take practice, but it can be done because in the end, it's simply a choice we make.

- **Hand out Anger Styles Worksheet (S5H1).**
- As you read the list ask participants to check off the ones that describe the anger styles they use.
- Tell participants not to fill out the box at the bottom of the sheet. They will do this in Exercise 5.9.

Anger Styles

- Hot Head:** Explodes easily and is always on the edge of becoming angry
- Silent Type:** Shuts down and is real quiet once they become angry
- Cold Shoulder:** Won't deal with the person who makes them angry
- Long Fuse:** Can take a lot before they get angry but then flips out
- Pass the Buck:** Keep anger hidden from the person who triggered him and takes it out on someone else
- The Waiter:** Hides anger during the conflict, but gets revenge another time
- The Coper:** Gets mad, but deals with it in healthy ways like blowing off steam getting some exercise or talking to friends
- The Faker:** Pretends that they are not angry
- The "Numb"er:** Tries to escape feelings of anger by using drugs, alcohol, or sex to numb how they're really feeling
- The Masker:** Hides their anger in humor or another emotion
- The Stewer:** Thinks about something for a long time before getting angry
- The Blamer:** Blames someone else for making them explode
- Other: _____

My 2 Anger Goals:
These goals need to be concrete, realistic and positive

1. _____

2. _____

Discussion Questions for Anger Styles Worksheet

- What anger style or styles best describes you?
- Give one example (an actual situation) of when you used the anger style you use the most.
- Have you always had this anger style or has the way you've expressed your anger changed over the years?
- Is your anger style "working" for you?

Exercise 5.5 Anger Style Group Game

Explain:

To understand how these anger styles work in your day to day life we're going to play a game.

- Divide the group into two teams.
- Give the following directions:

I am going to read a scenario and the team that raises a hand first will have the chance to answer the question. Wait until I read the entire question before raising your hand. If the team who receives the question is wrong, then the other team will have a chance to answer. Teams will receive one point for each correct answer.

Scenario 1: Your best friend (or your closest associate) inside the walls made you upset because s/he won't give you some of the food s/he got from the canteen even though you've often given him/her some of yours. When s/he asks you what is wrong afterwards, you say "nothing". Which anger style is this?

Answer: The Faker

Scenario 2: You make fun of your friend about her/his haircut so s/he gets upset and starts to tease some young kid who just came into the institution. Which anger style is your friend showing?

Answer: Pass the Buck

Scenario 3: You decided not to play cards with your friend because s/he did not help you out with some GED school work that you needed a little help with. You never told her/him that s/he upset you. Instead you wanted to get her/him back at the right time. Which anger style is this?

Answer: The Waiter

Scenario 4: Someone you considered a friend has been making fun of you because of a new "friend" that you've been hanging out with and it has become pretty annoying. At first you just blow off all of her/his stupid comments because you're used to her/him running off at the mouth. But s/he won't let up this time. You don't react until s/he makes his 50th stupid comment. You immediately start swearing at him and run toward him as if you are about to hit him. Which anger style is this?

Answer: Long Fuse

Scenario 5: You're on the outside and you're so mad at your friend that you decide to have a couple of drinks to get your mind off it. Which anger style is this?

Answer: The "Numb"er

Scenario 6: When your child’s mother (father) wrongly accused you of something, you told him/her that you didn’t do it and it makes you upset that they would accuse you of something you didn’t do. After saying this in an honest but respectful way, you decide to go lift weights to let off some steam. Which anger style is this?

Answer: *The Coper*

- Tally the points.

Exercise 5.6 Anger in Your Family Discussion

Explain:

How we deal with our anger can often come from what we learn in our family. Think about the anger styles of people in your family or people you grew up with.

Facilitator Note: Use this discussion as an opportunity to explore family patterns of emotional regulation both in terms of what participants observed and learned from their own caregivers as well as what they are passing on to their children. Encourage participants to put themselves in their children’s shoes and imagine what it feels like for them to see their parents express their anger. Does their anger expression make their children feel safe or fearful? Are they creating healthy patterns of emotional expression for their children or legacies of fear?

Anger in My Family Discussion

- How would you describe the anger styles of your mother, father, grandparents, siblings, or other close family members? *Look at your sheet for reminders of the styles.*
- How did your caregivers (or important adults in your life) express their anger?
- What are the similarities and differences between how your caregivers managed their anger and how you manage your anger?
- Do you see any patterns?
- In what ways did their anger styles affect you?
- How has *your* anger style affected your children?

Exercise 5.7 Dealing with Someone Else's Anger Role Play

Explain:

As children, we are not equipped to deal with other people's anger. We are entirely dependent on adults to manage their own anger and shield us from the anger of others. And when they fail to do this, the effects can be devastating.

Children exposed to uncontrolled adult anger such as domestic violence and child abuse can carry those emotional wounds for years.

But as adults, we have the power and resources to effectively deal with the anger of others.

And to handle someone else's anger we're going to use the same skill we use to handle our own anger.

For the next exercise, Steps to Handling Someone Else's Anger, we are assuming that **you are physically safe and don't need to react immediately to secure your safety...**

Facilitator Note: One step of dealing with someone else's anger involves Forgiving on Neutral Territory. It may be necessary to remind participants of this process (Chapter 7 in HOH). In using this skill, participants can reframe how they perceive another's anger. Instead of personalizing it, they can see it as a misguided call for respect or help.

- Write the Steps to Handling Someone Else's Anger on the board.

Steps to Handling Someone Else's Anger

1. Breathe.

2. **Choose a Cool Thought.** See the situation on Neutral Territory (see their light even if they are lost in their angry subpersonality - *rather than personalizing the situation*, try and understand what the other person is feeling, thinking, and reacting to.)

3. **Choose a Good Move.** Help the person solve their problem if possible. Take responsibility and apologize if you have done something that triggered their anger. Walk away if necessary.

Dealing with the Someone Else's Anger Role Plays

- Divide into smaller groups of 4-6 participants.
- Ask groups to identify a situation (to role play) in which they might have to deal with another person's anger.
- Each group then chooses a director from within the group to assign parts and guide the role play.

- The group will decide on the setting, the roles played, and what has happened immediately prior to the opening of the scene.
- **The group must use Break...Breathe...And Choose to respond to the other person's anger.**
- They can identify the Cool Thoughts to the audience by raising their hand and saying the Cool Thought aloud, by pointing to their head, or by holding up a sheet of paper with the words written on it. The Good Moves can be demonstrated through the action in the role play.
- Before doing the role play, the director "sets the scene" for the audience.
- By the end of the role play, the acting group must have identified the **Cool Thoughts and Good Moves** to the audience.
- **If the actors do the role plays without identifying the Cool Thoughts, stop the role play and prompt them.**
- Praise actors for their efforts. Provide reinforcement for role plays in which Cool Thoughts and Good Moves were effective in attaining a positive, realistic, and concrete solution to the trigger.

Discussion Questions for the Anger Role Plays

- In the past, what Hot Thoughts or Risky Moves might you have had in response to someone else's anger?
- How can Forgiving on Neutral Territory help us deal with someone else's anger more effectively?
- What else can you do to help yourself not get so triggered?
- How might we deal differently with someone else's anger if we are the person who triggers it?
 - *Take responsibility for any damage we have caused.*
 - *Apologize for any harm we have done.*
 - *Work harder not to get triggered ourselves.*

Exercise 5.8 What's Under the Anger?

- Have participants open HOH book to bottom of page 62 and ask for a volunteer to read "Under the Anger."
- Read the *Pause and Reflect* on page 63 aloud and ask participants to listen and silently answer the questions asked during this exercise.
- Read the full two paragraphs on page 63 in HOH.
- Ask for participants to share a time when they felt or expressed anger, but a deeper feeling existed beneath the anger?

- Ask whether our culture, families, or communities reinforce the expression of anger (especially for men and boys) as opposed to more vulnerable emotions such as sadness, grief, and fear.

Exercise 5.9 The Last Word - Anger Goals

Explain:

In the next sessions we will be addressing the issue of anger more.

An important part of taking control of our anger is to make a real commitment to changing how we express our anger.

Examples of anger goals might be:

- *Never striking or threatening to hit my girlfriend/boyfriend when I'm angry*
 - *Not using anger to intimidate or control people in my life*
 - *Not allowing my children see me lose control of my anger*
 - *Removing myself from situations if I can't control my anger*
- Allow participants a few minutes to think of two goals they can make regarding their anger and write these on the bottom of **S5H1**.
 - Go around the room and ask participants to share their anger goals.

Exercise 5.10 Self-Work Assignment

- **Hand out and review self-work (S5H2).** Note that there is an additional handout for the week (**S5H2a**). If copying one for every participant is a burden, it can be read aloud to the group and discussed.

Reinforce that the sessions are an introduction to these issues. The work needs to be continued on their own in order to get the most out of the course and fully participate.

Stress that the course is NOT ONE DAY A WEEK (although that may be the only time they come together as a group.) The course is SEVEN DAYS a week. If they come to the course and don't work with the material during the rest of the week, then they get the benefit of only one-seventh of the course.

- **Hand out The Emotional Weather Report (S5H3)**
- **Read "Cool Thoughts and Good Moves" chart in self-work aloud.**

- Remind participants that most every week a part of their self-work assignment will include the Emotional Weather Report. Ask participants to bring their EWR back to the group each week. Encourage them not to wait until just before the class to reflect on the weather report but to do the report during the week.

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