

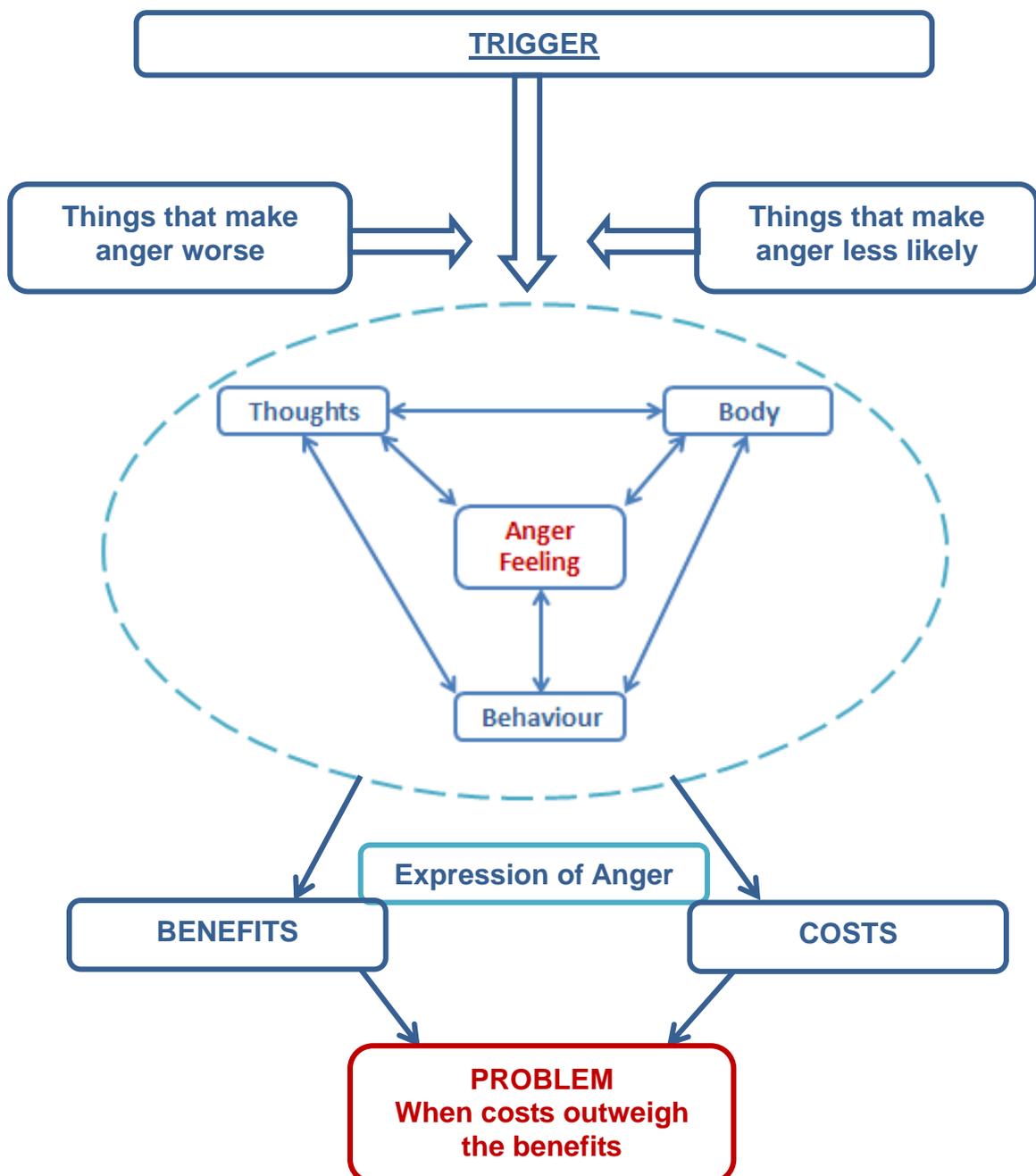


Working on Anger Week 2



Where are we so far?

We are now in week 2 of the course and it might help to think back to the picture we drew up last week to help understand anger. Anger can be understood by considering the effects it has on your body, thinking and what you do. Anger is usually set off by hassles, frustrations, a sense of unfairness or feeling abused. There are times when anger can be helpful, but often getting angry can cause problems. Only you can tell if anger is a problem for you, but usually if the costs of anger are greater than the benefits of anger, it is a problem.



What can make anger worse?

We have already looked at what situations might set off your anger, we can call these “immediate triggers”. There are also more general things that can make anger worse and can affect whether an “immediate trigger” sets off your anger. These things can often be hidden and can be more difficult to notice than “immediate triggers”. However, it can be difficult to control anger if you are not aware of what may be behind it.

The sort of things that might be behind your anger include:

- Poor sleep
- Drugs and alcohol
- Relationships
- Stress, depression, anxiety, trauma, bereavement
- Living conditions

There may also be other things you can think of that are behind your anger.

Exercise 1: what makes your anger worse?

Tick any of the following that you think may make your anger worse. You may find this exercise quite difficult and it might help to think about what someone who knows you very well might say about you.

- Poor sleep
- Drugs and alcohol
- Relationships
- Stress, depression, anxiety, trauma, bereavement
- Living conditions
- Anything else (please say what)

.....

Sleep

Poor sleep can make anyone feel irritable and short tempered. The same things will not trigger anger when you have had a good nights sleep as when you have had a bad nights sleep. The following are some examples of the link between sleep and anger:

Emily

Emily is very stressed at work. She found it very hard getting to sleep as she was thinking about all the things that were going wrong at work and how she felt unable to sort them out. She didn't get to sleep until around 2am. When driving to work she was "cut up" at the traffic lights and felt a huge rage come upon her, she thought about it all day at work and was very irritable with her colleagues. Normally she would have just shrugged and driven on.

Gavin

Gavin is a father to two children under 5. Both children have been ill and were up a lot in the night. Gavin had a very disturbed night's sleep and woke feeling exhausted in the morning. Both children seemed better in the morning and were full of energy getting all their toys out. When Gavin tripped over a toy train in the middle of his hallway he flew off the handle with his children and shouted at them.

A bad night's sleep may be caused by any of the following:

- Disturbances
- Discomfort
- Troubling thoughts
- Difficulty getting to sleep / waking early

Often sleep is affected by bad habits that come about during periods of stress and hang about after the stress has gone.

Sleep – possibilities

The following areas are useful to consider when trying to ensure that you have a good nights sleep. Breaking bad habits and sticking to a good sleep routine will help you get a good night sleep.

Caffeine

Caffeine, which is in tea, coffee, chocolate and cola, is a stimulant. If you drink caffeine before going to bed you may find that getting to sleep is difficult because your body is all hyped up. It can help to try to avoid caffeine 2-3 hours before going to bed or to drink less of it.

Smoking

Nicotine, which is in cigarettes is also a stimulant and will hype your body up, making it difficult to wind down and fall asleep. It may be worth not smoking so much or at all in the evening and definitely not if you wake up in the night.

Alcohol

You may feel that alcohol helps you to get to sleep but like caffeine and nicotine, alcohol is a stimulant. It does not help you to sleep in the long term and it makes it more likely that you will wake in the night and you will have poor quality sleep. Avoid using alcohol to get you to sleep.

Milky drinks

It seems like an old wives' tale but it is true. Hot milky drinks like Horlicks, Ovaltine and Hot chocolate can sometimes help with getting to sleep.

Food/drink - eat as little as possible after 7 or 8 pm.

It can be difficult for your body to try to shut down for sleep if it is busy trying to digest a big meal at the same time. Your body takes around 3 hours to digest a big meal.

Bed

Consider whether your bed is comfortable? It may sound obvious but if you are not comfortable then it is unlikely that you will get a good nights sleep.

Room

Again, it sounds obvious but consider if your room is warm/cool enough and comfortable. Try, if you can, to avoid being in a bedroom that is very noisy due to outside noise.

Partner

If your partner keeps you awake by snoring or fidgeting then it might be worth considering sleeping separately if you feel that the possible benefits of this will outweigh any disadvantages.

Exercise

Exercise can help with sleep difficulties. It is important to keep any exercise in the evening moderate (not vigorous) and to consider not doing exercise after 8 pm, to avoid overstimulating your body just before winding down for sleep

Relaxation

Finally, consider having a “wind down” routine before you go to bed, to help prepare you for sleep. It is very hard to keep going at 100 miles/hour and then to go straight to sleep. Your “wind down” routine will be personal to you but may include a warm bath, reading, listening to music you like. It is probably not helpful to listen to very stimulating music, watch very exciting television or play very intense computer games just before you plan to sleep.

Drugs and Alcohol

You may smoke or drink to help get through difficult situation or block things out but, in the long term, they are likely to make your anger worse. When you have been drinking or taking drugs your body will not be as restful as usual and you can get wound up before there are even any triggers for your anger.

This is not giving yourself a good chance of controlling your anger. Alcohol and drugs can also be a trigger for anger because they make you less able to control or stop your behaviour.

Drugs and Alcohol – possibilities

Diet

Although food is not really a drug we have included it here as there are some important things to consider. It is important to ensure you have a balanced diet to give yourself a good chance of feeling full of energy and not lethargic/hyped up. If you feel fit and healthy you are more likely to be able to take on new information and consider new ways of thinking and behaving.

Caffeine

Caffeine is a stimulant and raises your arousal levels, making you feel hyped up. If you drink a lot of caffeine you may wish to consider reducing the amount of drinks you have with caffeine in. A good guide is to aim for less than 8 drinks with caffeine per day.

Nicotine

Nicotine, in cigarettes, is a stimulant and if you smoke you may want to reduce the amount you smoke or give up altogether. Reducing to under 15 cigarettes a day will give some health benefits if you feel that giving up is too much. Your GP can help you if you want more information about this. Also the NHS website www.gosmokefree.com has information on giving up smoking.

Alcohol

Alcohol is often involved in difficulties with anger. When you get drunk you are more likely to get aggressive or violent and it is best to keep alcohol use to a minimum. It is recommended that women do not drink more than 2-3 units per day (14 per week) and men do not drink more

than 3-4 units per day (21 per week). Talk to your GP if you feel you have a problem with alcohol.

Illicit drugs

Drugs such as cannabis, cocaine, heroin, amphetamines etc, will all have an effect on your anger and it is best to avoid using them (for a number of reasons). Again, your GP will be able to help if you wish.

Relationships

Difficult relationships with others can be behind anger difficulties. We sometimes learn unhelpful ways of dealing with situations when we are growing up and over time we sometimes get into unhelpful (or abusive) relationship patterns. These difficulties can happen with relatives, friends or people at work.

Some relationships can be full of anger and conflict and these make anger problems worse. Other times you may just find that you are in stressful, difficult relationships. Of course, some relationships can be very supportive and act as a way of reducing anger and have a calming effect.

It is important to think about the relationships that you are in and have been in. Are relationships making your anger worse?

If you think that difficult relationships may be behind your anger then you may find it helpful to talk to someone you trust. Counselling (short term supportive relationship, problem solving) can help with relationship difficulties. Your GP will be able to help you get to see a counsellor.

Psychological

Psychological difficulties such as stress or depression can make an anger problem worse. Sometimes the psychological difficulty itself can be the cause of your anger. Difficulties include:

- Stress*** Family, work, ill health, too much to do, financial worries, can all make you feel stressed.
- Anxiety*** High levels of worry and fear, often about the future.
- Depression*** Low mood, lack of motivation.
- Bereavement*** Can be a problem when it feels like there have been a lot of bereavements in a short period of time, if it was someone special, or if the person died in difficult circumstances.
- Trauma*** Can be from childhood or recent and could be a one off trauma or lots of traumatic events.
- Abuse*** Childhood, recent, sexual, physical.
- Other*** Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, phobia, health worries.

Psychological – possibilities

If you feel that any of the above difficulties apply to you and you want to do something about them then there are a number of different ways you can get help:

1. Talking with someone you trust can often help, especially if your difficulties are recent and relatively mild. Sharing a problem can make it easier to see what it is about and what you might do that could help.
2. Internet: there are a number of good websites and self-help booklets. Two good websites are www.ntw.nhs.uk/pic/?p=selfhelp and www.glasgowsteps.com
3. Your local library and bookshops will all stock a selection of self help books. Clients that we have seen in individual work have found some of the following helpful:

<u>Book Title</u>	<u>Author(s)</u>
Overcoming irritability and anger	Will Davis
Overcoming anxiety	Helen Kennerley
Overcoming depression	Paul Gilbert
Overcoming obsessive compulsive disorder	David Veale & Rob Wilson
Overcoming social anxiety and shyness	Gillian Butler
Overcoming low self esteem	Melanie Fennell
Breaking free (for adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse)	Carolyn Ainscough & Kay Toon

If you feel that you would find individual therapy helpful you should speak with your GP. Your GP is able to refer you to a counsellor, Primary Care Mental Health Worker or Psychologist, all of whom will see you in or near your GP practice and within 3 months.

Living Conditions

There are some things, usually quite practical things, that can just make life more complicated and stressful. These include:

- Debt
- Overcrowding
- Living in a “bad area”
- Domestic abuse
- Employment (difficulties or lack of)

Sometimes there is nothing obvious that can be done immediately to make things better. In these cases it can be helpful to realise what is making your anger worse and then trying to live around it, knowing why things are hard.

Other times it is possible to change circumstances and there are a variety of agencies that can help (Citizens’s Advice Bureau, housing department, job centre). It can be helpful to use a problem solving approach when tackling these difficulties.

This involves 5 steps:

1. Identify the problem
2. Identify a number of possible solutions
3. Pros and cons for each solution
4. Choose a solution
5. Do it!

Jim

Jim found that one of the things behind his anger was difficult, noisy neighbours. He lived in a local authority flat and the neighbours in the flat above were often very noisy late at night – revving the car when they came back, arguing loudly and playing loud music often until the early hours of the morning. This disturbed Jim’s sleep, leading to him being more irritable the next day. He also got very irritated when they were being noisy and would take it out on anyone who was near him, particularly his partner. He didn’t like the effect that his irritability was having on his relationship and he decided to try to problem solve the situation:

1. Identify the problem

Jim realised that part of the problem was noisy neighbours

2. Identify possible solutions

- a) Ask them to be quieter at night
- b) Buy ear plugs
- c) Speak with the housing office and ask advice regarding re-housing or making a formal complaint

3. Pros and cons for each solution

- a) it might work immediately, but they might just become more noisy just to be awkward
- b) might be less disturbed by the noise but it doesn’t really deal with the problem
- c) a bit of an effort but should pay off in the longer term with a good outcome

4. Choose a solution

Jim decided to try option c)

5. Do it!

He went to the housing office who advised him to put in a formal complaint which they took forward and it led to the eviction of his neighbours.

Exercise 2: what might you need to do next?

Look back at the last exercise and the things that you thought may make your anger worse. Do you want to add or change anything?

.....
.....

What do you think you may need to do next?

Hidden problem

Possibilities

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Recognising when you get angry

Being able to recognise when you get angry is the first step in getting control of your anger. Often the easiest way to do this is to be able to notice the bodily sensations linked with your anger. Noticing the early warning signs to your anger will help you keep control in a situation.

Bodily sensations

Remember, anger is a physical emotion and when you get angry your body responds. The sort of bodily sensations that you can look out for include feeling tense, sweating, breathing faster etc. These sensations are a reaction to stress and the technical name for this is the “fight-flight response”. This is something that is very ancient and goes back to when we were cavemen, facing life-threatening stresses such as attacks by large animals. The fight-flight response is very useful for life-threatening events because it alerts us to a threat and puts our minds and bodies on the alert. Chemicals (e.g. adrenalin) are released into our bloodstreams and our body changes to cope with the possibility of fighting or running.

Fight – flight

There are a number of physical reactions when our body goes into fight-flight including:

Breathing increases To get more oxygen into the blood and blood into the muscles needed to fight / run.

Pupils dilate To let in more light and improve your vision.

Vigilance improves So you focus on the source of danger. This will make you feel keyed up and easily startled.

Sweating This cools you down and makes you more slippery so you are less easy to grab.

Stomach churning Because your body is concentrating on being able to fight or run and not on digesting your last meal.

These changes all make you ready to fight or run. However, these days we do not live in caves and most times there is not really a life-threatening situation. Unfortunately, our bodies have not caught up with us and we still get the physical reaction. If you frequently get angry or stressed the effect on your body can affect your long term health:

- ◆ Immune system
- ◆ Gastrointestinal problems (irritable bowel syndrome, ulcers)
- ◆ Blood pressure problems

Early warning signs

Although it may sometimes feel like it, you will not usually go from calm to angry in one quick step. There are usually some warning signs that you are becoming angry. These include:

- ◆ Feeling tense
- ◆ Losing your sense of humour
- ◆ Voice getting louder
- ◆ Breathing getting quicker
- ◆ “sizing up” another person
- ◆ seeing red / white/ black/ mist
- ◆ feeling very angry very quickly

Remember, all of these signs can be understood as a result of our body mistakenly thinking that it needs to prepare to fight or run.

Exercise 1: noticing when you get angry

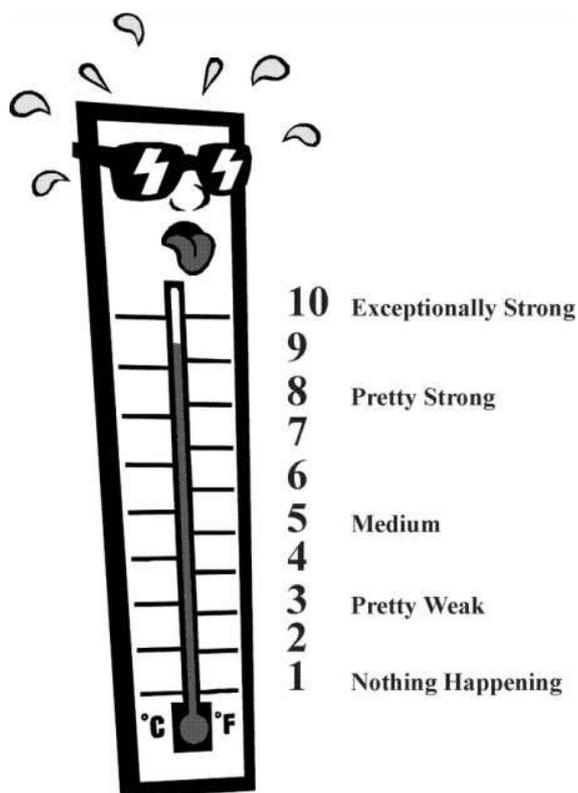
Think back to the most recent time you got very angry and try to answer the following:

2. My early warning signs of anger (tick all that apply and add any others)

- tensing fists, muscles stiffening, jaws clenching
- Losing my sense of humour
- My voice getting louder
- My breathing gets faster
- I find myself “sizing up” another person
- I see red/white/black/mist
-
-

Anger thermometer

Using an anger thermometer can be a useful way of measuring your anger. Consider the following:



When your feelings change you go up and down on the thermometer. It is not possible to get from 0° to 100° without going through all the other temperatures. It is the same with anger, anger is not an all or nothing emotion, you move up the scale on the way to the top. When thinking about anger control you will need to do something before you get “too hot” and go too far up the thermometer. You can use your own words to make the thermometer make most sense for you.

Exercise 2: anger thermometer

Look at the thermometer below and rate how you feel right now. Listen to our imaginary scenes and rate how you would feel at each point.



Right now

Scenario 1

Scenario 2

Scenario 3

Scenario 4

Calm the Emotional Brain: Take SToC & Act

STOP, THINK of the Consequences & the ACT

The aim of this section is to learn to buy yourself some time so that you can act thoughtfully rather than react without thinking.

Time out

This sounds simple but can be difficult to do when it comes down to it. The idea is that you need time to think about what you are going to do to stop yourself getting angry. Think about a basket ball game, where if things are not going well the coach can call time out. The game then stops and the coach can spend a few moments with the team thinking about ways to improve their game. Ways in which you might buy yourself some time include:

- Walk away
- Count to ten
- Distract yourself
- Keep quiet / bite your tongue

Not all of these ways will work for you, different ways work for different people. Remember, the key to using time out successfully is to use it early enough, when your anger is below 5 or 6 on the thermometer.

Breathing

Breathing techniques are a bit like relaxation but are quicker to do. This is essentially a quick way to calm your body. When you get stressed your breathing can quicken and become shallow, increasing the bodily effects of stress. Correcting your breathing can sort out your arousal levels quickly and can be a way of switching off the “fight-flight” reaction.

When you are starting out with this it can be easier to lie down. Choose somewhere where you won't be disturbed and where you feel comfortable. Take a slow normal breath (not a deep breath) and think "1" to yourself. As you breathe out, think "*relax*"; breathe in again and think "2", breathe out and think "*relax*". Keep doing this up to 10. When you reach 10, reverse and start back down to 1. Try to put all else out of your mind. It may help to see the numbers and the word 'relax' in your mind's eye. If you feel dizzy, stop - something is not right.

For this to be a helpful strategy you will need to practise until you feel confident enough to try it when you feel yourself getting angry.

Diaphragmatic breathing

Place one hand on your chest and the other over your belly button. As you breathe in, the hand on your stomach should be pushed out while the hand on your chest should not move. As you breathe out, your stomach should pull in. Your chest should not move.

To help, breathe in through your nose, purse your lips and breathe out slowly through your mouth. If you are a chest breather, you may find this difficult at first. If you can't get the hang of this, lie on your back on the floor and practise as it is easier to do in this position.

Put these two exercises together and do them twice a day. Once you get good at them, practise when you are at work, sitting on the bus, watching TV etc. The aim is to be able to do this no matter where you are. No one will notice you doing them.

Breathing Retraining

Take a breath in and think "**1**"

Breathe out and think "**relax**"

Take a breath in and think "**2**"

Breathe out and think "**relax**"

Repeat up to **10** and then back down to **1**

Concentrate only on breathing and on the number and "**relax**" in the mind's eye.

Use slow normal breathing (10-12 breaths per minute).
Breathe in through nose. Purse your lips and breathe out slowly through mouth.

Use the diaphragm - as you breathe in, your stomach should push out while your chest should not move.

As you breathe out, your stomach should pull in. Your chest should not move when you breathe out.

Practise twice a day in different places.

Progressive Muscular Relaxation (PMR)

Anger fills you with energy and tenses the muscles. PMR teaches you to manage this by:

Teaching you how to relax the muscles
Teaching you how to control your breathing

These two skills will teach you how to control your body. The easiest way to learn it is by using a tape/CD. You will get a CD in Class 2. It is yours to keep. PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING BEFORE USING THE CD.

PMR divides into three parts:

Part 1) Deep Relaxation

Part 2) Rapid Relaxation

Part 3) Prevention

PART 1: Learning Deep Relaxation

Deep relaxation is the form most favoured by experts. You will need a CD player.

One word of warning. If you have any problems such as a back injury and are concerned that PMR might make it worse, ask your GP for advice.

What is it?

PMR teaches you how to relax your body and mind. You first become aware of the way anger affects your body (*'I didn't realise that my shoulders were up at my ears all day'*). Once you become aware of this, you then use the CD to get rid of it. Once you get good at it, you will feel anger creep into your body at a much earlier stage, so you will be able to nip it in the bud.

Like all skills, PMR takes time to pick up. You should expect that it will take a few weeks to even start to feel relaxed when you play the CD.

Bear in mind that you are learning something that might be new to you or you might be out of practice with, so be patient.

Where should you play the CD?

Play it in a room where you can get some peace and quiet and where you can be warm and comfy. Try different rooms to see which is best for you.

DON'T play the CD while driving your car, for obvious reasons.

Should you sit or lie down?

Suit yourself. The best places may be the bed or the settee. You may prefer the floor. If you have a comfy chair (recliners are very good), you could use this. If you are prone to falling asleep during relaxation it may be best to sit up rather than lie down.

When should you play your CD?

Many people find it hard to find time for PMR. You must work at this. Perhaps start at aiming to do PMR 4-7 times a week.

What will happen when you play the CD?

You will hear a voice. You will tense and relax various muscles as instructed. The idea is that you become aware of the difference between tension and relaxation in your muscles.

The CD will then lead you to slow your breathing to a steady pace.

Toward the end of the CD, you will move onto ways to relax your mind. After the CD stops talking, you may want to just stay where you are to enjoy the relaxed feeling.

Please note that this is not a hypnotic tape so don't worry about going into a trance. You will be in complete control.

IF YOU EXPERIENCE ANY PECULIAR SENSATIONS WHICH MAKE YOU FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE, THEN STOP USING THE CD IMMEDIATELY & CONSULT A HEALTH PROFESSIONAL

9 tips to help you relax

1. Get as comfy as you can before you start. Take off your shoes and wear loose clothes. Make sure the room is warm. If you can, take the phone off the hook. Make sure no one in the house comes in the room while you play the CD. If they want to join in from the start then that is fine.
2. At first, you should play the CD when you are feeling fairly calm. You will be able to concentrate better. This will let you pick up the skill more quickly.
3. When you go to play the CD, you may think of all the other things you should be doing instead. This is a common experience when learning relaxation. Simply return your attention to the voice on the CD. You may have to do this several times.
4. As with learning any skill, practice makes perfect. So play the tape each day. Try to use it at the same time. Let relaxation come naturally. Don't try to rush it. When the feeling comes, enjoy it.
5. Use your Breathing Retraining skills to boost the relaxation. Practise slowing down your breathing to about 10-12 breaths per minute at various times of the day (use the seconds hand on your watch). This will help you keep your body calm right across the day.
6. PMR can leave you feeling nicely drowsy. Some people fall asleep. If you are one of them, don't worry, but bear in mind that you are learning a skill. So you will get more out of it if you can stay awake. If you need to be alert after using the tape, e.g. driving, make sure that you feel fully on the ball before setting off.
7. You may find that when you tense your muscles, you hold your breath. Don't worry, most people do this at the start. Try to keep the muscle tensing and breathing control separate.
8. Keep a diary. This helps you see if you are making progress. There are diaries at the end of this handout. Fill them in after each time you play the tape.
9. Keep playing your CD until you can relax well. At this point, you should switch to Rapid on track 2 of the CD.

PART 2 : Learning Rapid Relaxation

This lets you fine-tune your new skills. The idea is the same as before, except that now you can learn to relax more quickly. It is simply a quick version of what you have just learned. The same rules apply - play the Rapid track at the same time each day. As before, don't expect to pick it up at once. So don't be put off when it doesn't work first time.

If you want to play both tracks of your CD each day then go ahead - you can't get enough relaxation. However the whole aim of PMR is, of course, to teach you a way to control your anger. You should aim to reduce the amount you use your CD and eventually be able to relax without it. So your final job is:

PART 3: Prevention

.As you will be more alert to anger building up, you can nip it in the bud before it gets the chance to get a grip of you.

You do not have to run through all the parts of the CD. Stick to the bits you find best for you. This could be breathing control, relaxing your shoulders, etc. If you are with others, do the exercises, no one will notice.

In summary, you should:

- Start with Deep Relaxation / keep a diary.
- Play the CD every day until you learn to relax.
- Move to Rapid Relaxation.
- Play the CD every day until you can relax quickly.
- Prevent anger building up by nipping it in the bud.

Exercise

Always consult your GP if you are unsure about your fitness or general health.

As well as helping you to manage your anger there are proven health benefits to regular exercise. Exercise can help with:

- Blood pressure
- Weight
- General health
- Fitness
- Sleep
- Social life

Exercise is useful for using up the energy you get from being stressed (the fight-flight response). You should try to do 30 minutes exercise a day. Choose something that you enjoy, you do not necessarily have to put on the lycra and head down the gym! Simply going for regular walks can help. Remember to keep to moderate exercise and not get yourself keyed up by doing lots of vigorous exercise. Also you should make sure that you allow time at the end of your exercising to wind down. This is especially important if you exercise in the evening.

Avoid explosive exercise such as boxing, martial arts, rowing etc. This type of exercise usually feels good in the short term – letting off steam. However in the medium term it increases a person's physical arousal and in turn increases the chances of becoming angry more easily.

Humour

- ♦ Recent research has shown that humour and laughing can have positive benefits for emotional and physical health. Humour can be helpful for dealing with anger difficulties. It is not easy to use humour, when you feel angry, however finding the funny side of a situation or gently laughing at yourself for expecting too much from someone else will help. **Avoid:** ridiculing (taking the Mick), mocking, being cynical (seeing the worst in others), sneering or being sarcastic because this is disrespectful and can make the situation worse.

Summary

This week we have looked at the Anger Thermometer and you have thought about what your early warning signs are – these are often physical feelings such as your heart racing, tense muscles or seeing red. We have discussed how it is important that you notice these early warning signs of your anger, so you can do something before it goes too far.

We have looked at some ways of calming your anger:

1. Time out
2. Breathing
3. Relaxation
4. Exercise

Thinking for next week

This week you have been given a lot of information about ways to control your anger. To get the most of this information it would help you to do some thinking before the next class. You might like to begin by re-reading this workbook and thinking again about the exercises we covered this week.

Try out the techniques we have described, including:

1. looking out for early warning signs of your anger
2. taking time out when you feel yourself getting angry
3. practicing your breathing retraining techniques
4. using the relaxation CD regularly
5. building some exercise into your life

The ideas and strategies described in this workbook are based on high quality research. These strategies are tried and tested. They are unlikely to work first time so you need to persevere, practise and plan.

These ideas are probably not new to you and they are not the only way to stop or reduce your anger. You may already be doing other things that help. The key is, if it stops or reduces your anger then do it again!