



Combating Conflict with Character

HANDLING ANGER AND FRUSTRATION

Introduction

This guide provides information to help you get the most out of *Handling Anger and Frustration*. The contents of this guide will help you get your students to think about the topic before viewing the video, while also providing follow-up discussion questions and activities to reinforce and expand upon the program's key learning points.

Let's face it — anger is a fact of life, an emotion everyone can relate to. But it isn't always handled well, and if it surges out of control, the effects can be devastating. This video examines the problems arising from extreme or repressed anger and presents helpful methods for loosening the grip that all-consuming rage can have on one's mind and actions. Viewers learn basic psychological concepts relating to the human need to confront and remove obstacles, a primal instinct that all too easily translates into "lashing out." Encouraging students to look closely at their feelings in these trigger situations, the program highlights steps that can be taken toward dealing rationally with anger sources, focusing on staying "centered" rather than "getting even." Family and peer relationships, the importance of self-respect and respect for others, and useful distinctions between "good" and "bad" anger all come into play.

Learning Objectives

After viewing the program, students will be able to:

- Identify some ways in which unchecked anger can have a negative impact on the person who is lashing out and the people around him or her.
- Explain how overreacting, repressing anger, and holding a grudge can each have lasting consequences.
- Consider situations and circumstances that can cause feelings of anger and frustration.
- Know that chronic anger is often caused by larger problems, and what they can do to get help.
- Practice strategies for remaining calm and rational and reducing overall stress.

Program Overview

In this program, teens reenact scenes where feelings of anger and frustration come into play. Experts point out the downsides of unchecked anger, including overreacting, holding a grudge, and not addressing chronic anger. Practical strategies for recognizing anger and dealing with it when it arises are discussed.

Main Topics

Topic 1: Anger — What It Is And Why We Feel It

This section defines anger as an emotion that covers up underlying feelings, potentially making it difficult to deal with the real issues. Anger is actually an innate emergency response mechanism that is triggered when we are faced with a threat, such as social rejection.

Topic 2: Primal Anger Can Hurt You and Others

Handling primal anger can be difficult, especially if we keep replaying what was done and how we should have retaliated. But does revenge really work? The consequences of letting anger go too far are discussed in this section.

Topic 3: Managing Your Anger

This section discusses how both repressed and over-expressed anger are inappropriate and can have negative consequences. Recognizing what is causing feelings of anger can help us to avoid overreacting, and therefore to make better decisions. And anger is contagious. Strategies and techniques for cooling down — and helping others cool down — are illustrated.

Topic 4: Dealing With Chronic Anger

Some people seem to have a very short temper — they're always getting angry. What can cause this pattern of aggression? How does it affect them and the people around them? This section discusses the deeper issues that can be at the root of chronic anger, including grudges.

Topic 5: Managing Anger With True Character

In this section, viewers gain insight into what may trigger feelings of anger. Knowing what these triggers are and practicing stress-reduction techniques can help us stay calm, self-aware, and true to our values.

Fast Facts

- According to NAME (the National Association for Mediation in Education), the value of peer mediation is “to teach students how to deal with anger constructively, how to communicate feelings and concerns without using violence and abusive language, and how to think critically about alternative solutions in which all parties win.”
- A “conflict loop” occurs when those who lack confidence in their ability to cope with conflict are less open to new experiences. This gets in the way of clear communication. Miscommunication leads to misunderstanding and conflict, which decreases confidence, thus starting the cycle again.
- If the people involved in a conflict take a break and talk to each other in a less pressured situation, they will often be able to present their point of view without blaming or accusing.
- In one survey of junior and senior high school students conducted by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control in 1999:
 - 33% said that when they were really angry there was no way they could control themselves;
 - 41% said that if they were challenged, they would fight;
 - 21% said that avoiding fights was a sign of weakness;
 - More than one in three said that they had been in a physical fight in the past year.
- Psychologists believe that anger is an essential part of being human, and is a trait that goes all the way back to our earliest forebears.
- So-called “good” anger can motivate people to change something in society for the better.
- Chronic anger can directly affect our health by impairing the immune system.
- The aphorism “An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind,” attributed to Mahatma Gandhi, highlights the ultimate foolishness of seeking revenge.

Vocabulary Terms

defamation: Saying or writing false, negative things about a person or people.

demonize: To ascribe purely evil motives or characteristics to another person.

kitchen sinking: Pulling past events and unrelated frustrations into a present disagreement.

mediation: Working towards an agreement or reconciliation.

negotiation: Mutual discussion and arrangement of terms or an agreement.

self-esteem: A confidence and satisfaction in oneself.

Pre-Program Discussion Questions

1. What causes you to feel angry?
2. How do you feel when others around you get angry?
3. How do you feel around a person who is short-tempered or constantly seems angry or frustrated?
4. How might frustration lead to overreaction?
5. In what ways does tolerance and acceptance of differences impact a person's ability to handle anger, frustration, and conflict?

Post Program Discussion Questions

1. What is a pet peeve, and how might a pet peeve become a source of anger?
2. What can you do to control your own anger?
3. What strategies might you use if you know someone is holding a grudge against you?
4. What are some of the negative consequences you've seen or experienced as a result of over-expressed or repressed anger?
5. As a bystander, what can you do to help a friend effectively handle anger?

Group Activities

- **Constructive Communication:** Invite a local law enforcement officer to visit your class to participate in an open discussion about conflict resolution in your school and community. Prepare questions prior to the discussion, and ask the visitor to consider preparing questions for students as well.
- **Zero Tolerance for Intolerance:** Create an action plan to help your fellow students develop more empathy and tolerance toward one another. Begin by developing a list describing what the worst school environment would be like. Then, create a second list for the ideal school environment. What ground rules can you agree upon? What activities could you do to encourage this? What strategies can help achieve this goal?

Individual Student Projects

- **Setting an Example:** Everyone gets angry at some point. But when you're in the public spotlight as a sports figure, entertainer, politician, etc., your actions have the potential to influence the ideas, behaviors, and actions of others. Research a public figure who has received media attention for acting in anger. How might this person's actions influence someone else? In what ways might the media contribute to how this person and the situation are perceived?

- **That Makes Me Mad!** Consider the things that make you angry or frustrated. Make a list of at least five things that cause you to feel this way and then describe what you can do to stay calm and not overreact if and when this situation next arises.

Internet Activities

- **Acting in Anger:** Examples of violence and aggression can easily be found throughout history. Use the internet to research a local or international news event that occurred as a result of a person or a group of people acting out of anger. Write a one- or two-page summary to explain the conflict, what occurred, and your thoughts on what could have been done differently.
- **Getting Over It:** Are you holding a grudge against someone? It can be hard to let things go sometimes, even though when we know we should. Using the internet, search for information on “letting go” or “overcoming anger.” Then, draft an email to someone explaining your thoughts and feelings in a calm and respectful manner, while also considering the situation from the other person’s point of view. You may not want to actually send the letter, but just writing out your feelings can be a big help in getting over anger.

Assessment Questions

Q1: When you're feeling angry or frustrated, it can be helpful to _____, so that you can present your point of view without over-reacting.

- a) take a break and talk to each other in a less pressured situation
- b) punch the other person until they give in
- c) talk louder than the other person
- d) get a group of friends on your side

Q2: True or False: Excluding someone because he lied to you about dating your old girlfriend is an example of effective, constructive anger management.

- a) True
- b) False

Q3: Chronic anger can _____.

- a) influence others to have similar feelings
- b) escalate into violence
- c) be rooted in deeper issues, such as substance abuse
- d) All of the above

Q4: True or False: Managing conflict destructively can cause depression, anxiety, and deterioration of relationships.

- a) True
- b) False

Q5: Tolerance can be described as _____.

- a) cultural bias
- b) fair objectivity
- c) manipulation
- d) defamation

Q6: Using racial slurs is a form of _____.

- a) conflict resolution
- b) justice
- c) defamation
- d) prejudice

Q7: True or False: Boys are two times as likely to act out in anger than girls.

- a) True
- b) False

Q8: Anger _____, and potentially makes it difficult to deal with the real issues.

- a) clears the air
- b) usually attracts other people
- c) covers up underlying feelings
- d) is never valid

Q9: True or False: Chronic anger strengthens blood flow and therefore actually improves your physical health.

- a) True
- b) False

Q10: True or False: Anger can sometimes be good.

- a) True
- b) False

Assessment Questions Answer Key

Q1: When you're feeling angry or frustrated, it can be helpful to _____, so that you can present your point of view without over-reacting.

- a) take a break and talk to each other in a less pressured situation
- b) punch the other person until they give in
- c) talk louder than the other person
- d) get a group of friends on your side

A1: d)

Feedback: It can be helpful to step away from a situation and talk to the other person when you have had some time to cool down and are less likely to overreact.

Q2: True or False: Excluding someone because he lied to you about dating your old girlfriend is an example of effective, constructive anger management.

- a) True
- b) False

A2: b)

Feedback: This approach allows the opportunity for your feelings to escalate and grow and may cause you to act irrationally. A more constructive approach might be to be honest with your friend and let him know how this situation makes you feel.

Q3: Chronic anger can _____.

- a) influence others to have similar feelings
- b) escalate into violence
- c) be rooted in deeper issues, such as substance abuse
- d) All of the above

A3: d)

Feedback: While conflicts and disagreements are an inevitable part of life, they do not have to lead to violence. Around the country, many schools and community groups offer conflict resolution programs for teens.

Q4: True or False: Managing conflict destructively can cause depression, anxiety, and deterioration of relationships.

- a) True
- b) False

A4: a)

Feedback: Holding a grudge, chronic anger, and violence are examples of destructive ways to handle a conflict since they do not overcome the problem, but allow it to fester and grow.

Q5: Tolerance can be described as _____.

- a) cultural bias
- b) fair objectivity
- c) manipulation
- d) defamation

A5: b)

Feedback: Tolerance involves respecting differences and appreciating individuals for their unique character. It is a fair, objective, and permissive attitude toward opinions and practices that differ from one's own.

Q6: Using racial slurs is a form of _____.

- a) conflict resolution
- b) justice
- c) defamation
- d) prejudice

A6: d)

Feedback: Defamation is saying or writing false, negative statements about a person or people.

Q7: True or False: Boys are two times as likely to act out in anger than girls.

- a) True
- b) False

A7: b)

Feedback: Anyone can be overcome by anger. Understanding why you are feeling angry can help you address the true issue.

Q8: Anger _____, and potentially makes it difficult to deal with the real issues.

- a) clears the air
- b) usually attracts other people
- c) covers up underlying feelings
- d) is never valid

A8: c)

Feedback: Anger is actually an innate emergency response mechanism that is triggered when we are faced with a threat, such as social rejection.

Q9: True or False: Chronic anger strengthens blood flow and therefore actually improves your physical health.

- a) True
- b) False

A9: b)

Feedback: Chronic, long-term anger has a negative effect on the immune system, making it easier to get sick.

Q10: True or False: Anger can sometimes be good.

- a) True
- b) False

A10: a)

Feedback: So-called "good anger" can motivate people to change something in society for the better.

Additional Resources

American Psychological Association

www.apa.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Search on "*healthy relationships*"

www.cdc.gov

Mayo Clinic

Search on "*anger management*"

www.mayoclinic.com

Nemours Foundation TeensHealth.org

www.kidshealth.org

ippa: International Positive Psychology Association

www.ippanetwork.org

Order from www.CambridgeEducational.com • 1-800-257-5126

C.A.G.E. the Rage

Calm down, Assess the situation, Gauge alternatives, and Empower yourself by choosing how to react: that's the way to safely C.A.G.E. the rage. By viewing this program, students will learn to identify anger in themselves and those around them; understand why mismanaged anger is so destructive; discover how anger gets repressed, and the illnesses that may result from it; and learn to release anger and express emotions in an acceptable and positive way. A viewable/printable instructor's guide is available online. A Cambridge Educational Production. (23 minutes) © 2007

Rage Behind the Wheel: A Look at Teen Drivers and Road Rage

Experts in law enforcement and youth psychology explain road rage as the camera captures actual road rage incidents involving teen drivers. The teens are also filmed in a group setting where they honestly express their points of view as frustrated drivers, while taking responsibility for their anger. A viewable/printable instructor's guide is available online. A Cambridge Educational Production. (19 minutes) © 2008

Real Life Teens: Teen Rebellion

In this video teens express their attitudes toward rebellion, their parents, their schools, society in general, and their peers. Subjects covered include healthy versus unhealthy rebellion, anger issues, the role of parents, differences between respect and permission, and dealing with disappointment. (17 minutes) © 2009