

Section 1

Anger

It probably goes without saying that anger can be an intense emotion. We always like to start our exploration of anger by talking about the Incredible Hulk. Anger can make you think of the Incredible Hulk as a negative, uncontrolled, aggressive expression of intense, unwieldy energy. The Hulk, of course, emerged out of Bruce Banner's unmanaged anger. The big green monster was the result of Bruce Banner's inability to work skillfully with his own difficult emotions.

This course will teach you how to expand your view of anger and uncover the layers, complexity, and influencing factors of your experience of anger and how it plays out in your life.

What is anger?

Anger on its own is just an emotion — not negative, not positive, but just an emotion. Like all emotions it has its own energy and its own experience that unfolds in your body. Anger affects the mind as well as the body. It may show up in your body as clenched fists or jaw, a flushed face, a racing heart; you may feel your blood is boiling, and/or that your breathing becomes faster. Everyone has experienced anger and it can range from a mild annoyance to furious rage.

It is important to note that anger in and of itself is not unhealthy. In fact, from a positive perspective, anger can work as a healthy warning system letting us know that something in our life is unbalanced, that we have been mistreated in some way, or that a need has not been met. Anger can also work as a motivator, motivating you to social action, to make a tough change in your life, or confront a situation that is unhealthy for you.

On the negative side of things, anger can be expressed using hostility, aggression, and violence which can cause harm to you and/or others.

Anger is usually a reaction to a conflict, whether personal, work-related, or some other unforeseen obstacle, such as a lack of communication.

Expressions of anger

There are scores of ways of expressing anger. Generally, we associate the expression of anger as an escalation of feelings that turn into a loss of control that may include yelling, cursing, violence and aggression. This is not always the case. Anger also can be expressed internally through negative self-talk, feelings of resentment, body aches, or other forms of physical pain. It also can be just as unhealthy to stifle anger, to run away from conflict, or to suppress our emotions, as it is to explode and react outwardly.

In this course we will examine healthy and unhealthy expressions of anger. Most of these expressions are habits we have learned from childhood, from our family, and/or the reactions we have received to our expectations, needs, and beliefs. Despite common misconceptions, anger is not genetic or inherited. **How you handle your anger is your responsibility — this means you are capable of changing your relationship with your experience of anger.**

Some unhealthy expressions of anger include:

- Sarcasm
- Bullying
- Excessive cynicism
- Low threshold for frustration
- Throwing or breaking objects
- Violence

When your experience of anger is out of your control, chances are it will be expressed inappropriately.

Why anger management?

Unhealthy expressions of anger can negatively affect your personal life, your workplace, and your health.

Lack of anger management can result in isolation, feeling a loss of community, guilt, shame, pain and/or fear. Relationships and other interpersonal interactions can plummet due to emotional and physical harm as a result of explosive reactions. Escalating anger, building resentment when you suppress your anger and/or avoidance of conflict, can be painful and scary.

As we know, anger has many negative consequences. We may not communicate as effectively, we may get into power struggles, and/or show disrespect to others. This all can lead to more conflict, arguments, increased stress, a loss of productivity at work and even the loss of your job.

Anger is a bodily process as well as a psychological one. Being angry excessively, either in frequency or intensity, can cause health issues such as weakened immune system, hypertension and/or heart disease.

People look to anger management courses for different reasons. Everyone can benefit from learning new methods of managing anger and cultivating healthy social skills. Some people are required to take anger management courses by their employers. This ensures a productive and respectful work environment. Others are required by court order. Anger is a difficult emotion to control and not all of us have learned healthy ways of dealing with it.

Throughout this course, you will learn methods for dealing with anger in a productive manner, all the while strengthening personal relationships, self-esteem, and physical health.

Exercise

Before personal growth is possible, it is crucial that goals are set. Take some time and set three goals for yourself, keeping in mind what you would like to achieve with this course. Think of some of your behaviors or habits you would like to change. Think of how you want your next conflict to look—do you want it resolved peacefully, where neither party gets hurt and maybe where both parties may benefit? Maybe you want to know how to cultivate more respect and/or compassion for others.

While thinking of your goals, please keep in mind that while this course will help develop anger management skills, true anger management is a process that needs constant attentiveness, awareness, and the willingness to be honest with yourself. This course will give you the foundation you need to start improving your relationships, your work, and your life, but it will take daily work on your part to maintain it.

Along with these goals, a journal would be an extremely useful tool while you take this course. In the next few days, write down some conflicts you witness, whether they involve you or not. Observe how others react to these conflicts. If the conflict involves you, are you running away from the conflict? If it involves others, are they reacting passively aggressively, agreeing to something they clearly disagree with? How would you improve these situations? Try to see the conflict from both parties' perspectives.

It's okay if you draw a couple of blanks at this point. This exercise is meant to build awareness of others' feelings as well as your own emotions. Emotional awareness is a big part of anger management, which we will explore in depth in the upcoming sessions.

Quiz;

Section 2

Expressions of anger

Stress and irritation are common in our day-to-day lives. Our time becomes more and more precious with each passing moment, our workloads can be overwhelming and we can feel pulled in several different directions at once. Our world is fast-paced and full of stimulation. Our environments and relationships change at the bat of an eye. No wonder anger is so prevalent.

Unhealthy expressions of anger

At times, anger may explode outside of your control and an expression of anger can turn destructive. Other times anger may seem to blow up internally inside of you, disrupting concentration, showing up as negative self-talk, or causing physical pains such as headaches or stomachaches. Anger may also fester inside you when ignored or buried. Often we bury anger as a way to deny the feeling or control it, only to have it come out in confusing ways, such as overreacting to little things. Sometimes, these unhealthy expressions are a recurring issue, and relationships to yourself and others can disintegrate.

Destructive anger may be a reaction to conflict, disrespect, or emotional pain.

Consider the following:

Tasha and Greg have shared an apartment for a few months now. Tasha generally cooks at home and is sure to clean while she works. Greg almost always chooses to bring prepared meals home to eat, but still uses kitchen utensils for various things. He never cleans the dishes. Tasha does not say anything to Greg at first, preferring to avoid any confrontation. After a stressful day at work, Tasha comes home to a sink full of Greg's dishes. Tasha begins cleaning the dishes herself, but slams drawers and plates while cleaning. A plate breaks, and Tasha blames Greg.

In this example, Tasha has stifled her initial anger with Greg, avoiding the conflict as a way of handling it. Tasha thought she had her anger under control, but when she was overwhelmed by stress, her lack of control roared to the surface. Her anger became destructive.

Sometimes, it may not be obvious that you are avoiding a situation. Not all unhealthy displays of anger look like the behavior of those with short, explosive tempers.

In the previous exercise from section 1, we listed a few unhealthy expressions of anger. Provided below is a more extensive list, although it is by no means all-inclusive. Each person responds differently with anger, but we made sure to include some of the more subtle methods that may not send up flags immediately.

- Excessive interruption of conversation
- Sulking when a situation does not meet expectations
- Instigating arguments
- Allowing mood to affect others
- Attempting to make others feel guilty
- Holding grudges
- Needing to be correct
- Rolling eyes or sighing heavily
- Silent treatment
- Abuse, both physical and emotional
- Frequent disregard to others' feelings
- Passive aggressiveness
- Frequent lying
- Feeling justified in anger
- Avoiding conflict
- Punitive or condescending behavior
- Manipulation of a situation
- Suppressed anger
- Frequent black and white or all or nothing situations
- Little regard for forgiveness
- Intimidation
- Vengeance
- Blaming others/things for how we feel

Healthy expressions of anger

Healthy expression of anger means learning to *act* versus react to an emotion, thought, situation, or behavior. A healthy expression of anger is a skill. The situation and/or experience must be analyzed objectively, keeping in mind the following: other people's feelings and experiences, examining your own feelings, thoughts, intentions, and expectations, and assessing your physical vulnerabilities. Physical vulnerabilities may include poor sleep, poor nutrition, hunger, stress, illness, change in hormones (both for men and women), and a lack of physical activity. A healthy expression of anger does not place blame on another; instead, you are able to take ownership of your own thoughts, feelings and behaviors. This may mean using "I" phrases, such as, "I feel angry when..." Instead of **reacting** instinctively to an unwanted situation, you take the time and effort to **respond**, or act.

Consider the following:

In the example given above, Tasha reacts to a sink full of dishes. An alternative to slamming and breaking objects could be that Tasha takes time to talk to Greg as soon as she feels uneasy about cleaning up after him.

She may begin the conversation by saying, "I feel upset when there are dishes left in the sink."

If Tasha decides to voice her discontent in a calm and collected manner before succumbing to the stress of either the event itself or an outside stressor, then she is allowing open communication and expressing anger in a healthy way. Tasha would need to exhibit insight to both her feelings, thoughts, expectations, intentions, and needs, as well as Greg's feelings surrounding the situation. Tasha would also need to be respectful to Greg, not using blaming, hurtful, or disrespectful statements or words.

Learning to use healthy expressions of anger can be work. It requires the ability to take a pause, create distance between yourself and your thoughts and emotions, increase self-awareness, and the ability to see alternative perspectives. Let's say Tasha put the time and effort into approaching and resolving the conflict with Greg, she would be sure to reap the benefits, as she and Greg could better understand each other's intentions. Tasha's self-esteem may improve for having the confidence to approach the situation and proactively work to meet her needs. The resolution would build trust and strengthen the relationship.

Section 2: Exercise

Looking back to the previous exercise you did in section 1, write out possible solutions to the conflicts you witnessed. Imagine beginning a conversation with one of the parties, placing emphasis on your feelings instead of their actions.

Additionally, write down a previous experience where you have reacted to conflict with destructive anger. What were the short-term consequences of your reaction, both positive and negative? For instance, did it feel relieving? Did you feel strong? Scared? Confused? What about the long-term consequences? Did that relief later turn into regret? How did this impact your relationship? How would you resolve the conflict now in a healthier manner? Imagine what the short and long-term consequences could have been if you resolved the conflict healthily.

Continue to keep track of conflicts that arise within you and around you. Begin to write down the time of day when you feel angry, and why you think the anger arose.

Section 3

Where does your experience of anger come from?

How we express anger is a learned response. There are several influences that may impact how we express our anger. We learn from personal experience, from watching others, from the way our family expresses anger, from the media, from cultural and gender stereotypes, from our role models and from so many other sources. You may have heard someone claim that they inherited their tendency to yell from their father, or their passive-aggressiveness from their mother. However, anger is not something inherited, like eye color. Dealing with anger is something that can be, as previously mentioned, learned through experiences throughout our childhood. Think back to your childhood. How was anger expressed?

At times as children we are given the message that our emotions are wrong, not acceptable, or that they need to be hidden. Were you told not to cry growing up, not to feel angry, or that anger was bad? Perhaps you witnessed your older brother engaging in physical conflict with another child instead of dealing with the loss of your family dog. Maybe you saw someone seemingly gain power over another by using aggression, or saw anger as uncontrollable, scary, and something you need to avoid. You may have learned some unhealthy habits of dealing with anger while growing up.

Regardless of where or how you learned your behavior, it is important to realize that it can be changed and that this change is up to you. Self-awareness will play a huge part in managing anger, not just of holding yourself accountable for your own actions, but also of your own needs.

But really, where does anger come from?

We touched on the destructive nature of anger expression in the previous section. It is clear that managing your experience of anger in a healthy, caring and peaceful manner can take awareness, planning, skill, and at times creativity. When anger becomes intense, unhealthy or even destructive, chances are it is because some need inside you has not been met. This could be a basic need such as food, money, a roof over your head, stability, or sleep. It's easy to recognize, for instance, that a toddler will become cranky if he or she is hungry, sleepy, or the environment is unstable.

These needs do not go away as we grow. In fact, they multiply.

Humans have a need for:

- Acceptance
- Cooperation
- Respect
- Joy
- Comfort
- Ease
- Challenge
- Exuberance
- Independence
- Safety
- Love
- Support
- Connection with others

The list is seemingly infinite, because we are all different, and needs include not just the things we require to survive, but also our wants and desires to create a meaningful and peaceful life.

When needs aren't being met, there is a tendency to react in an unhealthy or destructive manner, instead of responding in a healthy way. This is especially true if you are in need of food or sleep, as these needs not only can trigger a survival response but also impact our production of what our brains need to feel good.

Consider the following:

Imagine yourself facing an auto collision. You are in the driver's seat. Your mind reacts instinctively, making your hands steer out of the way, and making your foot stomp on the brake. Time may slow down or speed up, your heart races, your body is pumped full of adrenaline. Your need for safety is immediate. You are in survival mode. All rationale has flown out the window at that point.

Now imagine yourself during a busy day at work. You were running late getting ready for work, you didn't bother with breakfast and you are so busy that you have forgotten to eat lunch. Now the copier has jammed for the sixth time this month and your first urge is to kick it or to yell. You may even decide to give up entirely on the copier and avoid your duties at work. You are reacting, driven by instinct, and reverting back to learned behaviors, perhaps from your childhood.

How are these two situations similar?

In both situations, your body is in a kind of survival mode. You are reacting instinctively and not responding thoughtfully. While this may prove effective for the near car accident, it is not as effective with social interaction.

Not all needs drive us into survival mode, but most unmet needs are surprisingly taxing. Thinking that a photocopier is good-for-nothing, could be a reaction to a need for ease or effectiveness, that was made worse by a need for food or exercise.

Section 3: Exercise

How did others express anger during your childhood? What are some of your beliefs about anger? Can you find characteristic behaviors you may have learned from your family growing up? How did women express anger when you were growing up? How did men? How did your role models or your close friends? Think about possible needs these people were attempting to fulfill while expressing anger.

Think back to the previous exercise. Try to recognize some needs that were not being met that may have contributed to the conflicts you have written about. Be as objective as possible with this.

Meanwhile, continue to track conflicts. Along with these conflicts, write down unmet needs of both you and others. For your own needs, think in both the broad scheme of things and in individual circumstance. Think about reaching broader needs as a goal. Maybe you want consistency in your life or maybe you want closeness. Imagine what your life would look like with these needs met. Write it down

Section 4 Recognizing anger

As we mentioned before, a large part of anger management is self-awareness. Put simply, this means having a greater understanding of what is occurring in both your mind and body. You have been working on recognizing your own needs and maybe even the needs of others around you. Hopefully you are beginning to draw connections between unmet needs, and beliefs about anger. We hope you are also getting a sense of some of the patterns of expressing anger you learned from childhood and past experiences, and your habitual ways of reacting or expressing anger.

Conflict, frustration, pain (emotional and physical), disrespect, and unmet needs are inevitable, and so is anger. Anger management is not about getting rid of anger and you probably have caught on by now that it isn't about suppressing it either. Anger management is about dealing with anger in a healthy, effective way. It is about using anger as a natural warning system, letting us know when something is out of balance, when a personal boundary has been crossed, or when we are hurt, and then using this knowledge to determine an action. This action could be any or all of the following: finding a way to take care of an unmet need, taking care of your body, working to heal an emotional or physical wound, doing something to change your situation, problem solving your situation, challenging unhelpful thinking patterns or beliefs, shifting your perspective, or so many other things.

Before you can do that however, you must learn to recognize feelings of anger before it becomes too intense, too big and before you are about to express it in an unhealthy or destructive way.

Luckily, recognizing bodily symptoms and external triggers can bring awareness to your arising anger. Increased self-awareness of anger can open doors to new ways you can handle a situation. You now have given yourself a choice: on one side you could react emotionally or instinctively, and on the other, perhaps a door is open that will enable you to respond thoughtfully and in a healthy way.

This is easier said than done and throughout this course, we will offer insight into how to make the process smoother for you.

Recognizing bodily cues

Unhealthy expressions of anger tend to occur when we are acting mindlessly, with little awareness of our needs, feelings or thoughts. In fact, anger at times can feel like it comes out of nowhere and without warning. It can seem out of control when you feel your anger goes from 0-100 in the blink of an eye and without warning. Increasing your awareness and understanding of how anger expresses itself physically, the way you feel it in your body, can be a great place to start to control your experience of anger. Our bodies offer a wealth of information and wisdom, often making us aware that something is off or wrong before we are fully mentally aware. Here are some ways anger shows up physically in our bodies, just to name a few examples:

- flushed face
- clenched fists
- clenched jaw
- crying
- knot in the stomach
- headache
- shallow breathing
- increased heart rate
- trembling hands

- a buzzing energy throughout your arms and legs
- tightness in shoulders and/or neck

Consider the following:

Josef is at a friend's party when he notices Julia, his ex-girlfriend, is present. They broke up a few months before because she did not keep her commitment to Josef. He is already feeling amped up by the party. Upon seeing Julia, Josef's body stiffens and he crosses his arms across his chest. His stomach feels like it is in a knot, and his jaw clenches. Josef may not even be aware of what he is feeling but his body is telling him something is out of balance. Before Josef's mind has time to connect his feelings and thoughts with his past negative experience with Julia, his body has responded.

Recognizing triggers

Everyone has different things that upsets them. Recognizing anger triggers, creates awareness, and can create the mental space to be able to plan ahead. It can allow you to react and not react. Triggers can be thought patterns, emotions, physical discomfort, physical stress, physical or emotional threats, or external events.

Let's break down some possible triggers. Here are four categories of potential types of triggers.

- **Emotional Triggers:**
Emotional triggers are emotions that seem to lay underneath our anger or that our anger sometimes mask. Some common emotions that seem to trigger anger are: fear, boredom, frustration, hurt, irritation, embarrassment, shame, guilt, worthlessness and confusion.
- **Physical Triggers:**
Physical triggers can include pain, injuries, illness, or discomfort.
- **Mental Triggers:**
Mental triggers include our thoughts and beliefs. These could be negative self talk, rigid beliefs, or misunderstandings.
- **Environmental Triggers:**
These are things like stressful work environments, extreme hot or cold weather, traffic, etc.

Consider the following:

For many people, anger occurs when they are feeling rushed. Imagine that Patricia needs to be at work at 8:00 AM. Patricia works approximately 20 minutes away from her home, however every Wednesday morning there is a train that blocks off the major highway she needs to take to get to work. Every Wednesday morning, she fumes as she waits and watches the train inch by and the rest of the morning is spent in an aggravated state.

Instead of giving in to this anger, Patricia could use her anger as a warning signal that something needs to change. She could increase her awareness related to this situation, take notice that being late creates stress for her and triggers her anger. This awareness then allows her the opportunity to make a change. Every Wednesday morning, she could leave ten or fifteen minutes earlier than she usually does, ensuring that she will not be stopped by the train, and ensuring she will be on time for work.

Section 4: Exercise

This exercise will take considerable more time than previous exercises. Be patient with yourself while practicing and do not demand perfection from yourself right away. The next time you feel angry, really try to experience it within your body. Does your throat close up? Does your face turn red? Allow the anger to sit inside you while you explore it fully. Try to notice as much as you can, no detail is too small. It is important you do not react to this anger. Instead, allow it to be only an emotion within you. You do not need to take action just pay attention.

Afterward, write down why you experienced the anger, and where you experienced it in your body. What triggered you to feel angry? Is this a common trigger? Does it connect to an unmet need of you or of another? How can you plan to find an alternate way around the trigger?

Compose a list of possible triggers. Take time to think about these, and continue to add to the list. Do you feel angry thinking about someone else's demands? Do you feel angry when your partner uses a certain tone of voice?

Also, continue to write down conflict you are witnessing or that you are involved with, still keeping track of needs and possible resolutions. When faced with a conflict, practice using an "I" statement from the previous section, such as, "When you don't do what you said you were going to do, I feel taken advantage of and

Section 5 **Developing emotional intelligence**

In a previous section, we discussed where angry behaviors come from, and how most reactions stem from childhood. We learned that a lot of our behaviors are picked up from influential people that surrounded us during our youth, such as parents, siblings or friends.

Childhood is where people also accumulate emotional intelligence.

What is emotional intelligence and why is it important?

It is easy to spot people with emotional intelligence. They are generally warm, friendly, good at empathizing and listening. They appear to value our opinions and feelings. They are team players. Generally, they lead pretty successful lives, maintaining fulfilling relationships and gaining meaning from existence. They seem to navigate bumps in the road, such as loss, stress, and hurt with grace. They are also skilled at giving themselves permission not to be perfect. They know it's okay to fall apart from time to time. These people were probably raised around other people with high emotional intelligence. They are self-aware of their emotions and the emotions of others.

Anger becomes a problem when there is a disconnect between yourself and the feelings of others and, more importantly, between yourself and your own feelings. The good news is, you are always capable of gaining and growing your self-awareness, and consequently, your emotional intelligence.

Components of emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence has a few main components. As you can probably guess, the biggest one is **awareness**.

We discussed previously that awareness of others helps develop **empathy**. Empathy is the ability to try to understand what another person is feeling in any given moment. When we are well practiced at empathizing with others, it allows us the ability to approach a situation objectively. Empathy allows us to see things from another's perspective. It also opens up our thinking, which allows us to notice more details in a situation. Finally, it allows us to see options that may have been hidden from us because of our limited perspective.

Self-awareness also aids greatly when it comes to **self-control**. Knowing when and why you are getting angry gives you a choice on how to respond to a situation or conflict. This awareness allows you to regain control and responsibility for your anger, no longer giving it the power to take you over or take you by surprise.

Self-control means a reduction of impulsive reactions, and the ability to translate conflict into effective, **assertive communication**.

Assertive communication starts with how you communicate with yourself. It starts with you labeling for yourself how you are really feeling.

For example you may tell yourself, "I am feeling angry and sad." It then requires self reflection to understand what thoughts, beliefs, needs, or stressors may be contributing to these feelings. Lastly, it requires you communicating this awareness clearly to others, sharing what you need or how you are planning to go about changing your situation for the better.

Consider the following:

Olaf recently completed a very large workload that was vital to his company. He felt proud of this completed project, which included two other coworkers' collaboration. Jenny was one of those two coworkers, but she never really pulled her weight for the project. Olaf had to pick up her slack. A few days after completion, the boss congratulated the team for the project and promoted Jenny to be Olaf's manager.

Olaf feels himself getting extremely angry. His body tightens and he feels hot all over. He realizes this and is quick to bring his mind to what is happening. He takes a few breaths to regulate his rush of adrenaline. Next, he tries to empathize with his boss, and with Jenny. She was usually a hard-worker, and Olaf guesses maybe this was just an off-week for her. He congratulates her sincerely on her promotion.

Later that day, Olaf takes his boss to the side, and asks the boss directly what he can do for a promotion. His boss was happy to talk about Olaf's options for moving up in the company.

When Olaf began to get angry, he had an array of doors fly open for him. He could have slammed his fist on the table, he could have quit, or he could have spoken punitively to Jenny using sarcasm. He could have also tried to stifle his anger, try to brush it off, not bothering to follow up with his boss after, and eventually allow the anger to seethe and arise later, most likely in an inappropriate form.

We will be exploring and practicing each of these components of emotional intelligence in more depth in the upcoming sections — in the meantime, be sure to keep these concepts in mind:

- Awareness
- Empathy
- Self-control
- Assertive communication

Section 5: Exercise

This week we will be practicing another awareness exercise. In the previous exercise, you spent some time familiarizing yourself with being present in your body while angry.

Let's take this a step further. Today, practice awareness in a non-stressful situation. Try, for instance, being self-aware while brushing your teeth or washing the dishes. Try to be fully aware of how your body feels, perhaps tight from sitting too long, or maybe your shirt tag is scratching at the nape of your neck. Maybe there is a pleasant, cool breeze coming from the window. How quickly or slowly are you breathing?

Now gently bring your mind to any thought or emotion you are processing. If you were listening to your body with rapt attention, chances are your thoughts are completely enveloped in the present, with little feeling of overwhelm.

Repeat this practice throughout the day. It can last only a moment, or ten minutes, you decide.

Continue to keep track of when you feel angry, why you felt it, and what happened. If the result of the anger wasn't ideal, list possible ideal solutions. Also, begin thinking about rating your anger. Did some event cause you to feel especially angry? Were you only mildly frustrated? Write this down as well

Section 6 Empathy

Take a minute to look back over your notes on your experience of anger and conflict that you have written down so far. How frequently were feelings of anger or a conflict caused by lack of communication? Or by thinking thoughts about others that were not necessarily true? How empathetic do you think you were being in those situations? Were you able to see other people's perspectives?

Let's take a look more at empathy and how this may have shifted those situations for you in the positive.

What is empathy?

When you empathize with someone, you imagine what it's like to be in their shoes. You take into account what they may be feeling, what their thoughts or perspective may be, you notice what is going on for them. It is the ability to take a step back mentally in a situation with another, and notice what is going on in that person's life.

Consider the following:

Edgar just arrived home from a long day at work. His wife, Judith, is at her wits' end. The dog has dug holes in their newly planted garden and the dishwashing machine has overflowed the kitchen with an onslaught of bubbles. Edgar's parents are about to arrive for dinner.

He is upset at the state of the house. Edgar begins to think, *How could Judith allow this to happen? She only needed to keep the house presentable!* He realizes he is in the grips of anger and takes a deep breath to check in with his body, feeling the anger in his shoulders and his jaw.

Now in the present moment, Edgar is not stuck in his thoughts about what should have happened in the past, instead he sees that Judith is having a rough time. He notices that she has already begun mopping up the kitchen and he realizes that she must be even more flustered than he is! He also considers the fact that Judith has spent the day working, taking care of their children, dog, and home. Edgar asks calmly how he can help.

In order to be successful in your management of anger, you must be able to see the other person's side of things. You must be able to view a situation as objectively as possible. Admittedly, this is one of the most difficult things to do when in the middle of a conflict.

Cultivating empathy

A big part of mastering empathy is realizing what your thought process is when you are thinking of other people. We always have assumptions in the moment: some of these assumptions may be about the other person's motive, how we think things will turn out, how we want them to turn

out, or assumptions we make about ourselves. These thoughts may be negative judgments — if they are, let's call these thoughts criticisms. Here are some examples of criticizing words:

- Mean
- Inconsiderate
- Stupid
- Lazy
- Uncaring

Remember those unmet needs we are all trying to fulfill from the previous section? Re-examine the list above and think about if those words are actually trying to communicate an unmet need.

Consider the following:

Margaret asks her coworker, James, to pick up some documents and deliver them to their boss. She specifies the quantity and that they need to be printed in color. Later that day, her boss asks why he received so few documents.

Margaret begins to think, *James is so stupid! I told him how many were needed!* She also thinks her boss is being mean for coming to her instead of asking James about it. *Another thing on my plate!* she thinks.

She takes a deep breath and realizes how angry she has gotten. She re-examines her thoughts. Of course James isn't stupid, there was just an unmet need of efficiency. She could have communicated more effectively what needed to be done or she could have made sure he heard her correctly. And her boss wasn't being mean, Margaret was experiencing an unmet need of consideration. Switching perspectives provides a quick and sure connection with the people around us.

Converting criticism into unmet needs goes both ways. Are your needs being met? Are the other person's? What were James's possible unmet needs? What were her boss's? Having an idea about these needs could help Margaret know the best way to communicate in the moment. It could also help her know what steps to take to manage this stressful situation in a healthy way. If Margaret's boss's unmet need is related to productivity, she could reassure him by giving him a clear time to correct this, and inform him of her progress on their task or project. It is important to note however that without effectively communicating how we are thinking or feeling with each other, we never know for certain what another's needs or perspective truly is.

Section 6: Exercise

While not in a conflict, try to avoid using criticizing or negative judgmental words when thinking about people or events. Think instead of possible unmet needs that may be the underlying cause. Switch perspectives. What's life like in their shoes? Is the situation different from their perspective?

Look back to the conflicts you have recorded from earlier exercises. Did you have any criticizing thoughts surrounding these situations? How can you translate these negative thoughts into simple, unmet needs?

Take time to really feel your body in both heated and ordinary states. This time, bring special awareness to your breathing but don't worry about trying to change it. Just feel it fill your chest and feel it leave. Is it shallow? Is it deep? Notice your breath for ten seconds. Then for thirty seconds. If you want, sit with your breathing for as long as possible. How do you feel after this experience? Feel free to record any emotion or sense of calm that follows.

Section 7 Forgiveness

While considering our mental health, it is important practice letting go of pain, suffering, and anger. This does not mean that we consciously avoid feeling these things. It means that we consciously attempt to touch into feeling these difficult emotions without making them part of who we are.

A part of letting go is forgiveness. When a conflict arises between two or more people, the conversation often shifts to pointing fingers, blaming others, or even blaming yourself. However, when interacting with another person, a conflict always deals with "we." As we've said before, it takes two to tango, after all.

Forgiving others

A large part of this course is centered around the practice of empathy. When you're in the midst of conflict with someone and you can see what is happening from that person's perspective, it becomes easier for you to perceive what is *actually* happening. Typically when we're in the midst of a conflict, our need to be "right" gets in the way, and muddies the water making it harder to know what is actually happening. Empathy allows us to be freed from the judgments that make conflict confusing. You end up gaining control of your anger and any criticizing, generalized thoughts about that person.

Forgiveness is not allowing people to hurt you. Forgiveness is accepting the mistakes of others, just as you would want them to accept your mistakes. It does not release them from their share of responsibility. Both of you can create a solution together.

Consider the following:

Patricia has just had an intense argument with her sixteen-year-old daughter, Mavis. Mavis wanted to use the family car to go to the cinema, but Patricia needed to use it to get groceries for the upcoming week. Patricia had forgotten Mavis requested to use the car earlier in the month.

Mavis is still learning how to express her anger. She feels extremely frustrated and unimportant. She screams at Patricia and calls her a profane name before stalking off to her bedroom and slamming the door.

Patricia tenses up and wants to scream back. She remains still however, accepting her anger. She also accepts Mavis's anger. She can see how it is frustrating for Mavis to put effort into making plans. She takes a deep breath and brings more awareness to herself and her body. She feels for forgiveness for Mavis and the harmful things she said.

Then, Patricia approaches Mavis. She asks Mavis if now is a good time to speak. Patricia says, "I made you upset because I told you initially you could take the car. Now, I'm saying you cannot. However, I will not allow you to speak to me that way. I also will not allow you to slam doors. I still need to get groceries, and you still have plans for the cinema. How about I drop you off and pick you up?"

Here, Patricia acknowledged the mistakes of both herself and Mavis. She also assertively communicated that she will not accept Mavis's behaviors. Patricia brought Mavis a solution that respects both parties. Finally, Patricia forgave Mavis by feeling empathy for her daughter. While Mavis said things intended to hurt Patricia, and while those things did hurt her, Patricia knew Mavis was only expressing her anger.

Forgiving yourself

As important as it is to forgive others, it is important to also forgive yourself. When you have setbacks or when you make mistakes, you may feel overwhelmed by guilt. Guilt and shame are normal emotions that can have positive effects. However, they can be extreme and expressed unhealthily, just as with anger.

Just as with anger, when you experience guilt or shame, you can sit with it. You can sit with all sorts of uncomfortable feelings. Feel it out intensely. Is it a sinking feeling in the pit of your stomach? Is your chest caving in? Have your ears gone red? Maybe you are trying to resolve it, as if your behavior was a conflict in and of itself. Although conflicts usually require resolutions, feelings like anger and guilt do not need to be resolved.

Be aware, honest and accepting of your guilt. Try to go deeper into it. Maybe you are holding on to something, refusing to let go. This could be an idea of yourself or an idea of what others think of you.

Before you begin to forgive yourself for the big stuff, try forgiving yourself for the small things. If you forgot to hold the door open on the way out of the grocer, know you are human and are at times too absorbed to be aware of your surroundings. Forgive yourself for that. If you knocked hot coffee down the front of the clerk at the counter, forgive yourself for that as well. Maybe you can even forgive yourself for not being so great at forgiving yourself! Practice forgiving yourself and others for smaller mistakes or setbacks, and soon you can forgive yourself for larger mistakes.

Section 7: Exercise

Practice patience with yourself and others. Patience will lead you to forgiveness. If you feel the idea of "practicing patience" isn't concrete enough, sit with yourself and your breath for more than ten minutes. Explore yourself gently while sitting, and remain seated for the entire time you plan.

Keep yourself open-minded and empathizing with others.

Continue to track your anger and rate it. Communicate assertively, keeping your boundaries maintained.

Section 8 Social networking

It is important to have a support network. Having friends, family, or acquaintances you can speak with reduces stress and can help you work through ongoing conflict.

For plain fun

Having people you can interact with can bring fulfillment into your life. Friends with whom you can share the joys and pains of life can prove as refreshing as a hot bath. Maintaining relationships with others outside of romantic partnerships and the workplace can be a good source of relaxation. As with any method of relaxation, a friendship can work to defuse potential anger and stress.

As a sounding board

There are times when you will feel highly frustrated at situations or others and you will need to talk it out with someone. Make sure this person is unbiased or unattached to the situation at hand. Ask them if it is okay with them that you are presenting a personal problem. If you aren't seeking advice, say so up front. Unwanted advice may create more frustration on your end.

Like bringing awareness to your body creates a feeling of being present, translating your frustration and upset into words dissipates feelings into rational thought. It may be that you only need to word the situation in your head to an outside source for a resolution to come to light.

As mediator

Sometimes conflicts seem irreparable. Both parties are at a standstill and there is no resolution in sight. When this occurs, it would be helpful to find a third-party that could help mediate. Finding another person that is unattached and unbiased can help put an objective perspective on the situation.

Like before, be conscientious of the mediator's time and abilities. Make sure they have the time and willingness to help mediate. Let them know you are seeking them out specifically for gaining new perspective. This ensures the conversation will not turn into a complaint session, which may lead to negative self-talk or criticizing judgments.

Consider the following:

Carlos and Deborah work together frequently. Carlos is often disorganized, and usually avoids taking responsibility for his actions. Both Deborah and Carlos are working with a client. They both forget they had a meeting with their client. The client calls, angry that his time was seemingly wasted.

Deborah blames the situation on Carlos. He usually sets appointments with clients. Carlos blames the situation on Debbie, who managed this particular client's account. They are both angry at one another and feel they cannot be productive until the conflict is resolved.

They decide to seek mediation with a fellow coworker, Denise. Denise works in a different department and is impartial to the situation Carlos and Deborah are facing. Both Carlos and Deborah calmly tell Denise their side of things, being sure to not interrupt one another.

Denise sees both perspectives as well as her own. She suggests that they both slipped up, and they should acknowledge their mistake to the client. Additionally, she suggests they create a calendar that both can make edits to and that they both can see, so hopefully no one else slips through the cracks.

Section 8: Exercise

Think of a few friends or acquaintances you feel comfortable talking to about problems or challenges you may be facing. Perhaps go as far as writing a list down of these contacts, as a sort of "in case of emergency." Next time you're feeling upset, give someone a call. Go out for coffee with them. Be sure to maintain contact with these people in times other than just the stressful ones.

Continue tracking your anger and your assertive communication.

Quiz 1 ANGER MANAGEMENT 8 HOUR CERTIFICATE QUIZE

1. Anger is experienced both psychologically and bodily. True
- 2
Anger is never appropriate. True
- 3
Improved self-esteem is one benefit of anger management. True
- 4
Stifling anger is an appropriate method of handling anger. True
- 5
Mild annoyance is not a form of anger. True
- 6
Lack of anger management can result in isolation. True
- 7
Anger management can lead to effectual communication. True
- 8
Anger is inherited. True
- 9
Sarcasm can be a form of an unhealthy expression of anger. True
- 10
Only some people can benefit from anger management. True
- 11
Anger management can be learned quickly and with little effort. True
- 12
Lack of respect can lead to anger management issues. True
- 13
Imagine this scenario: Jim is more often than not a calm person. He never raises his voice at home, and he never shows signs of anger at work. Jim, however, has felt disrespected on multiple occasions by his boss. On the way home from work, he is in a constant state of road rage and experiences a fast heart rate and a tight jaw. Jim is probably not in need of anger management. True
- 14
Employers that require anger management for their employees are working to ensure a productive and respectful work environment. True
- 15
Feeling anger frequently or extremely intensely can lead to health issues, such as hypertension and a weakened immune system. True
- 16
Conflicts can be resolved without anger getting in the way. True
- 17
Most people cannot unlearn unhealthy habits of dealing with anger. True

18
Avoiding conflict is the best way to resolve something. True

19
Observing others' ways of dealing with anger is helpful when learning about yourself. True

20
Excessive cynicism, such as talking down to others or yourself, is not a form of misplaced anger. True

Quiz 2

1. Anger can only be expressed in an unhealthy ways. True

2
It is easier to respond thoughtfully while angry than to react on autopilot. True

3
Suppressed anger is an unhealthy expression of anger. True

4
Blaming others for a conflict is an effective way to resolve something. True

5
Dealing with conflict effectively can improve self-esteem and relationships. False True

6
Feeling justified in displays of anger is healthy. True

7
Susan and Oscar are in the middle of an argument. Susan feels extremely hurt and angered by the situation. She decides to walk out of the room and to no longer speak to Oscar for the remainder of the night. This is a healthy way of dealing with anger. True

8
Respect is an important part of maintaining open communication. True

9
Only you will be affected by your expressions of anger. True

10
Resolving conflicts appropriately can build trust in a relationship. True

11
Using phrases beginning with "I feel upset when..." is a way to take ownership of your own emotions, thoughts, and expectations and /or beliefs True

12
It is healthy to avoid a conflict until it has built up enough to feel unavoidable. True

- 13
When we respond with anger, situations can quickly spin out of control. True
- 14
Lying and manipulation are both unhealthy expressions of anger. True
- 15
Instead of acting out in anger, it is better to shut it inside. True
- 16
Edith often finds herself waking up on the wrong side of the bed. She slams things around while making coffee and is gruff with her children while getting them ready for school. Her children are often grumpy as a result of Edith's behavior. This is an example of not considering others' feelings. True
- 17
An unhealthy expression of anger can create a long-lasting feeling of relief. True
- 18
In order to resolve a conflict peacefully, it is important to see both sides as objectively as possible. True
- 19
All unhealthy expressions of anger are violent in nature or blatantly aggressive. True
- 20
Anger can be expressed in a healthy, appropriate manner. True
- Quiz 3
- Anger is inherited. True
- 2
Because dealing with anger is a learned behavior or habit, it can be relearned. True
- 3
Most of our methods of handling anger were learned in childhood. True
- 4
Self-awareness is not that important when it comes to managing anger. True
- 5
It is another person's fault that you often react with unhealthy expressions of anger. True
- 6
It is much more difficult to keep cool when you are hungry or tired. True
- 7
Needs only include basic things, like food and shelter. True
- 8
Ruth has trouble maintaining meaningful friendships. She often checks social media and feels both jealous and angry when she reads about acquaintances getting together and having fun. Ruth probably has an unmet need for a sense of community. True
- 9
Needs simplify as we mature. True
- 10
Learning to recognize unmet needs in others will help you gain an objective perspective when trying to resolve conflict.

11	Unhealthy expression of anger can be caused by something seemingly irrelevant, allowing a person to avoid the real emotion, such as grief or pain.	True
12	People with unmet needs tend to react rather than respond to a situation.	True
13	Developing an awareness of needs can cultivate compassion for yourself and others.	True
14	Being reprimanded for expressing emotions during childhood has nothing to do with how you handle anger today.	True
15	Bringing awareness to unmet needs develops a deeper connection to your emotions.	True
16	It is your responsibility to change your behavior.	True
17	The expression of anger is frequently a learned habit.	True
18	Children raised by parents who often become involved in verbal or physical altercations may express their anger in a similar manner as they grow up.	True
19	Unawareness of unmet needs, such as a sense of independence or power, may lead someone to be reactive and aggressive which may harm their relationships.	True
20	It is always possible to learn new methods of handling anger.	True
Quiz 4 Self-awareness is a necessary part of anger management.		
2	You do not need to worry about being able to recognize when you begin to feel angry.	True
3	Properly managing anger includes ignoring it.	True
4	Conflict should not ever happen.	True
5	Not everyone feels angry.	True
6	You are able to choose between reacting inappropriately or responding appropriately.	True
7	Anger management successfully means you must know yourself, your needs, and your environment.	True
8	Some bodily symptoms of anger include feeling beet red, a tightening jaw, or changed posture.	True
9	Usually our bodies are the first to react when encountering anger.	True
10	Things that trigger anger can never be avoided.	True
11	It is wise to plan in advance of a situation that may arise feelings of anger.	True

- 12
Recognizing patterns in your life is important in knowing how to improve. True
- 13
When you are in the midst of an unhealthy reaction to anger, you are probably not being mindful to yourself or your situation. True
- 14
Feeling rushed or stressed by workloads is not a common trigger for anger. True
- 15
Being fully attentive in a situation is not hard, especially if the situation is something you do not want to be in. True
- 16
You can plan ahead of time to find an alternative to things that trigger you. True
- 17
In order to effectively manage anger, you must realize patterns to your triggers. True
- 18
Using your triggers as justification for being angry is okay. True
- 19
There are many things that contribute to stress that can make our frustration turn into ill-expressed anger. True
- 20
Managing your anger and knowing yourself are commitments that take time but will ultimately lead to a healthier, calmer life. True

Quiz 5

- 1.Many of our behaviors are learned during childhood. True
- 2
Emotionally intelligent people value the opinions of others. True
- 3
Improving your emotional intelligence can improve your relationships. True
- 4
People with high emotional intelligence find it easy to know how others are feeling. True
- 5
Emotional intelligence is something you're born with and cannot be improved or learned. True
- 6
Awareness is one of the most important parts of emotional intelligence. True
- 7
Empathy makes it more difficult to see another person's side of an argument. True
- 8
Strengthening your self-control will reduce your likelihood of impulsive reactions. True
- 9
Assertive communication requires physically confronting another person. True
- 10
You can see how angry or stressed someone is by paying attention to their breathing rate. True
- 11
Once anger responses are learned in childhood, it is impossible to change them. True
- 12
People who are mean spirited and unfriendly probably have high emotional intelligence. True
- 13
Understanding the perspectives of your coworkers will help you be a better team player.

- 14
Unlike a muscle, self-awareness and control cannot be strengthened. True
- 15
When you aren't practicing self-awareness, anger can feel uncontrollable and take you by surprise. True
- 16
Once anger begins building, it cannot be controlled. True
- 17
When you feel underappreciated at work it is best to use physical aggression to show everyone that you are upset. True
- 18
Maintaining self awareness allows a person to carefully consider the ways they can react to a situation. True
- 19
Anger that is held in or ignored can easily arise later. True
- 20
Self-awareness only needs to be practiced in stressful situations. True

Quiz 6

- Empathy means imagining what it's like to be in someone else's shoes. True
- 2
Some things are too small to cause anger. True
- 3
Empathy enables us to understand that there are many factors affecting others that we may not be aware of. True
- 4
Successfully managing anger requires you to ignore the perspectives of others and only focus on yourself. True
- 5
It is usually easy to view a situation objectively when in the heat of a conflict. True
- 6
Empathy is something you're born with, it can't be learned. True
- 7
Being able to track your thought process is a crucial part of empathy. True
- 8
Oftentimes unmet needs can be the source of anger. True
- 9
It is important to yell at others to make sure they know your needs have not been met. True
- 10
It is fine to expect others to know when your needs are unmet without communicating. True
- 11
When certain needs aren't met, clear communication regarding your needs may be helpful. True
- 12
There's no reason to be considerate of a coworker's needs if you are not friends outside of work. True
- 13
Switching perspectives enables you to connect with others. True
- 14
At work, if my needs are met, there's no reason to make sure that everyone else's needs have been met. True

- 15 True
If a person has not completed a task the way I described, it is likely because they are incompetent.
- 16 True
There's no reason to consider the needs of people I am in charge of because they are below me.
- 17 True
Negative thoughts can be translated into simple, unmet needs.
- 18 True
If I feel myself getting angry at work, it can be ok and helpful to excuse myself to gather my thoughts before continuing a conversation.
- 19 True
If a criticism is true, it is ok to say it to a person's face.
- 20 True
If other people make no effort to empathize with me, there's no point in trying to empathize with them.

Quiz 7

- f I struggle to gain self-control, I will probably never be able to learn it. True
- 2 True
Levelheadedness is a key ingredient in not losing control in stressful situations.
- 3 True
When things don't go as planned, it's important to blame someone.
- 4 True
Surprises are always welcomed.
- 5 True
Events that surprise us may be accidental or mistakes.
- 6 True
Bodily responses to fear can resemble anger.
- 7 True
Fear and anger are usually separate and have little to do with one another.
- 8 True
People who disagree with our beliefs are probably less intelligent than us.
- 9 True
When we get stuck in our own beliefs, we can fail to see why others may feel differently.
- 10 True
Belief, fear, and surprise can be used to translate irrational thoughts into more controlled, calm thoughts.
- 11 True
Empathy means considering another person's beliefs and fears.
- 12 True
Judgmental thoughts make good conversation starters.
- 13 True
Breathing is a good way to respond to sudden fear and anger.
- 14 True
No event is too small to cause anger.
- 15 True
Small accidents can be fixed with simple actions when self-control is employed.
- 16 True

When you are upset there is no need to ask yourself why you are upset.	True
17 People who make mistakes are probably careless.	True
18 It's important to recognize that it's ok for my beliefs to be challenged.	True
19 There's no need to be considerate of another person's beliefs if their opinions are different from mine.	True
20 Criticism has no place at work.	True

Quiz 8\

1. It's ok to rely on previously learned forms of communication when in a highly stressful situation.	True
2 Invading someone's personal space is a good way to communicate assertively.	True
3 Passive aggressive communication is better than aggressive communication.	True
4 Explosions of feeling are attempts to communicate anger.	True
5 When a person responds poorly to aggressive communication you should try to communicate more aggressively to get their attention.	True
6 Aggressive communication gets the point across.	True
7 Communicating aggressively has negative long term effects on relationships.	True
8 Trying to talk or yell louder than another person is a form of aggressive communication.	True
9 It's ok to criticize someone if it's done punitively.	True
10 It's best to communicate with coworkers who work under you by being aggressive and showing them who's the boss.	True
11 If I don't communicate aggressively, people will walk all over me.	True
12 If a person's body language does not match what they are saying they may be communicating passive aggressively.	True
13 If Gina rolls her eyes when asked to do a task, then does the task anyway, she is communicating aggressively.	True
14 Part of being aware in situations is comparing a person's body language with what they are saying.	True
15 It is ok to say no to a person even if I don't have an excuse.	True
16 It's best to discuss blame when handling conflicts so that everyone knows who is at fault.	True
17 When someone makes a mistake at work it is ok to attribute this mistake to their character.	True

- 18
When handling a stressful situation it is important to monitor my tone to ensure that it matches what I'm saying. True
- 19
It's ok to respond to aggressive communication with more aggressive communication if I didn't start it. True
- 20
Being able to maintain my composure and not become aggressive will let others know that I am weak. True