

## **ANGER MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES**

(1) The '**ABCDE**' method (see form) to monitoring your anger triggers and evaluating the effectiveness of your strategies. The three **As (A1, A2, A3)** approach

(2) **AWARENESS (A1)** Of your anger triggers, anger symptoms and stress level (monitor your stress level using the DASS scale at [www.cgh.com.sg](http://www.cgh.com.sg) -> Health Library -> Interactive Patient Guide (IPG) -> General Health -> Stress Management)

(3) **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT (A2)** That your anger is a problem and you need to do something about it.

(4) **ACTIONS (A3): A-B-C STRATEGIES**

(4a) **A (Affective) Strategies**

Crying; Creative & spiritual means (e.g. dancing, prayer); **Appreciation; Acceptance**

(4b) **B (Behavioural) Strategies**

(i) **"Time Out" method.** To take a short break and come back to talk about the issue at a later time. A must for people who are very "short fused". Helpful to have pre-agreed guidelines and "cues". (**Use this method only when & where appropriate**).

(ii) **Learn to Give Up Your Rights temporarily.** In very volatile (hostile) situations, it may be wise to give up your rights temporarily to maintain peace or ensure safety.

(iii) **Relaxation methods & Exercise:** Slow breathing; 10-count method; Meditation, Yoga; Scheduled breaks and holidays; Exercises you enjoy.

(iv) **Emotional (Assertive) Communication:** Expressing feelings, needs and requests without blaming and demanding, using "I feel..... when you (say, do).... Could you.....?" (or similar) statements. Avoid labeling people with put-down terms (e.g. stupid, lazy, inconsiderate). (**Use this method only when & where appropriate**).

Example: Someone has made a mistake.

Aggressive Response: "You stupid fool, look what you have done! You have ruined my whole day with your stupidity!"

More Effective Response: "I feel extremely annoyed that you forgot to send that message. It is going to cause me a great deal of difficulty. Could you please make sure that it will not happen again in future?" (in a firm but respectful tone).

In the aggressive response, you have certainly communicated your anger to the person, and you have also blamed them and verbally abused them. In the latter response, you have stated your *annoyance*, which is directed not at the person *but at their actions*. You have expressed your feelings clearly and indicated that you want to try to resolve the problem.

(4c) **C (Cognitive) Strategies**

(i) **Engage in Calming (Anger-Reducing) Self-Talk.** Look out for, and dispute (change), thoughts (and beliefs) that are anger-inducing and often extreme and irrational

(e.g. "It is not fair!" "I am entitled to get angry", "People should not treat me like that", "You should know better to....!", "You are always late...", "I can't stand this!"). Avoid words that are extreme or demanding or exaggerate the badness of a situation (e.g. never, always, should, must, should not, must not).

<b>Anger-Encouraging Self-Talk</b>	<b>Anger-Reducing Self-Talk</b>
"I <u>can't stand</u> this waiting. This cashier is so incompetent...!"	"It is frustrating but not intolerable. I can see she is trying her best in this busy situation."
'It's so <u>unfair</u> that he is promoted before me....!"	"Where is written that life is fair? ..."
"He <u>should not</u> do that to me because I will not do that to him.!"	"Not everyone lives by my rules. It is sad that people can be unkind and thoughtless but I don't need to react..."
"I am so stupid for making such mistake...!"	"I am only human...What can I learn from this mistake?"
"Oh no, this traffic jam is driving me mad!"	"No point getting angry over this. Maybe I can use this time to relax."
"He does not like what I do. I must be stupid or what!"	"I can't please everyone. Most other people like what I did...."
"He is <u>always</u> unreasonable...."	"Come to think, he had been reasonable in the past when I was not so pushy...."
"I must win this argument...I must be in control....I must be in charge!"	"Wait a minute. It is not necessary to win all the time. I need to listen...he may be right...."

(ii) **Advantage / Disadvantage Method.** When you are feeling angry in a particular situation, you are urged to list the advantages and disadvantages of behaving angrily. You then review the list considering the short and long-term consequences, and decide whether angry behaviour is in your best interest.

Example: Mary, a mother with 2 children, is often angry with her husband, John. John works very long hours and occasionally takes time off after work to relax with his friends. Mary often feels deprived and resentful. She makes a list of the advantages and disadvantages of becoming angry and abusive so frequently.

<b>ADVANTAGES</b>	<b>DISADVANTAGES</b>
I have the right to get angry if I want to.	I often feel guilty and hate myself after I have lost my temper
I will teach him a lesson not to do it again.	It probably won't teach him not to do it again. It may in fact worsen the situation.
I want him to feel bad and hurt for not paying attention to my needs.	My irritable and unpredictable reactions will make things worse, affecting my children as well. We will all feel miserable.

(5) Evaluate the effectiveness of your strategies constantly. Seek professional help if your anger continues to be out of control.

### **Recommended Reading**

(1) Robert Nay (2004). Taking Charge of Anger. London: The Guilford Press.

(2) Matthew McKay (2000). **The Anger Control Workbook.** USA: New Harbinger Publications.