

# Anger Management

## Module 1: Introduction

Thank you for registering for the Anger Management program through Sober2Day.com. This program was initially designed as a 12-week group session, utilizing the SAMHSA developed Anger Management Workbook. With the rise of COVID in 2020, the program was re-designed to accommodate sessions via phone, video, or alternative methods that aim to bring the information to you in a meaningful way while maintaining safe distancing and accommodating scheduling conflicts that may exist.

The Anger Management Workbook was revised in 2019, and this is the most up-to-date version of the workbook. You should have already received the electronic version of the workbook, and can use the lessons in it as a guide as we move through the modules. The overall goal of the program is to assist you in thinking more deeply about the role of anger in your personal life, both historically and presently, and to help you develop necessary skills to manage anger appropriately.

### Program Layout:

Periodically over the next few weeks, you will receive reading material that will cover specific “modules”, or sections related to the workbook. In addition, video links may be sent to provide more perspective. After every 2-3 modules, you will participate in a post-test that will verify that you have achieved adequate comprehension of that material. These will be electronic surveys that you will receive email links to. Upon successful completion of all modules, you will be issued a certificate of completion for the entire program.

At any time during the course of the program, you can reach out for support or questions via phone or email.

### Contact Information:

Kenneth Jones  
<https://sober2day.com>  
[admin@sober2day.com](mailto:admin@sober2day.com)  
810-258-0300

## Anger Management

### Module 2: Definitions and Myths

Anger can be seen as one of many emotions all human beings experience at one time or another. Anger tends to be a “master emotion”, in that it can impact our behavior more than some other feelings. Anger may be experienced as mild frustration, irritation, or intense fury or even rage. The feeling itself is not a “bad” thing. In fact, for the purpose of this course, we can dispense with any label of “good” or “bad” for any feeling you may have. Feelings are not facts, they simply are responses to cues in our environment that we can become more aware of, and thereby gain a higher level of control over our *response* to those emotions. Anger itself is not a problem, but sometimes our behavioral response to anger creates serious consequences for us.

Anger, again, is just a feeling. Aggression, which some people confuse with anger, is *behavior*. Aggression is behavior that is intended to cause harm or injury to another person, or to cause damage to property. As stated above, having anger (which may cause us to *choose* aggressive action) is not the problem. However, acting with aggression can be a serious problem. Another important and potentially harmful issue is *hostility*, which refers to a set of attitude and judgments that can motivate aggressive behavior.

Referring to Page 4 of the workbook, respond to the questions provided. You can use a separate notepad to do so. Have you confused anger with aggression? Has anger affected you physically? And, importantly, what are some payoffs to anger that you are aware of?

*Payoffs:*

Considering the potential consequences of aggression and hostility, it is tempting to think that it would be easy to stop. After all, when we look at the damage that the reaction to anger can cause, no one would ask for that to continue. As it turns out, for most of us, changing behavior is easier said than done. Evaluate if there are benefits (even perceived benefits) of continuing a damaging behavior. For example, some people share that anger is a motivating force for them. They have difficulty taking action until they are “pissed off enough to act”. Another perceived benefit may be that you have some social anxiety, and rather than face social situations, you keep people at a distance through an irritable or aggressive personality style.

What benefits do you get from anger? On page 4 and 5, respond to the question to identify both “payoffs” and “consequences” you may have experienced from anger in your life.

## Myths about Anger

On page 5, review the four myths about anger. Identify and note (in your separate notebook or the workbook) if you have held any of these myths. The following statements will be important going forward through this course:

*How you respond to anger can be changed*

*Anger does not have to lead to aggression*

*You can get what you want and need through healthy means rather than aggression*

*Anger does not always have to be vented*

As human beings, we sometime get stuck. We always do what we have always done, and continue to get unsatisfactory results. Just because you have always responded a certain way to issues in your life, does not mean you have to continue to respond in this way. The first step in getting unstuck is to recognize that your are truly not stuck in the first place – you have choices, and you can change. Break the *habit* of responding to situations the same way. Anger can become a habit as well. The more we practice aggressive responses to anger, the more it becomes ingrained and ultimately becomes a habitual, maladaptive response that results in negative consequences.

Review the questions on page 6.

## **Breaking the Habit**

In order to break the anger habit, or any other negative habit, you must first become aware of the events, cues, and circumstances that trigger this habitual response. As you think about your own response to things in your life, take note of things you would like to change – things you would like to respond to in a healthy way. Note these in your notebook, and then evaluate ways you may be able to control your reactions – what strategies might you employ?

## **The “Anger Meter”**

On page 7 is an “Anger Meter” that you will be asked to use on a regular basis. Use this meter to evaluate how you responded to things over the course of your day or week. You can use this as a tool for self-inventory. What helped you stay on the low end of the meter? What things triggered a higher level on the meter? In our next section, we will talk in more detail about triggers and cues.

## Anger Management

### Module 3 – Events and Cues

It has been said that if you want to get a glimpse at someone's character, see how they respond during an unexpected traffic jam. The intimation here is that a person of poor character will explode in anger and act out toward other drivers. This, of course, is a vast oversimplification. Many other things are in play when we face unexpected frustration. If one has already had a highly stressful day, or if one is trying to race home due to a family emergency, just lost their job because the factory closed ... you get the picture. There are obvious events and triggers for anger like those mentioned, but there are also many more subtle ones.

A key point is that when you experience anger, it is in response to your interpretation of an event in your life. Your interpretation is filtered through previous experiences that may be related to longstanding sensitive issues. The traffic jam may trigger the memory of a traumatic event in your life, and you suffer an overreaction to the current event as a result. One way to begin to address these issues is to learn how to “observe” your reaction rather than allow it to control your behavior. In other words, if you “watch yourself” as if you are outside of the situation, and it is clear you are overreacting to it, try to use some healthy self-talk to bring the emotional temperature down. “This is just a small setback, no big deal”.

Review the questions on page 9. Note for yourself what events lead to anger or other unwanted reactions. Identify 2-3 “Red Flag” events that lead to an overreaction, and potentially unwarranted anger.

Once you have identified some of these events, you can then analyze them a bit closer. Think of an event when you may have reacted with a high degree of anger, perhaps 7 or higher on the anger meter. Now, with this memory in mind, consider what cues you can recollect of each of the following types:

**Physical** – What can you recall about how your body responded (increased heart rate, tightness in the chest, feeling hot or flushed)

**Behavioral** – What can you recall about your behavior (did you clench your fists, stare at others, raise your voice, kick something?)

**Emotional** – What other feelings can you remember during that time? Did you feel hurt, disrespected, embarrassed, afraid?

**Cognitive** – What did you think of in response to the event? Did you talk harshly to

yourself? Did you see images of aggressive acts or revenge?

Now that you have explored events and cues, think of other events and use the same process to identify some cues and triggers. Try to identify patterns that can help you develop a plan of action for dealing with these events as they may arise.

Over the course of the next several days, follow the procedures on page 11 to monitor anger for the week. Identify the highest number reached on the anger meter, then review the event and cues associated with it. Note the strategies that you used to avoid reaching 10 on the meter. Spending some time analyzing situations that you face, and identifying cues and triggers will help you develop an effective anger control plan.

## Anger Management Module 4 – Monitoring and Anger Control Plans

On page 12 and 13 of the workbook, there are charts to help you document events, cues, and triggers, as well as to take a closer look at how situations may develop into unintentional behaviors that have negative consequences. The key to these tools is to break down the situations and responses into before, during and after analyses. An example follows.

**Situation:** I invited family over for a dinner and get-together, looking forward to spending quality time with them. Dinner was planned for 3, and at that time, some of the family had not arrived yet.

**Anger Cues:** I was thinking that my family didn't appreciate me, or that I wasn't important. I was feeling hurt, and began to feel angry at the perceived slight. I told myself "I just won't invite them over anymore, they don't care about me".

**Anger Meter:** At 3 o'clock, I found myself at a 3 on the anger meter. At 4 o'clock, I had risen to a 6, and felt it could go higher.

**Behavior:** I fought hard to keep it under wraps so that I could enjoy those who were there on time. I made coffee, I prepared the table, keeping to myself a little so my disappointment and anger didn't show.

**Consequences:** Positive – I was able to use self-talk and breathing techniques to bring my anger level down. Negative – when they arrived, I made a couple passive-aggressive comments that I regret.

**Strategies Used:** distraction, self-talk, breathing techniques

In this example, some tools are highlighted that can improve the outcome of the situation. Without the coping strategies, this may have devolved into a shouting match with the family, and a wedge in the relationship. In this case, an honest discussion with the tardy family members may be helpful at a later date.

Over the next two weeks, refer to these tables, and make notes about situations you encounter. Remember that the cues are sometimes rooted in beliefs – in the above example, this person may have a belief that they are not cared about, and the situation serves to reinforce that belief. This is a recipe for overreaction.

## Anger Control Plans

While the focus here is on anger, these strategies can be utilized in general to mitigate emotional upset and distress. Review the methods discussed beginning on page 15. The first strategy, the *timeout*, can be very effective in preventing an escalation of emotions and potential anger outburst. Remember, the key to this is not to just “stuff” the feelings, but to postpone your reaction, but committing to return to it later for a calm discussion. This strategy can be used in the “heat of the moment” to lower the temperature and move on to a healthy outcome.

The Timeout strategy can and should be used with other coping strategies. Take a timeout and go listen to calming music, or go for a walk, or write in your journal.

On page 16, review the Social Support Plan. Identify 2-3 people you can use for healthy support, and make a plan for how you will ask for this support. It is recommended that you put this plan in place when you are in a good place, rather than waiting for an emotionally-charged situation. If you are unable to think of 2-3 people you can count on for this support, then your plan instead should focus on how to add these support people to your life. Consider the support as mutual – in other words, approach someone you believe you can trust to provide this support, and offer it mutually. Make a sort of informal contract - “I’m here for you, you’re here for me”. It’s ok to set some boundaries about this, and ask for what you need. Maybe you only need that support person to be there to listen, without judgement or advice. Other support people may be more like a mentor, and you would welcome their perspective on the situation.

Review the sample Anger Control Plan on page 17, and write your own plan. There are important ones listed in this example, such as exploring the *primary* feelings underlying the anger. In our example situation, the primary feelings were hurt, feeling unimportant, etc. Anger in these cases is used as a salve against that hurt, to push people away that you believe may hurt you further.

In the next module, we will delve into the Aggression Cycle.