



A Professional Growth Module:

MANAGING ANGER IN THE WORKPLACE

©1998-2014

May be copied for use within each physical location that purchases this inservice.



A Professional Growth Module:
**MANAGING ANGER
IN THE WORKPLACE**

We hope you enjoy this inservice, prepared by registered nurses especially for nursing assistants like you!

Instructions for the Learner

If you are studying the inservice on your own, please do the following:

- Read through **all** the material. You may find it useful to have a highlighting marker nearby as you read. Highlight any information that is new to you or that you feel is especially important.
- If you have questions about anything you read, please ask _____.
- Take the quiz. Think about each statement and pick the best answer.
- Check with your supervisor for the right answers. You need **8 correct** to pass!
- Print your name, write in the date, and then sign your name.
- Keep the inservice information for yourself and turn in the quiz page to _____ no later than _____.
Show your Inservice Club Membership Card to _____ so that it can be initialed.
- Email In the Know at feedback@knowingmore.com with your comments and/or suggestions for improving this inservice.

THANK YOU!

After finishing this inservice, you will be able to:

- Describe the biological changes that take place in the body when someone becomes angry.*
- ❖
- List at least two physical illnesses and two mental illnesses associated with anger.*
- ❖
- Outline a plan of action one might take to deal with angry feelings before they happen.*
- ❖
- Discuss the importance of using assertive communication instead of aggressive communication.*
- ❖
- Decide to get professional help if/when anger becomes a problem.*



Inside This Inservice:

The Biology of Anger	2
What Makes People Angry?	3
When Is Anger a Problem?	4
Ten Tips for Controlling Anger	5-6
When Someone Else Is Angry	7
Make a Plan	8
More Tips for Controlling Anger in the Workplace	9-10



© 2014 In the Know, Inc.
www.knowingmore.com
 May be copied for use within each physical location that purchases this inservice from In the Know. All other copying or distribution is strictly prohibited.

A Professional Growth Module: Managing Anger in the Workplace

WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH DANA?

Dana worked at a long term care facility. She found it a stressful place to work because there were lots of changes and a high employee turnover rate. Dana often lost her temper and became very angry and impatient towards her co-workers and clients.

Dana felt that people took advantage of her and that the only way she could get them to listen was to be aggressive. As a result, her relationships with co-workers were suffering and many avoided working with her when possible.

The supervisor decided that if Dana was unable to manage her anger, the company would have to let her go. After talking it through with her, Dana's supervisor encouraged Dana speak to a counselor that specializes in anger management and even recommended contacting the company's employee assistance program (EAP) for a referral.

Dana took her supervisor's advice and made an appointment with a therapist a week later. They met six times over the next six weeks to explore the issues behind Dana's anger. They also discussed appropriate ways to manage and express frustrations, how to use relaxation techniques and how to develop assertiveness skills to help Dana communicate her feelings.

Dana made good progress, and soon felt more relaxed and better able to control her anger both at work and at home. Her relationships with co-workers improved and she was able to talk to her supervisor about ways they could resolve workplace difficulties together.

If you sometimes feel like Dana, or work with someone like Dana, keep reading to learn about all the positive and productive ways you can help yourself and others manage anger in the workplace!

WHAT'S NEW?

Grab your favorite highlighter! As you read this inservice, **highlight five things** you learn that you didn't know before. Share this new information with your co-workers!



THE BIOLOGY OF ANGER

Anger affects the whole body because it triggers the "Fight or Flight Response." This is the body's primitive, automatic response that prepares the body to "fight" or "flee" from an attack, harm or threat to our survival.

This response starts in an area of the brain called the hypothalamus, which—when stimulated—initiates a sequence of hormones like adrenaline, noradrenaline and cortisol to be released.

This sudden flood of hormones causes the following changes in the body:

The Brain has trouble focusing on small tasks.

The Pupils Dilate (enlarge) to take in as much light as possible.

Heart Rate and Blood Pressure Increase.

Blood-Glucose Level Increases.

Muscles Contract and Veins Constrict leading to the "chill" and "goose bumps" that may be felt.

The Digestion and Immune Systems shut down to keep energy for emergencies.



All of these physical responses are intended to help you survive a dangerous situation by preparing you to either run for your life or fight for your life (thus the term "fight or flight").



The Facts

Anger takes a toll on the body and the mind.

Anger can cause physical health problems, such as:

- Backache
- Headaches
- Hypertension (high blood pressure)
- Insomnia
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Skin disorders
- Stroke
- Heart attack
- Lower pain threshold
- Weakened immune system.

In addition, anger can lead to emotional problems, including:

- Depression
- Eating disorders
- Alcohol abuse
- Drug abuse
- Self injury
- Low self-esteem
- Moodiness



WHAT EXCITES YOU?

HAVE SOME FUN

People who take time to have a little fun with family and friends on their days off from work are generally happier and find less things to be angry about when they are at work!

What can you do on your next day off to relax and have fun?

Fun doesn't have to cost a lot of money. In fact, it can even be free! For example, you could go on a picnic, take a drive in the country, visit a local farm, go to a free museum, take a walk in the park, go bike riding, look for coupons for your local bowling ally, skating rink or movie theater!

Think of 2 or 3 things you can do with your friends and family. Then, make a plan and start having some fun!

WHAT MAKES PEOPLE ANGRY?

The most common factors that make people angry are:

- Grief, losing a loved one
- Rudeness
- Tiredness
- Hunger
- Pain
- Withdrawal from drugs or some medications
- Some physical conditions, such as pre-menstrual syndrome
- Physical illness
- Mental illness
- Alcohol abuse, drug abuse
- Injustice
- Being teased or bullied
- Humiliation
- Embarrassment
- Deadlines
- Traffic jams
- Disappointment
- Sexual frustration
- Sloppy service
- Failure
- Infidelity
- Burglary
- Financial problems
- Being told you have a serious illness



Anger arises in different people for various reasons and is usually linked to a past experience or a decrease in frustration level.

- **Past Experience:** A person who was abused as a child may become angry when she hears someone else being yelled at. Or, a person who has been teased or bullied may get angry if he hears people teasing someone else.
- **Frustration Level:** A person's tolerance for frustration can decrease when there is stress or anxiety, physical or emotional pain, drugs or alcohol, or from simply having a bad day.

In general, people get angry when they feel that they are being *threatened*. It could be a real or imagined threat to themselves, their ego, or someone they love or care for.

WHEN ANGER BECOMES A PROBLEM

Anger itself is not always bad. In fact, experts say anger is a natural emotion that is important for survival. It's programmed into our DNA.

The increased heart rate, blood pressure, and the release of hormones prepares us to take action. Remember the "fight or flight response"? It's when we decide to dig in our heels and fight . . . or run for our lives!

It's only when anger is *uncontrolled* that it becomes a problem which can have some serious consequences. So how can you tell if your own (or someone else's) anger is a problem?

Here are some clues:

- It leads to trouble with the law.
- There are constant arguments especially between partners, parents, children or co-workers.
- Arguments lead to physical fights.
- Someone gets hit.
- There are threats of violence to people or property.
- Emotional outbursts occur even when minor things go wrong.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF ANGER

- 20,000 people are killed by another person each year in the United States.
- About 300,000 people are murdered worldwide each year in wars, conflicts, and violence between individuals.
- Every day in the United States, 65 people are killed and more than 6,000 are wounded in interpersonal violence.
- Nearly half of all workers admit to losing their temper on the job.
- Thirty eight percent of men report being unhappy at work.
- Nearly 30 percent of nurses have been attacked at work.
- Up to 60 percent of all absences from work are caused by stress.
- One in 20 of us has had a fight with a co-worker.
- More than 80 percent of drivers say they have been involved in road rage incidents. Twenty five percent have committed an act of road rage themselves.
- Fifty percent of people polled admitted that they reacted to a computer problem by hitting it or throwing parts of it!



TALK ABOUT IT!

BEFORE IT GOES TOO FAR!

The best way to get a handle on anger, (whether it's your own anger or the anger of someone else) is to talk about it.

If someone on your team is angry, and that anger is beginning to disrupt your teamwork or client care, talk to your supervisor. There may be some resources she could offer the person to help get his or her anger under control.

If you feel angry or out of control, talk to a trusted friend or your doctor right away. Help is available.

A problem like this almost never goes away on its own. You can't just wish it away. There are proven programs, methods and counseling therapies that can help!



THE NEXT STEP!

The best way to combat anger (and the results of an angry outburst) is to make a plan during a time when you *don't* feel angry.

After completing this inservice, come back to this page and develop your own step-by-step plan for handling your own anger.

A PROMISE TO MYSELF

The next time I become angry at work, I will do the following:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

TEN TIPS FOR CONTROLLING ANGER

1. CALL "TIME-OUT."

Before you say or do something you will regret, say, *"I need to take a time-out."* Then walk away from the situation, take a deep breath and count to 10. Take this time to think about what you want to say. Only return when you feel calm and in control.

2. GET YOUR FINGER ON THE "EDIT" BUTTON.

In the heat of the moment, it's easy to say something you'll later regret. By taking a few moments to collect your thoughts before saying anything, you'll be able to press that edit button before the thoughts become words.

3. EXPRESS YOURSELF.

Once you're thinking clearly, express your needs and concerns in a calm and rational way. Speak clearly and directly, without hurting others or trying to control them.

4. USE "I" STATEMENTS.

Avoid criticizing or placing blame by talking about how you are feeling with "I" statements. For example, say *"I feel really embarrassed about this mistake"* instead of, *"You made a horrible mistake that makes us all look bad."*

5. FIND THE HUMOR.

Lightening up can help diffuse tension. Don't use sarcasm, though — it can hurt feelings and make things worse.

6. IDENTIFY POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS.

Instead of focusing on what made you mad, work on resolving the issue at hand. If your co-worker's sloppiness is making your job harder, design an organizational system that provides a place for everything. Remind yourself that anger won't fix anything, and might only make it worse.



TEN TIPS—CONTINUED

7. DON'T HOLD A GRUDGE.

Forgiveness is a powerful tool. If you allow anger and other negative feelings to crowd out positive feelings, you might find yourself swallowed up by your own bitterness or sense of injustice. But if you can forgive someone who angered you, you might both learn from the situation.

8. PRACTICE RELAXATION SKILLS.

During a time when you do *not* feel angry, plan a relaxation ritual you can practice the next time angry feelings surface. It can be deep-breathing exercises, imagining a relaxing scene, or repeating a calming word or phrase, such as, "Take it easy." (See more about "Making a Plan" on page 8.)

9. GET SOME EXERCISE.

Physical activity can provide a healthy outlet for your emotions. If there is a situation at work that is causing frustration or anger, consider doing some physical activity just before or just after work. Physical activity produces the "feel good" chemicals that leave you feeling happier and more relaxed than you were before you worked out.

10. KNOW WHEN TO SEEK HELP.

Controlling anger can be a challenge. Seek professional help if your anger seems out of control, causes you to do things you regret or hurts those around you.

- Request a referral from your doctor to a counselor specializing in anger management, or ask family members, friends or other contacts for recommendations. Your health insurer, employee assistance program (EAP), clergy, or state or local agencies also might offer recommendations.

A FEW ONLINE OPTIONS

Want more information? Check out these online anger management resources:

- **Anger Management Online** at: <http://angermanagementonline.com>
- **American Psychological Association** at: www.apa.org/topics/anger/control.aspx
- **Get the Angries Out** at: www.angriesout.com



GET OUT!

THINK OUTSIDE OF THE BOX!

Working with clients in the home often requires coming up with creative solutions to uncommon problems.

- **THE PROBLEM:** You are caring for a 54 year old woman with terminal cancer who is near the end of her journey.
- Once a week, your client's adult daughter comes to visit. On every visit, she flies into a rage about the mess in the kitchen, a stale odor in the house, her mother's un-combed hair, and many other minor things that wouldn't bother most people.
- **WHAT YOU KNOW:** You know her anger comes from frustration, grief and fear. But it's hard when it's always directed at you.
- **GET CREATIVE:** What will you do? Think of three creative solutions to this problem.
- **TALK ABOUT IT:** Share your ideas with your co-workers and supervisor and find out how they would solve this problem.



THINK ABOUT IT!

ANGER AND THE ELDERLY

Your elderly clients may become angry for many reasons. Loss of abilities, pain, fear, and feelings of helplessness are often at the root of the problem.

Some signs your client is angry may include:

- Impatience
- Sarcasm
- Unwillingness to participate in daily events or schedules
- Withdrawal
- Increased complaints

What can you do to help?

- If pain is a problem, do what you can to help make your client comfortable.
- If helplessness is the problem, offer choices. Allow your client to participate in his or her own care, as much as possible.
- Recommend your client speak to his physician, a pastor, a social worker, or his family.

WHEN SOMEONE ELSE IS ANGRY

SIGNS A CO-WORKER OR CLIENT IS ANGRY:

- Yelling, swearing and making threats.
- Looking flushed and tense, with clenched fists.
- Speaking or breathing too fast.
- Glaring intensely.
- Standing too close to others.
- Pacing or stamping their feet.
- Throwing objects.



PROTECT YOUR PERSONAL SAFETY:

- Avoid touching an angry person unless you know from past experience that touching them is safe.
- Be a good role model. If you get angry because of someone else's anger, it will only make the situation worse.
- Never tease or ignore an angry person.
- Stand at least an arm's length away from an angry person.
- Avoid letting the person trap you in a corner or block your exit from the room.
- If you fear for your safety, leave the room and contact your supervisor.
- Don't wear jewelry—especially necklaces—to reduce your risk of being harmed if the anger turns violent.
- Make sure you know your workplace policy for getting help if a client or co-worker becomes violent.



MAKING AN ANGER MANAGEMENT PLAN

If you know you have trouble controlling your anger, it's time to make a plan now! By thinking through all the situations that can trigger your anger, you may help yourself to steer clear of those situations before a problem emerges.

Understanding all the possible reactions you may have to your triggers—and all the consequences of those reactions—may help you make better choices in the heat of the moment.

Here's how you can set up your own anger management plan:

- **Identify your anger triggers.** On a separate sheet of paper, list all the things that make you angry.

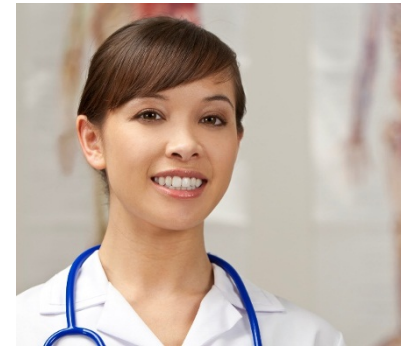
For example, maybe you become angry when co-workers don't complete all their own tasks and leave the work for you. Or, maybe you become angry when you see others gossiping or backstabbing. Outside of work, maybe slow drivers make you angry.

- **Decide what you will do.** Once you know your anger triggers, think of a few things you can do in each situation to keep your anger under control.

For example, if you said that hearing co-workers gossiping makes you angry, you might list; count to ten, breathe, walk away, and then, calmly return to express your feelings in a non-threatening way.

- **Practice assertive communication.** Learn how to express your feelings and needs assertively when you feel angry or frustrated. Assertiveness has nothing to do with aggressiveness. Assertiveness includes respect for yourself and others. **Here's a comparison:**

	ASSERTIVE	AGGRESSIVE
Description	You stand up for your rights while respecting the rights of others.	You stand up for your own rights—but but violate the rights of others.
Beliefs	You believe: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone is important. • We are all equal. 	You believe: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Others are not important. • You are superior.
Verbal styles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses "I" statements (to take ownership of own actions). • Speaks in a firm voice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses "you" statements (for blaming or accusing others) • Speaks in a loud voice.
Non-verbal styles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-threatening eye contact. • Relaxed posture. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stares with accusing eyes. • Tense posture, clenched fists.
Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High self esteem. • Respected by others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low self esteem. • Disrespected by others.



TIME TO LAUGH!

ANGER IN MARRIAGE

Husband: "When I get mad at you, you never fight back. How do you control your anger?"

Wife: "I clean the toilet."

Husband: "How does that help?"

Wife: "I use your toothbrush."

PERSONAL ANGER MANAGEMENT

"After my counseling session, I immediately went out and bought a book on anger management.

And now that I have this book, I don't know if I'll get time to read it!

But, I'm certainly excited about the day when I can't find the book, and I get to say, 'Where the h*** is my anger management book?!'

~ Marc Maron



FIVE KEY POINTS!

REVIEW WHAT YOU LEARNED!

1. Anger affects the whole body because it triggers the "Fight or Flight Response."
 2. Anger is usually linked to a past experience or a decrease in frustration level.
 3. People get angry when they feel that they are being threatened. It could be a real or imagined threat to themselves, their ego, or someone they love or care for.
 4. When anger is uncontrolled it becomes a problem which can have some serious consequences.
 5. The best way to combat anger (and the results of an angry outburst) is to make a plan during a time when you *don't* feel angry.
- **Exercise your breath!** Being able to control your breath is the most powerful tool against anger. Here's how: Take a deep breath in through your nose for 6 seconds. Hold your breath for 2 seconds. Breathe out for 8 seconds. Repeat 5 times. As you breathe in, your belly should inflate like a balloon. As you exhale, your belly should collapse or be pulled in toward your spine. Your goal is to push out all the old stale air in your lungs.
 - **Let nature empower you!** Take a walk outside. Notice the trees, the clouds, the plants and the birds. Experts agree that just 20 minutes spent in a natural environment has the power to restore and refresh the mind. Twenty minutes surrounded by trees, birds, plants and fresh air decreases anger, increases vitality, energy, mood and happiness. One of the best ways to feel better is to reconnect with nature. Do your breathing exercise while you walk outside to double the benefit!
 - **Stretch out your anger!** Your muscles become tense when you are angry. It's part of that "fight or flight" response. When your muscles are tensed and you're ready to strike, your mind goes blank. If you can get up and stretch, you can unlock your muscles and your mind. Stretching relaxes your muscles and improves oxygen flow to the brain which enables you to think more clearly.
 - **Eat, sleep and exercise!** Studies show that individuals who exercise at least 20 minutes per day, sleep at least 7 hours per night, and eat healthy foods have reduced feelings of anger and irritation, and higher levels of happiness and well-being. So, get out in nature and take a brisk walk for 15-20 minutes. When you return, eat a healthy meal full of fruits, veggies and whole grains. Be sure to go to bed at a reasonable time and get plenty of sleep!
 - **Tell yourself what you need to hear!** Talking to yourself in an understanding, calming manner is another way to keep from making poor choices while you are angry. When you begin to feel angry, tell yourself something like, *"I'm supposed to learn something from this situation. I may not know what that is right now, and that's okay. The calmer I stay, the more likely I can continue making good decisions. I am a good person and I have nothing to be ashamed of."*
 - **Don't bottle-up your feelings!** Controlling your anger does not mean you become passive and ignore your feelings. It means you know how to get a hold of your emotions and express yourself calmly and rationally. When it's safe to do so, talk about why you are angry. Remember, to speak with assertiveness and identify what you need in a non-threatening way. This is much better than sitting on your anger and it's more constructive than exploding in a rage which can spiral out of control.



A Professional Growth Module:
Managing Anger in the Workplace

EMPLOYEE NAME
(Please print):

DATE: _____

- ***I understand the information presented in this inservice.***
- ***I have completed this inservice and answered at least eight of the test questions correctly.***

EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE:

SUPERVISOR SIGNATURE:

Inservice Credit:

<input type="checkbox"/> Self Study	1 hour
<input type="checkbox"/> Group Study	1 hour

File completed test in employee's personnel file.

Are you "In the Know" about managing anger? Circle the best choice or fill in your answer. Then check your answers with your supervisor!

- 1. Anger causes changes in the:**
 - A. Brain.
 - B. Heart.
 - C. Immune system.
 - D. All of the above.
- 2. Assertive communication involves:**
 - A. Using "I" statements.
 - B. Using "You" statements.
 - C. Speaking in a loud voice.
 - D. Believing you are superior.
- 3. Anger is a problem when it leads to:**
 - A. A feeling of empathy.
 - B. Assertive communication.
 - C. Threats of harm to people or property.
 - D. The need to call a time out, take a walk or count to ten.
- 4. One way to manage your angry feelings is to:**
 - A. Go for a walk.
 - B. Pray.
 - C. Keep a journal.
 - D. Do any or all of these.
- 5. True or False**
Some anger is useful and can even have a positive and productive outcome.
- 6. True or False**
Managing your anger means you have to ignore your feelings and always let others get their way.
- 7. True or False**
Aggressive people are usually respected by others.
- 8. True or False**
Pain, loneliness, grief and loss can cause elderly people to become angry.
- 9. True or False**
Anger can lead to physical health problems, including headaches, insomnia, and even heart attacks.
- 10. True or False**
People who have serious anger problems can usually fix the problem on their own with positive thinking and family support.