

**DEALING WITH ANGER & FRUSTRATION IN 12 SESSIONS  
A GROUP PROGRAMME**

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## DEALING WITH ANGER & FRUSTRATION IN 12 SESSIONS

### A GROUP PROGRAMME

#### SESSION 1 – INTRODUCTORY - Group ground rules

- **CONFIDENTIALITY**
- **COMMITMENT** = sticking with it when it is challenging; when it does not seem to be changing things straight away.
- **CONTROL** = each participant to have control over how much and what they share in the group.  
If things get too much within the group you can leave and come back when you feel better.

*HANDOUT ON GROUND RULES IF THOUGHT TO BE APPROPRIATE*

#### **THE GROUP IS NOT A PLACE TO GET ANGRY. IT IS A PLACE TO REFLECT ON ANGER.**

- WE ALL EXPERIENCE ANGER AND FRUSTRATION. DIFFERENCES IN WHAT WE DO ABOUT IT.
- DO YOU THINK ANGER IS BAD? OR GOOD?

#### **FLIPCHART + BRAINSTORM**

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- **EXPLORE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ANGER** = a feeling: you do not choose feelings – they give you information about what is important to you.
- And **AGGRESSION & VIOLENCE** = ways of acting/doing. You can choose what you do.

In this group we accept the feeling of anger as potentially useful, and look at good ways of handling it and how it can help you, and at how the bad ways (e.g. aggression and violence) that cause trouble for you and others.

**OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE. SEE THE OVERVIEW SHEET.** Reminder not to be impatient

#### **INTRODUCE MONITORING**

#### **MONITOR/SITUATION/FEELING**

**HANDOUTS:**           **GROUND RULES**  
                          **OVERVIEW**  
                          **MONITORING SHEETS**

## **SESSION 2 - EXPERIENCING ANGER IN THE BODY**

### *FEEDBACK FROM HOMEWORK*

Some people will have completed charts (hopefully). Others will not.

### **FLIPCHART – MODEL COMPLETING THE CHART WITH SITUATIONS FROM THE LAST WEEK FROM MEMBERS OF THE GROUP.**

Under FEELINGS; might notice different degrees of anger – where someone “has had a good week. Nothing happened”, stress how useful it would be to dredge for something that was mildly irritating. Also other feelings occurring alongside anger – e.g. fear.

Note any situations that are likely to trigger anger for the different members of the group? – any similarities. Gives a clue for areas to watch out for.

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## **“How do I know when I am angry?”**

Learning to read the physical signs of arousal in your body, and in other people’s.

### **FLIPCHART: PHYSICAL SIGNS OF ANGER**

**BRAINSTORM** for what people notice when they are angry. Use an outline figure on the flipchart and put them in.

**Identify your early warning sign.** i.e. What bodily changes do you notice FIRST when something is starting to get to you.

Early warning signs are critical for taking control over anger.

### **HOW THE BODY REACTS TO STRESS AND DANGER**

Teach about autonomic nervous system reaction. Stress the effect of arousal on thinking.

### **BODY LANGUAGE**

- What effect does being stressed up have on what you look like?
- Has anyone commented on it?

### **BRAINSTORM FOR BODY LANGUAGE CHARACTERISTIC OF ANGER**

How do we know when other people are angry?

What effect does this have on you when you someone else look like that?

### **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STRESS (AROUSAL) LEVELS AND LOSING YOUR TEMPER**

See handout.

Where overall stress levels are high, something small can tip someone into “losing it”.

By reducing your overall stress levels, you can help yourself to cope with life’s’ problems.

### **CHART: SITUATION/BODY REACTION/FEELING**

Start to be aware of what is going on with your body: not taking notice of early signs of stress will not make them go away.

### **HANDOUTS: FIGHT & FLIGHT RESPONSE; MONITORING SHEET; RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STRESS LEVEL & LOSING YOUR TEMPER**

## SESSION 3 - BASIC COPING WITH EARLY SIGNS OF ANGER

### *FEEDBACK FROM HOMEWORK*

Concentrate on identifying early warning signs.

Bring in the idea of body language and anger – What were you doing while.....

What did X look like?

### **DEALING WITH HOW YOUR BODY REACTS**

Most of this course is about thinking clearly. You cannot think clearly when your body is reacting in the ways we were talking about last week. If you are going to learn to use anger and frustration to be more effective, you first have to learn to use control from the first moment you pick up those initial signs. That is why we keep emphasising early warning signs. The sooner you can pick them up, the better you will be able to do that.

**COPING TECHNIQUES** – Brainstorm for these using flipchart. (e.g. leave the room; keep quiet; count to ten)

Point out that there are desirable and less desirable coping techniques. Discuss pro's and con's of things like drink, etc.

**BREATHING EXERCISES** – Short gentle in breath; long slow out breath. Relax on the out breath. This exercise ensures that too much oxygen is not taken in and allows the opportunity for relaxation as the chest is relaxed during exhalation.

If it is practised regularly, it can be carried out discreetly in any situation – including talking to someone.

This technique works best if you catch your high arousal early – if you are too tense to manage your breathing;

First **Ground yourself in the present**; notice where you are; focus on things around you etc.

### **HANDOUT ON BREATHING EXERCISES**

Practice the exercise. Talk about relaxation – what experience do people have? Usefulness of acquiring a tape and practising. Yoga relaxation group and if they are receptive and there is time, give the group a relaxation schedule.

Lead into the theme of choices to be introduced next week.

Relaxation and breathing might seem trivial in the context of your problem: they are crucial to **you** being able to take control, and handle things the way you want to.

Introduce the Choices diagram, briefly if time – **BRAINSTORM** next week.

**HOMEWORK:**        **SITUATION/PHYSICAL SIGNS/COPING METHODS**

**HANDOUTS:**        **BREATHING EXERCISES**  
                             **MONITORING SHEET**

## SESSION 4 - "CHOICES"

### FEEDBACK FROM HOMEWORK

Any examples of coping? If not from the homework, then use any recent examples of tense situations and how they were coped with.

This session is accompanied by a flow chart which should be drawn on the flipchart as the ideas are introduced, and the handout with the complete flowchart should be distributed at the end.

When you feel your anger rising and make use of an immediate coping method so that you can think about it, you have 3 choices: (Can the group come up with them?)

1. *Give in to it – lose control with all the risks.*

**FLIPCHART; Brainstorm** the consequence of giving in.  
Should include at least one good consequence – e.g. Feel better

2. *Block it off. What is likely to happen if you do that?*

**FLIPCHART; Brainstorm** the consequences: e.g. feel bad; maybe get depressed; bottle it up so explode later.

Should include at least one good consequence – e.g. it might go away.

3. *Think it through and manage the anger.*

**THIS MEANS THAT YOU HAVE TAKEN CONTROL – YOU ARE NOW IN CHARGE!**

How to do that is what the rest of the course is about.

If you think about things, they can look rather different from how they first appeared. If you stand back and think about it, what different ways of looking at it might come to you.

*Is it worth getting that upset about it?*

How important is this particular incident – could you be getting it out of perspective?

*Thinking about your anger is also important because your anger could be telling you something important.*

You need to attend to it – we will look at that next week.

**HOMEWORK:** SITUATION/BODY REACTION/WHAT I DID TO COPE/WHAT CHOICE DID I MAKE?

**HANDOUTS:** "CHOICES"  
MONITORING SHEET

## SESSION 5 - THINKING ABOUT ANGER

### FEEDBACK FROM HOMEWORK

In this session we are going to start exploring thinking about anger, and this weeks' homework will include recording the thoughts that went through your head when you felt anger.

**2<sup>ND</sup> FLOWCHART** – drawn during the session and distributed in handout like the last one.

You start to experience anger and ask yourself:

*Q. WHAT IS MY ANGER TELLING ME?*

*A. THAT THERE IS SOMETHING WRONG WITH ME.*

Either 1. With the situation – what will we look at today?

Or 2 With the way I am thinking about the situation – we will pick that up later in the course.

Or A bit of both.

### IF THERE IS SOMETHING WRONG WITH THE SITUATION, CAN I DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT?

Using the homework examples, over preceding weeks if necessary.

**FLIPCHART – 1.** Decide whether there is something wrong with the situation in each case. (It does not matter if that is the whole story at this stage)/

**FLIPCHART – 2.** Where there is, brainstorm ways of changing that situation (get all group members involved, not just the person whose situation it is).

Assertiveness will probably come up – deal with that in depth later.

Leaving the situation – often necessary, but should be followed by some action, such as:

- talking to someone about it.
- making plans to do something about it, or see that it does not happen again.

### DISCHARGING ANGER

If there is something wrong with the situation, but there is nothing you can do about it, you need to discharge your anger safely.

- *DON'T BOTTLE IT UP.*
- *BE AWARE THAT YOU ARE JUSTIFIABLY ANGRY (BUT CHECK YOUR STRESS LEVELS SO THAT YOU DO NOT LOSE YOUR TEMPER).*
- *FEEL THE ENERGY OF THAT ANGER.*
- *PUT IT INTO A PLEASANT OR NECESSARY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY.*

### BRAINSTORM FOR ACTIVITIES

- *THEN LET GO OF IT. (VERY IMPORTANT). DON'T KEEP THINKING ABOUT IT.*

N.B AGGRESSION FOCUSED ACTIVITIES LIKE PUCHING THINGS ARE OFTEN UNHELPFUL BECAUSE THEY KEEP YOU THINKING ABOUT WHAT YOU ARE ANGRY ABOUT AND SO KEEPING YOU WOUND UP.

**HOMEWORK:** Need to start recording the thoughts that go through your head when you start feeling angry. Very important – can be difficult.

**CHART:** SITUATION. FEELING. THOUGHT. OUTCOME.

**HANDOUTS:** 1) FLOWCHART 2, 2) MONITORING SHEET, 3) DISCHARGING ANGER

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## **SESSION 6 - THINKING ABOUT FRUSTRATING SITUATIONS.**

### **THE COGNITIVE APPROACH – 1.**

#### *FEEDBACK FROM HOMEWORK*

With special reference to recording thoughts – get people to produce them if they have not noted them already. Explain that this is going to be crucial for what follows.

#### **FLIPCHART – return to FLOWCHART 2**

Today we are going to follow the arm of the flowchart that looks at how you are thinking about the situation, and we are going to start looking at the possibilities of making changes here.

**BECAUSE**    *How we think about a situation*  
                  *What we make of it*  
                  *How we see it*  
                  *Can make all the difference to how we feel about it*

We have already covered this a bit in the course up to now – is anyone aware of where it has come in?

*A        Asking yourself the question, “Is it worth getting angry about?”.*

*So:     You have a CHOICE about how you think about things.*  
          *About HOW LONG you think about things.*

**Brainstorm:** examples from homework etc, which illustrate this.

Further:        **HOW YOU THINK ABOUT THINGS AFFECTS HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT THEM.**

Let us look at the idea that how we think about something affects how we feel about it a bit more closely.

Example to illustrate the effect of the thought on the feeling:

Find your own example – this is just an e.g. Someone asks you to do something extra at work

*Thought a.     “How dare they assume that I can drop everything”.*

*Thought b.     “Bit of a nuisance, but I expect he will put himself out when I need it”.*

What feeling will accompany a?

What feeling will accompany b?

Can other people come up with examples where different thought lead to different feelings in the same situation.

*Can anyone spot a thought that is likely to lead to anger among the homework examples.*

**HOMEWORK:** Same

**HANDOUTS:** MONITORING SHEET

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## **SESSION 7 - UNHELPFUL WAYS OF THINKING**

### **COGNITIVE APPROACH – 2**

#### **HOMEWORK:**

1. *Recall last session: effect of how you think on how you feel – any examples of that in the homework?*

Today we are going to help you to identify the sorts of thinking that will wind up your anger.

Some thoughts are spot on. If you look hard at what you thought before you got angry, you might agree that you had every right to think that way and to feel angry. That is fine. We have already looked at some examples where people were angry because there was something really wrong with the situation. This session is about thoughts that are NOT helping you to deal effectively with the situation.

Also, carrying on thinking angry thoughts, however justified, after you have decided what to do, will only help to keep you wound up and angry.

There are a number of unhelpful ways of thinking that can lead to people feeling more miserable, angry or anxious than they really need. It is useful to be able to recognise these.

*Distribute the: **HANDOUT ON “UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS”.***

*Shoulds, musts, oughts.*

*Over generalising and black and white thinking.*

*Jumping to conclusions.*

Discuss the ideas. Get lots of examples from them and get them to classify them on the flipchart.

**BRAINSTORM** angry situation and what people were thinking.

*2<sup>nd</sup> handout on unhelpful thinking styles.*

**HOMEWORK:** SITUATION FEELING THOUGHT HOW I COPEd

**HOMEWORK:** SPOT EXAMPLES OF UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS

**HANDOUTS:** “UNHELPFUL WAYS OF THINKING MONITORING SHEET



## **SESSION 8 - FINDING A MORE HELPFUL THOUGHT**

### **COGNITIVE APPROACH – 3**

Recall the idea of *'unhelpful ways of thinking'* from last week.

Did people notice any over the week?

#### **HOMEWORK.**

Take homework examples, writing down the situation and the thoughts. Get people to:

1. Identify type of unhelpful thinking (while keeping in mind the situation could be wrong).

Introduce the idea of challenging such thoughts.

2. Find an alternative thought.

Using the Unhelpful Ways of Thinking handout from last week:

Go through each of the five ways of thinking – give examples from previous flipchart material, and for each, ask the group for an alternative way of thinking.

**At the end, distribute the handout “Challenging Unhelpful thoughts”, and go through it.**

#### **HOMEWORK.**

Includes 1<sup>st</sup> thought and alternative (or 2<sup>nd</sup> thought).

**HANDOUTS:           “CHALLENGING UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS”  
                              MONITORING SHEET**

## **SESSION 9 - ASSERTIVENESS**

### *FEEDBACK FROM HOMEWORK*

*Any examples of challenging unhelpful thoughts?*

Continue to check on: picking up early signs of arousal; coping with arousal.

Unhelpful thoughts are not the answer when there is something wrong with the situation.

When looking at situations that were wrong, one way of dealing with a situation was act assertively – *TO TELL PEOPLE WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT IT* – forcefully but not angrily – use calming technique first if this is difficult. Even if they do not see it your way, you will have made your point of view known.

OR make a complaint through the proper channels.

Look at examples that have come up from this point of view.

**DISCUSSION** – *how assertiveness is different from AGGRESSION.*

### **HANDOUT ON ASSERTIVENESS**

Differences between assertiveness, and passive, manipulative and aggressive approaches.

Bring out examples from the homework situations where responses were not assertive, which of the types of unassertive behaviour did they fall into?

See if you can get an example of each.

*PLOTTING REVENGE* – as a manipulative approach, (this section can be mentioned more in passing if it does not seem relevant to the group).

**BRAINSTORM** for views on revenge as a reaction to anger.

Advantages and disadvantages.

Among disadvantages, get in: ruminating on your anger makes it worse; revenge does not deal with the situation – only with your feelings. Other ways of dealing with your feelings.

Get locked into a cycle of revenge and counter revenge.

Not straightforward.

Straightforward people are more dignified; worthy of respect.

**HANDOUTS:**        **ASSERTIVENESS**  
                         **MONITORING SHEET**

## **SESSION 10 - THE OTHER PERSONS POINT OF VIEW**

Using assertiveness techniques does not necessarily get you what you want, though if done properly it will ensure a civilised interaction. It can also be very helpful to:

Imagine yourself in the others persons' shoes. Look at it from their point of view.

### **HOMEWORK:**

Are there any examples that keep coming up of anger with the same person?

Collect some examples

Choose a particular example and get the person concerned, and then the group to say how it must look from that persons' point of view. If possible, get people to try talking as if they were the other person.

Ask – does this have any effect on how angry you feel about it?

Using the other persons' point of view as part of assertiveness.

If you need to put your case, they are more likely to listen if you recognise theirs first:

“I understand that you feel that you have a right, etc, but this is how it looks to me...”

**BRAINSTORM** for other ways of putting this.

**HOMEWORK:**       **SAME**

**HANDOUTS:**       **MONITORING SHEET**

## **SESSION 11 - YOUR PERSONAL RULES HOMEWORK**

Any examples of looking at things from the other person's point of view?  
PERSONAL RULES

- As you have gone through this course examining how you think in some detail, you will by now know a lot about the sort of situations that get you angry.
- Even when there is some justification, there are patterns of thinking that made it worse, or even bring the anger on.
- The chances are that there are some deep assumptions behind these ways of thinking. If you can discover and recognise these it will help you free yourself from possibly unhelpful patterns
- You will also learn something about yourself.

This can be tackled either by brainstorming characteristic situations and ways of thinking about them from the group members;

- Can people recognise their favourite "unhelpful way of thinking"?
- Are there any that they are particularly attached to?
- Very reluctant to challenge?
- These are probably your 'Personal Rules'.

When the rules have been identified and written on the flipchart, ask people to think where they came from.

Distinguishing past and present.

This will probably bring up the issue of the influence of past trauma, abuse, etc. on current anger.

- This course helps you to deal with current anger.
- Looking at your thoughts helps you to see where they are about things that are going on now.
- And where your anger is really about the past.

If you can be clear about this, you can deal much more effectively with the present;

Your relationships will work much better.

This might help you to be less bothered by the past – it will not of course make it go away. If the past continues to be a problem, seek counselling or further therapy to help deal with what you have been through.

**HOMEWORK:**       **Same**

**HANDOUTS:**       **MONITORING SHEET**

## **SESSION 12 - RELAPSE PREVENTION AND MAINTENANCE**

### **Homework.**

**Final questionnaires need to be given out at this group.**

What gains have I made since being in the group programme?  
What is different now from before I attended the anger management programme?  
What have I done to make this happen?

What have I learned from the anger management programme?  
How can I apply this to future problems?  
What skills do I/will I take with me when I leave the group?  
How will these skills help me maintain a control of anger?

How can I continue to use anger management skills in my everyday life?  
What is my plan to help me keep my anger under control?  
What things might get in the way of doing this?  
How do I deal with such obstacles?

### **INTRODUCE RELAPSE PREVENTION: 'THE ROAD TO CONTINUED SUCCESS' HANDOUT**

What are the possible early signs of relapse which I need to be alert to?  
What do I need to do if I encounter these situations?

What is my "emergency plan" in the event of a lapse/slipback?  
What will be the most adaptive way to think about the lapse?  
What will be the most adaptive things I can do if a slipback occurs?

What are my specific goals/targets for the next month/3 months?  
How will I try to make each of these happen?  
What could sabotage my plans?  
What could I do to prevent this?

What are my thoughts concerning the future?  
Are these realistic?  
Do they contain any unhelpful thinking?  
What might be a more adaptive way to think?

### **HANDOUT: "ROAD TO SCOTLAND"**

**There will be a follow up group in about three months time – invite the participants back; you will be really interested to know how they have got on in the meantime.**

## UNHELPFUL WAYS OF THINKING

Everyone knows that we become unhappy, anxious or angry because of bad things that happen to us, or because we make mistakes.

People are not so used to the idea that we can become unhappy, anxious or angry, or make ourselves more unhappy, anxious or angry than necessary, because of mistaken ways of thinking.

Common unhelpful ways of thinking:

### **1. Shoulds, Musts and Oughts**

Thoughts that are very hard on ourselves or other people.

*Examples:*

- *I **ought** to be able to please everybody*
- *People **should** agree with my point of view*

### **2. All or Nothing Thinking**

If something goes slightly wrong, that's it – you might as well forget the whole thing.

*Examples:*

- *I cannot get this wallpaper to hang perfectly. I'm going to give up.*
- *This course hasn't stopped me from losing my temper yet. It is obviously useless. I'm going to give up.*

### **3. Overgeneralisation**

One setback is seen as a generalised disaster. Words to watch for are: 'Always' and 'Never'.

*Example:*

- *So the meal isn't ready yet.*
- *You are **always** late.*
- *You **never** organise anything.*

### **4. Jumping to Conclusions**

You make assumptions about what other people are thinking (mind reading) or let your imagination race ahead to what follows on from something that has happened.

*Examples:*

- *She didn't say 'hello', she must be deliberately ignoring me.*
- *The boss was in a hurry to get away when I tackled him about my career. He obviously doesn't value me, he probably wants to get rid of me>*

### **5. Personalisation**

You automatically assume you are the cause of a negative event.

*Example:*

- *It must be my fault that those two members have stopped coming to the group. I always thought they didn't like me.*

## CHALLENGING UNHELPFUL WAYS OF THINKING

If we can learn to notice how we are thinking when we do feel bad, we can pick up these types of thoughts, challenge them, and consider whether we cannot find a more helpful way of thinking about it.

### **1. Shoulds, Musts and Oughts**

Is it really necessary? is a useful question here.

*Example - People **should** agree with my point of view.*

*Challenge- not necessarily. Everyone has a right to their own point of view.*

### **2. Black and White Thinking**

Look for the compromise, the 'grey' position.

*Example - I cannot get this wallpaper to hang just right: I am going to give up. We'll live with the room the way it is.*

*Challenge- Is it really that bad? Once we have got the furniture in, it will be less noticeable and the room will look much nicer when it is decorated.*

### **3. Overgeneralization**

Look at the situation in hand, and beware of 'Always' and 'Never'.

*Example - So the meal isn't ready yet! You are **always** late. You can **never** organise anything.*

*Challenge- Alright, I am hungry and annoyed now, but the generalisation is unfair. It occasionally happens.*

### **4. Jumping to Conclusions**

*Example - She didn't greet me. She must be deliberately cutting me. How dare she!*

*Challenge-How do I know what she is thinking: maybe she didn't see me!*

### **5. Personalisation**

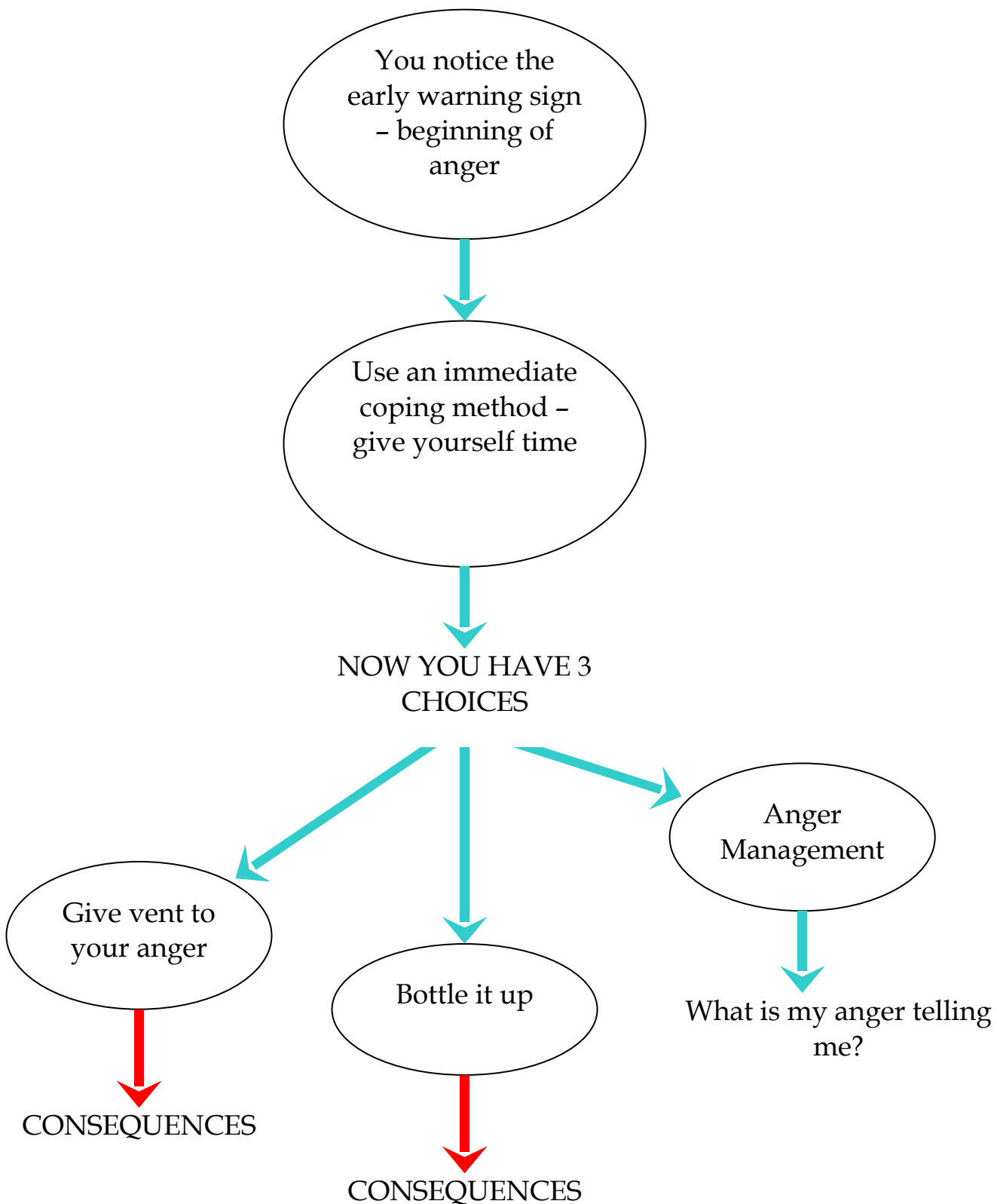
*Example - It must be my fault that those two members have stopped coming to the group. I always sensed they didn't like me.*

*Challenge-How do you know? You are mind reading again.*

## **HANDOUTS**



## CHOICES



# ANGER!!

