

## Anger Management Course – Participant Notes

### Aims of the course:

- For participants to better understand the role of emotions
- For participants to understand especially the dynamics of anger
- For participants to recognize the different forms, interpretations of abuse / violence that can take place in a relationship
- For participants (where relevant) to cease using violence as a way of dealing with their difficulties and their relationships
- For participants (where relevant) to cease using violence as a habitual way of dealing with their feelings
- For participants to understand / change patriarchal attitudes, beliefs and attitudes which underpin violent behaviour
- For participants to develop a range of constructive ways of dealing with their feelings, relationships and life difficulties

### Background

Q. What happened, why are you here?

Q. Did you see anger or violence when you were growing up?

Q. What are your goals from this program?

## The Science of Emotions

Q. Can you think of a recent example when you or someone you know, expressed a strong emotion? What happened and what was the emotion?

## Core Beliefs

Our core beliefs play a very important role in how we can understand ourselves and our emotions.

- What are core beliefs?
- Where do core beliefs come from?
- What is a core belief you might have about other drivers on the road? (What happens when someone cuts you off in traffic?)
- What are some core beliefs you saw in your parents growing up?
- What happens when your core beliefs don't match the world?

## Emotions & Core Beliefs

We experience emotions when our core beliefs don't match our experience of the world. Every time you experience an emotion, it is actually like 'evidence' or 'data' that one of your core beliefs was not met. The emotion we feel can then make us change the world around us or to make us change our core belief.

What core beliefs and emotions can play out in these examples? How might you change core beliefs change or the world around you from these experiences?

- Your partner asks if her bum looks big in her jeans
- You come home and your house has been robbed
- You lose your job

## Emotions

Often we experience and express many emotions without ever even recognizing them or naming them to ourselves. The more we understand the 'science' of emotions, the more we can understand ourselves and others towards living a clearer better life.

## Primary Emotions

In the theory of emotions there are only 5 primary emotions

- Sadness
- Fear
- Anger
- Shame / Disgust
- Joy

In the theory of this, each emotion has a proper purpose **if it is not mis-used**. As it is a primary emotion, it will pass quickly like a wave.

- Sadness (to allow ourselves to be sad can help us let something go)
- Fear (to allow us to freeze, run or protect ourselves from danger)
- Anger (to protect ourselves or others from danger)
- Shame / Disgust (to help us learn to act in ways to be accepted by others)
- Joy (to enjoy life!)

Many people might not be comfortable or able to express or give themselves permission to feel or show a primary emotion.

Q. Why would someone not allow themselves to feel these emotions?

- Sadness
- Fear
- Anger
- Shame / Disgust
- Joy

## Secondary Emotions

In the theory of emotions, if we don't or can't express the primary emotion, then we will experience a secondary emotion. These feelings can last much longer because they are not primary. Secondary emotions can be:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Jealousy
- Rage
- Envy
- Misery
- Sadness
- Fear
- Anger

**Examples:** If you sneak up and scare a man, what is the common reaction? What might the primary emotion be which is then covered by a secondary emotion?

If you have an abusive boss but you can never say anything in case you lose your job, what might the primary emotion be which is then replaced by a secondary emotion?

Q. What is your relationship with the primary emotions?

Is it easy for you to feel or express these?

- Sadness
- Fear
- Anger
- Shame / Disgust
- Joy

### Emotions and the Body

When we are experiencing emotions we notice our thoughts and how they might be anxious, angry or sad etc. Emotions however, are also felt in our bodies, and it can be different for each person. Sometimes you might only notice the body experience of emotions when you have an extreme emotion, but there are often many body feelings we just don't notice.

#### **Emotions in the body may be experienced through:**

- Changes in breathing
- Skin temperature and colour
- Feelings of butterflies or heavy weights in stomach or chest
- Sharp, tight feelings in the throat
- Muscle tightening
- Heartbeat changes
- Mind racing
- Tension in the neck, shoulders or back
- Agitation, pacing, tapping feet or fingers
- Feelings of nausea
- Changes in body temperature
- Tingling, flashes, numbness

Q. What signs like these do you notice in other people when they are expressing emotions?

Q. What signs like these do you notice in yourself when you are experiencing an emotion such as anger?

What does a 10/10 of anger feel like? What about an 8, 6 or 5 out of 10? This can be extremely helpful homework to study what is going on inside yourself when you are starting to feel angry?

### What is Anger?

- Anger is a feeling just like all other feelings.
- Anger is felt in the body, like any feeling.
- Anger generally starts from a core belief the person has that is not being met. We all have different core beliefs. Each core belief has costs and benefits. Sometimes we act on them without being fully aware of what they are. Some may be redundant – out of date and need to be reviewed.
- Often anger gets aimed at people who it is easier to aim it at rather than the original target of the anger.
- Anger can be a signal that there is a core belief problem for a person.
- Anger can be a habitual response to many feelings. Our culture encourages men to be angry but discourages acceptance of fear and sadness. This can result in men expressing all feelings through anger.
- Being angry is normal and healthy – it becomes a problem when we hurt others through expressing our anger, hurting them physically, verbally or emotionally
- Anger may be expressed when other emotions can't be experienced and accepted.
- Expressing unhealthy anger at others can make an individual feel strong and heard for a brief period of time but can be incredibly damaging.
- Anger is a problem when people make other people responsible for their anger – It is important to understand that our feelings are more to do with our thoughts, beliefs and experiences than about other people's behaviour.  
'He made me do it' = not taking responsibility  
'I let him make me do it' = taking responsibility

### Questions for Discussion

- What are some things that might make you angry?
- What are your core beliefs being triggered?
- What are your body responses?
- What actions do you take to manage your anger?

### What is Violence?

- Violence is behaviour.
- “Violence is any act that makes another person unsafe and not in control of their own life. It includes physical and sexual violence as well as non-physical forms of violence such as verbal, emotional, psychological and economic violence.”
- Violence and anger are different things. While violence is behaviour, anger is a feeling.
- Contributing factors to violence other than anger include poor skills for dealing with other feelings, patriarchal beliefs about women and family, enjoyment of violence, bullying.
- Violence towards women is generally shameful in our culture. To address violent behaviour it is necessary to be able to plan for and deal with shameful feelings which arise and avoid using defense mechanisms for deflecting difficult feelings.

### Q. What are examples of violence in relationships?

- Physical
- Verbal
- Emotional
- Psychological
- Economic violence

Questions for discussion

- What is your violent behaviour that you are wanting to stop?
- What is the history of violence in your family?
- Where in your life have you got the message that violence is ok? Are you willing to go against these messages?

To go away and do

- Make a list of how your behaviour has impacted the people you have been violent towards. How has it impacted them personally? How has it impacted your relationship with them?
- What sort of relationship do you want to have with them in the future? What do you need to do to promote this?

Notes:



## Patriarchy and Violence

- Patriarchy describes the structuring of society on the basis that men are primarily responsible for, and in charge of, their families and that women are inferior to men and should meet the needs of men.
- While our society has made some moves from patriarchal practices, everyone in our culture is influenced by Patriarchal beliefs, practices, systems and ideas.
- Patriarchal practices can underpin violence and give men the idea that their rights, feelings and needs come before women.
- In respectful relationships it is essential that each person's needs are respected and that one person does not see themself as being better or more important than the other.

### Questions for discussion

- Can you think of any patriarchal beliefs or practices in your own family or life?
- Are you aware of how patriarchal practices have impacted your life, relationships or beliefs?

### To go away and do

- Make a list of how patriarchal practices affect your family, your relationships and beliefs.

Notes:

## Violence as a Choice or Strategy

- Violence does not equal anger problems. It is behavior people choose to use to deal with their feelings, relationships and problems. If violence is an old habit it can feel automatic like changing gears in a car. You need to decide to break the habit of using violence and learn better ways which don't harm people and relationships.
- People tend to choose to use violence around people who they are more powerful than. Most people who are violent manage their anger and behaviour in most situations and use violence in particular situations where they are comfortable behaving violently.
- It is a myth that people use violence when they become angry and become out of control. People are generally very careful about setting situations up in which they are comfortable to use violence.

### Questions for discussion

- Why would you choose to use violence? What is the benefit of being violent to you?

### To go away and do

- Make a list of the problems you are using violence to deal with that you need to develop alternative strategies to deal with.
- What are the circumstances you require to be violent?
- What are the situations in which you would choose not to be violent in?

Notes:

## Costs and Perceived Benefits of Violence

Violence is a behaviour which people sometimes choose which has both costs and perceived benefits from participating in. It is important, when you are thinking clearly, to think through the costs and benefits of violent behaviour and make a choice for yourself about your intentions. This is important as changing entrenched behaviour is difficult and you need to be clear about your intentions and motivations.

### Costs of violence

- Violence has devastating consequences on the victims of violence.
- Violence has devastating consequences on your relationships.
- Violence has devastating consequences on feeling good about yourself.

### Questions for discussion

- What are the costs of violence for you?

### To go away and do

- Compile a list of the costs of violence for you?

Notes:

### Perceived Benefits of violence

- People use violence because they perceive a benefit from this behaviour.
- Some people enjoy being violent.
- Some people find exciting to be violent.
- Some people enjoy feeling powerful when they are violent.
- Using violence can make other people feel responsible for your feelings rather than having to deal with them yourself.
- Using violence can punish people if you perceive an injury, threat or put down from them.
- Using violence means that you don't have to use words to deal with difficulties.

### Questions for discussion

- What do you think the benefits of violence are for you?

### To go away and do

- Make a full list of the benefits of violence (even if it is a short term benefit)

Notes:

## Invitation to Take Responsibility for Your Own Behaviour

- Considering the costs and benefits of violence do you want to commit to rejecting the perceived benefits of violence and work towards non-violent, constructive and positive ways of dealing with feelings, relationships and life?
- Challenge to choose to take responsibility for violence and to reject the habit of making other people responsible for our feelings and problems.
- If you are planning on continuing to use violence, it is respectful to let potential victims of your behaviour know that this is your choice.
- If you are choosing to stop using violence, make it your responsibility to learn to deal with your feelings, relationships and life in positive ways.

### Questions for discussion

- What will you lose by not using violence?
- What will be the benefits of not using violence for you?

### To go away and do

- What skills do you need to develop if you are not going to use violence?

Notes:

## Ideas, strategies & practices which promote respectful behaviour and relationships

- Be clear with yourself about the impact of violence on your partner, your kids, your friendships and yourself
- Understanding the impact of your violence on people you care about. Ask people who you care about how they experience your anger and violence.
- (would be good to get an article on this)
- Understanding the impact of violence on children.

### Questions for discussion

- What do you know about how violence impacts people?
- How does violence impact children? How does it affect relationships?

### To go away and do

- Write down how the negative impact your violence has had on yourself, your children and your partner?

Notes:

## Taking Responsibility for your thinking

- Educate about the thought, feeling, behavior triangle and how to use it to manage behaviour.
- Taking control of your self-talk (little chatter)
- Pro violent vs Pro safety thinking
- Changing thinking that makes violence seem ok or not that bad. Minimization, justification, denial, victim blaming.

## Questions for discussion

- What thinking do you use that makes violence seem ok or not that bad?
- What thinking habits do you have which promote violence?
- What are your feelings which are associated with using violence?
- What thoughts do you need to use to promote safe behaviour?

## To go away and do

- Ask the client over the week to tune into their self-talk and notice any patterns.
- For the ABC triangle, identify ABC that promotes violence and ABC that promotes respectful relationships.

Notes:

## Taking Responsibility for your feelings

- Dealing with all feelings in constructive ways rather than using violence. Eg. Fear, jealousy, sadness, anger, loneliness, powerlessness, embarrassment. Deal with the original causes and relationships that are related to the feelings. Possibly addressing childhood experiences which there difficulties are processing.
- Relaxation strategies.
- Positive ways of dealing with feelings.
- Acknowledgement and acceptance of feelings.
- Being aware of your feelings and living with them.
- Dealing with things in your past that you are have left over feelings about.
- Taking responsibility for feelings and behaviour rather than making others responsible for feelings. Remember that feelings are just feelings. They are often too complex to really understand. Just need to be able to sooth them.
- Managing Stress (assertive limit setting, priority setting, learn to say no), time use, holidays, having a break.
- Confront your feelings rather than avoiding them with addictive behaviours.

## Questions for discussion

- What feelings are associated with violence for you?
- What can you try in terms of dealing more constructively with these feelings?

## To go away and do

- Trial your strategy for dealing with feelings in constructive ways.

Notes:



## Understanding your behavior cycle and planning for respectful behaviour

- Go through that violence tends to occur in somewhat predictable cycles
- Map out your Cycle of violence (precipitating event / situation, pro violent thinking, high risk feelings, violent behaviour, pretend normal, guilt, make up, honey moon, difficulties start to surface)
- At each part of the cycle map out a behaviour or action which breaks the cycle.
- Practicing dealing with situations in positive ways which the person has used violence to deal with.

### Questions for discussion

- Does this plan help you to see how you have been using violence?
- What parts of the cycle do you think you need to particularly use positive strategies?

### To go away and do

- Keep working on and expanding your behaviour cycle.
- Become aware of situations that can be part of your cycle. Use the positive strategies you have identified and become aware of difficulties you have doing this.
- Become aware of changes you can make that seem easy for you.

Notes:

## Having a plan for dealing with High Risk Situations

- Identify what the person's high risk situations are and develop ideas for how they can deal with these. Possibly role play these and set challenges for the week.
- Time out if needed
- Dealing with emergency situations (what to do if you are just about to use violence)

### Questions for discussion

- What are your high risk situations? How tempting is it to use violence in these situations?

### To go away and do

- Be mindful of your high risk situations and try dealing with them effectively.  
What difficulties and successes are you having with these?

Notes:

## Positive ways of dealing with conflict

- Practicing dealing with situations in positive ways which the person has used violence to deal with.
- Assertiveness training.
- In a conflict, truth is an unhelpful concept. Need to learn to listen to the other person to understand their beliefs, feelings and the way they are experiencing us. Need to learn skills to be able to express your beliefs, feelings and the way you are experiencing the person you are having conflict with.
- Use time out if feelings are too high to be able to talk and listen.

## Questions for discussion

- How do the above ideas differ from how you have typically dealt with conflict?  
What is difficult for you about following this plan?

## To go away and do

- Discuss with your partner what needs to happen for you to use these strategies for dealing with your conflicts.
- Ask your partner how safe they feel to use this strategy with you. Find out what they need from you to feel safer using this strategy.

Notes:

## Understanding and dealing with problems that can and cannot be changed.

- Addressing and dealing with difficulties that can be changed.
- Addressing and accepting difficulties that cannot be changed. (Most problems can't be fixed and we have to learn to live with them).

### Questions for discussion

- What difficulties do you have that can't be changed, or are unlikely to change?
- What do you need to be able to do live better with these problems?

### To go away and do

- Keep listing the above.
- Develop ideas on how you can better live with these problems.

Notes:

## Rejecting patriarchy and controlling behaviour & over entitlement - Allowing people their freedom and choices

- Go through the ideas of patriarchy and the benefits of patriarchy has provided to men.
- Go through examples of patriarchy in our culture.
- Identify the negative impacts patriarchy has had on men.
- Make the connection between patriarchy and violence.

### Questions for discussion

- What impact has patriarchy had on your life?
- What patriarchal attitudes do you have which are associated with your violence?

### To go away and do

- Think carefully and write down what patriarchal attitudes to you need to reject to have more respectful relationships.

Notes:

## Positive Lifestyle Plan

- Develop a Positive Lifestyle plan (including rest and holidays), exercise, friendships, relationships, positive times with kids

## Questions for discussion

- What is going to be a challenging to sticking to a positive lifestyle plan?

## To go away and do

- Keep developing the plan, discuss it with your partner, friends etc. Start making the changes you need to make.

## Making amends with people you have used violence against

- The most important thing about making a mends with people you have used violence against is to stop your violent behaviour.
- It is important not to put pressure on people to forgive you for your behaviour.
- If people you have used violence against are wanting an ongoing relationship with you, it is important that they have an opportunity to let you know how your behaviour impacted them.
- You need to find out from them what they need to feel safe around you if they want an ongoing relationship.

### Question for discussion

- How are you going to determine, in a non-abusive way, what people you have used violence against, want from you?

### To go away and do

- Carry out the above question.

Notes: