

# WEEK 5

## CONTENT



### INTRODUCE ANGER AND GOALS FOR THIS MODULE

5-10 MINUTES

Today, I will guide you through several topics about TBI and anger. We will discuss the relationship of anger/aggression and TBI, learn to identify anger and how a history of TBI affects the experience of feeling anger, and identify triggers for anger and physiological responses. We will also learn coping strategies for anger and do a stress management technique.

#### **Describe anger and its causes:**

- There are many physical reasons a person might feel irritable and have an angry outburst. These include pain, headache, lack of sleep, medication side-effects, infections, seizures, illness, or problems with hearing or vision.
- There are also emotional reasons one might feel anger. These include: Feeling humiliated, frustrated, disrespected, or overlooked. It is important to recognize that anger is only a response to an emotion, not truly an emotion itself. For example, if someone feels humiliated, that may turn into anger, but at its core, that anger is actually the emotion of shame or embarrassment.
- Anger can also arise from the emotions we experience when we experience a loss, changes in family and job roles, frustration about being less independent, and disappointment or confusion due to not being able to process or control what's going on around you.

#### **Briefly discuss how TBI affects anger:**

- How can TBI affect how fast you get angry? How can it affect how intense your anger feels to you?

- Discuss how excessive anger is often a symptom present in individuals with TBI. Facilitator may say something like, the brain is made up of a lot of different parts, which all control different aspects of our emotions and behavior. When certain parts of the brain that help us control and process emotions become injured, it becomes more difficult to control emotions such as anger. It may also become more difficult to recognize when that anger is getting out of control.
- Discuss how anger can be a positive emotion when controlled appropriately; discuss how anger can be a negative emotion when it leads to aggressive behaviors.
- Anger is an attempt to communicate, even though it often shuts down communication. This is where coping skills can help.
- What happens when you act out angrily? How does it affect the people in your life?
- Why is it important to be aware of things and situations that tend to make us angry?

*Provide participants with anger handout (located in the Handouts section at the end of this module).*



## **CURRENT ABILITY TO IDENTIFY ANGER**

5-10 MINUTES

- Describe what your anger looks like? Get examples from the group.
- Has your style of anger changed throughout your life?
- Given your understanding of TBI and what we've discussed previously, how do you think your TBI has influenced the way you experience and express anger?
- Next, we will discuss how you can better understand your behavior.



## IDENTIFICATION OF TRIGGERS AND PHYSIOLOGICAL RESPONSES

10 MINUTES

Now that we talked about what anger looks like to all of us, let's discuss what kinds of things seem to make us angry.

- What things seem to make you upset or angry?

Discuss for a few minutes; try to focus on and identify client participant triggers.

- Why do you think these things cause you to get angry?

**Note:** Although these triggers may be personal to specific individuals within the group, allow some group discussion if other participants are offering feedback or insight into potential reasons for why these triggers cause anger.

- So when this trigger occurs, we start to get angry. Can anyone identify some physical responses you have in your body when you get triggered?
  - Examples (if participants have trouble identifying these responses): increased heart rate, angry facial expressions, clenched fists, etc.

**Note:** If group is struggling utilize the following or personal examples of triggers:

- Does your heart rate seem to increase?
- Does your face feel hot?
- Are you clenching your fists?

## BREAK

5 MINUTES

Now we are going to take a five-minute break. During this break, we are going to do our guided breathing exercise. This is a very good technique for when you start to get angry and need to calm down.

- Breathe in through the nose, out through the mouth holding count with the facilitator. Count one in, one out, two in, two out, until you get to ten. At ten, count backwards: Ten in, ten out, nine in, nine out, etc.



## OPTIONS FOR COPING WITH ANGER

5-10 MINUTES

Before the break, we were talking about our triggers and how anger makes us feel. Anger affects us all in many different ways, and we all have different ways of dealing with it.

- What are some ways you cope with anger?

**Remember:** Stress the importance of honesty with these coping strategies. Regardless of whether the skills participants mention are physical or verbal, involve substance use, involve avoidance, etc., it is important to identify their most often utilized coping strategies so that new ones can be implemented to replace those which are maladaptive.

**Note:** When participants begin to voice their coping strategies, write these skills on a white board (or on flip chart if white board is not available); this will allow for easier facilitation of discussion, and will also allow the group to pair their triggers with coping skills.

If common themes appear:

- It seems that many of you share similar ways of coping with anger. Why do you feel that these help you?

We have identified different ways we currently cope with our anger. Let's try to brainstorm some alternative ways we can process anger. Provide Anger Management handout to participants (located in the Handouts section at the end of this module.). Read through the handout out loud. Allow time for discussion.

Follow up questions:

- What has stopped you from utilizing these alternative strategies before?
- What will be your motivation to use these in the future?
- How can they insure that they will utilize these positive coping skills in the future?

Ask group members if they are familiar with safety planning for unhealthy behaviors. If any individuals are, ask them if they can understand how safety planning can work for anger management.

**Safety planning is exactly what it sounds like:** creating a plan in advance that you can use to keep yourself and others safe in situations that are risky. For example, if you know that you tend to get into arguments with a certain family member, and you know you are going to see that family member at an upcoming family gathering, what might you put in your safety plan to help you avoid running into conflict with that person when you see them?

**Answers:** Plan to avoid being in direct conversation with that family member. Practice strategies for steering the conversation away from topics that could cause conflict. Prepare yourself to walk away from the conversation if you feel yourself getting upset. Tell someone else who will be there about your concerns, and ask them to keep an eye out and come interrupt you and lead you away if they see you and the certain family member becoming heated.

Have group participants consider a situation in their lives that they should make a safety plan for, and ask them to share with the group if they are comfortable doing so.