

WEEK 5

GROUP ACTIVITY



UNDERSTANDING ANGER MANAGEMENT

10 MINUTES

Read the following vignette aloud to the group:

Mark is upset with his girlfriend, Maria, because he believes that recently she has been spending much more time with her friends than with him. He feels ignored, and he misses her attention. This makes him feel angry. When he picks her up for a date one Friday night, he is upset, but he decides not to mention it and to try to have a good time. He hopes that they don't end up fighting. As they drive to the restaurant, Mark asks Maria how her day at work went. She tells him about an annoying co-worker she has, and about how she is stressed about a new project her boss has given her. When they are done discussing Maria's day, she asks Mark how his day went. However, while Mark is telling Maria about his day, Maria pulls out her phone and begins texting a friend. She says, "Don't worry, Mark, I'm listening," but keeps texting, and even laughs out loud at something her friend said, interrupting Mark's story. Mark begins to grip the steering wheel tighter. He feels his heart rate increase, and he feels his patience wearing thin. He notices he is beginning to drive faster. This alarms Maria, and she shouts, "Mark! Slow down!" For Mark, this is the last straw, and his anger boils over. He explodes at Maria, yelling, "You're so selfish! I always listen to you, but you never listen to me! You don't care about me, or how things are going in my life. All you care about is your stupid friends!" They arrive at the restaurant safely, but spend a half hour in the parking lot, yelling at each other in the car. By the end of the argument, neither feels like having dinner. The night is ruined, and Mark drives Maria home.

He isn't sure whether their relationship will last if they cannot stop fighting like this!

Now let's take some time to pick apart this scenario and talk about what could have been done better.

- If Mark had created a safety plan for this situation, what should he have included in it?
- What could Mark have done differently in terms of discussing his feelings with Maria?
- What physical signs of building anger were present for Mark?
(Answer: clenching his grip on the steering wheel, increased heart rate, urge to yell, driving faster)
- What made this situation unsafe?
(Answer: Being in a moving vehicle, where he is unable to walk away to de-escalate the situation.)
- What could Mark have said to Maria instead to communicate his feelings better? What communication strategies could he have used?
(Answer: I Statements, avoiding absolutes such as "always" and "never.")