

WEEK 5

CONTENT



INTRODUCE ANGER AND GOALS FOR THIS MODULE

5 MINUTES

Today, we will discuss anger and its connection to brain injury.

- Anger is a natural emotion we experience but is sometimes unwanted or irrational.
- People express anger in both verbal and non-verbal ways. For example:
 - A harsh tone of voice
 - Staring
 - Frowning
 - Fist and jaw clenching
 - Physical or verbal aggression
- Anger can be more easily triggered when experiencing personal problems such as changes in family structure (like a divorce or a death)
- Common triggers of anger include:
 - Grief and/or sadness
 - Tiredness and hunger
 - Feeling humiliated
 - Stress
 - A feeling of failure or disappointment
 - Being in physical pain
- Being angry is not "bad." The feeling can be helpful in alerting us that something needs to change.

- Anger and aggression are different.
 - Anger is a feeling / Aggression is a behavior
 - Aggression is not a good way to express anger
- The way we perceive situations can cause angry feelings. These thoughts can be intercepted. You have control over how you think.



DISCUSSION PROMPT

- How do you know when you are angry?
- What things seem to make you angry?
- How do you react when that feeling comes up?



INTRODUCE THE CONNECTION BETWEEN TBI AND ANGER

3 MINUTES

Discuss how excessive anger is common after TBI.

A brain injury can cause someone to have a shorter fuse. Individuals with brain injuries often more easily jump to an anger response because the parts of the brain that help control emotions may be compromised. It may also be more difficult to recognize when those emotions, anger in particular, are getting out of control.

Managing your anger starts by identifying what anger feels like.



IDENTIFYING TRIGGERS AND PHYSIOLOGICAL RESPONSES

3 MINUTES

Although these triggers may be personal, prompt an extended group discussion to define the experience of anger.



DISCUSSION PROMPT

Identifying anger is important so that you can intercept a poor behavioral response before it happens. What do you experience when you begin to get angry?

If the group has no answers, ask the following questions:

- Does your heart rate seem to increase?
- Does your face feel hot?
- Do you clench your fists? Jaw?

BREAK - PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

15 MINUTES

We will now take a short break and practice a progressive muscle relaxation exercise. As we just said, when people feel angry, muscles often tense up. Progressive muscle relaxation is a tool that can help relax your muscles and make you more aware of where tension is located in your body. It can also calm other body sensations when we get angry, such as a fast heart rate, rapid breathing, stomach problems, and headaches.

Close your eyes or find something in the room to focus your gaze on. Relax your whole body, allowing it to feel heavy. Take a deep breath in. Hold it for one second. Let it out slowly. Continue taking deep breaths in and out. Imagine the tension leaving your body each time you breathe out.

Step 1 Clench your right fist tightly. Clench for five seconds. (Provide a pause for them to hold the muscle.)

Notice the tightness. Now slowly let go and relax your fist. Feel the difference as your hand becomes loose. Now, clench your left fist tightly. Clench for five seconds. (Provide a pause for them to hold the muscle.)

Notice the tightness. Slowly let go and relax your fist. Feel the difference as your hand becomes loose.

Step 2 Bring both shoulders towards your ears. Hold for five seconds. (Provide a pause for them to hold the muscle.)

Notice the tightness. Slowly relax your shoulders. Feel the difference as your shoulders become loose.

Step 3 Clench your teeth together and press your tongue to the roof of your mouth. Hold for five seconds. (Provide a pause for them to hold the muscle.)

Notice the tension. Now slowly relax your jaw and tongue. Feel the difference as your mouth begins to loosen.

Step 4 Point your right toes and stretch your foot. Hold for five seconds. (Provide a pause for them to hold the muscle.)

Notice the tension. Slowly relax your foot. Notice the difference in looseness. Now, point your left toes and stretch your foot. Hold for five seconds. (Provide a pause for them to hold the muscle.)

Notice the tension. Slowly relax your foot. Notice the difference in looseness.

Step 5 Take a few deep breaths in and let them out slowly. Open your eyes when you are ready. You may get up, walk around, and/or stretch.

Hand out "Progressive Muscle Relaxation" sheet. This sheet contains an extended version of the exercise. Advise participants to practice outside of class.

Hand out a snack and allow the participants the remainder of the to eat the provided snack, to talk with peers, or relax by themselves.



MANAGING YOUR ANGER

5-10 MINUTES

Before the break, we were discussing how we respond when we get angry and how these responses differ from person to person. It is important to take a step back before responding. YOU are in control of your feelings.

Here are six tools to interrupt and de-escalate an anger response:

WRITE the following six tools on the white board:

1. Think

Slow things down. Take three deep breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth. Take this time to collect your thoughts before responding so that you do so with intent.

2. Express

Once you have some clarity of thought, express your frustration without aggression. Explain what you are angry about and what your needs are.

3. Timeout

Remove yourself from the stressful situation. Take a few moments to be alone so that you feel better prepared to manage frustrating incidents without reacting aggressively.

4. Humor

Laughter is another great way to de-escalate anger. Laughter diffuses tension (do your best to avoid sarcasm).

5. 'I' Statements

When voicing how you feel to another person, use "I Statements" from the "Communications Skills" week. Remember that "I Statements" begin with phrases like "I am" or "I feel."

6. Problem Solving

Focus on how you can resolve the issue (recognizing that not all situations will have a solution). Remind yourself that getting angry won't change the situation but finding a solution to the angering problem sometimes can.