

Anger Management Workshop Series

Part IV: Cognition

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1. Group Check-in (20 minutes)
 1. Invite participants to talk about their reactions to prior workshops, or to express any new developments on their understanding of anger.
2. Overview (5 minutes)
 1. This workshop focuses on cognitive processes such as our thoughts and beliefs, and how those thought processes influence our feelings and behavior. You will learn how to be more aware of your thought processes, how to slow them down, and how to develop new ones.
3. Accessing Cognitive Processes (10 minutes)
 1. Ask participants to "think about something that makes you angry."
 2. Write their responses on the board and use their examples to understand the following model.
4. A-B-C-D-E Model (15 minutes)
 1. Explain this model
 2. Derived from Rational Emotive Therapy (Ellis, 1962), which is a counseling strategy that addresses and challenges irrational belief systems.
 3. According to Ellis, an activating event (A) triggers irrational beliefs (B), these beliefs influence the ways in which we respond, and lead to certain consequences (C).
 4. Pass out ABCDE Model handout.
 5. **BREAK** (5 minutes)
5. Process ABCDE Model (15 - 20 minutes)
 1. Refer to prior examples to demonstrate how this model helps us understand anger, and how it can slow down our response.

2. By being more aware of the thoughts that contribute to our feelings, we can influence our behavior. Many times our thoughts and feelings occur in a "knee-jerk" reaction.
 3. By taking a few, quick seconds to consider our thoughts, we can respond less impulsively and be more mindful of our reaction (s). By doing so, we can make a more informed decision of how we want to react in any given situation.
 4. Encourage participants to notice their thinking patterns in situations where they feel angry.
 5. Note: This exercise can be difficult for participants, as it requires them to accept responsibility for their behavior and actions. Facilitators may wish to model the A-B-C-D-E process by using examples from their own lives.
6. Problematic Types of Thinking (10 minutes)
1. Hand out 15 Types of Problematic Thinking and discuss.
 2. Ask participants if they "recognize" any of these patterns in their own thinking.
7. Thought Swap & Reframe (15 - 20 minutes)
1. Explain the process of Thought Stopping:
 2. This is a technique designed to increase awareness of certain thoughts. Generally these thoughts are negative and lead to painful emotions or experiences.
 3. This technique can be used in many situations to better understand our thought processes, what elicits certain negative thoughts, and how to change them. In order to change the way you "do anger," it's important to change the way you are "thinking anger."
 - A. The first step is to become aware of your thoughts and we've been talking about how to do this.
 - B. The second step is to say "STOP" either silently or out-loud, or somehow break the "chain" of your thoughts with a simple command. (Offer optional commands such as, NO, WAIT, SLOW DOWN).
 - C. The third step is to develop a substitute or plausible alternative to the original thought. "What are some other ways of looking at or thinking about the situation?" This new thought is generally a more neutral or positive one

than the original distressing thought, and invites a fresh perspective.

- D. The final step is to "swap" the distressing thought with the more positive thought. It's important to reaffirm this process with a type of self-reward or congratulation. While this final step may seem "silly," it reinforces the desired behavior. The following example may help clarify this.
- E. Example: What do we see about every half-mile, or so when we're driving on the freeway? Answer: Speed limit signs. Why do we need so many speed limit signs if all of us know there's a speed limit? Answer: To remind us. So, even though we may "know" something, we need to be reminded of it. The same is true with swapping our thoughts.

8. Practice Thought Swap Technique using participants' examples (10 minutes)

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