

GROUP COUNSELING FOR SCHOOL COUNSELORS

A Practical Guide

Third Edition

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and
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WALCH  **EDUCATION**

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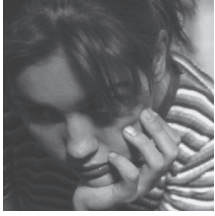
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Section 14

Coping with Stress and Anger

Grade Level: Middle School
and High School

Time Required: 8 Sessions

Authors: Wes Hawkins
and Greg Brigman

Purpose

To help students develop coping strategies to manage stress and anger appropriately. Students learn:

- causes and personal triggers of anger.
- appropriate ways to respond to anger.
- an easy-to-use anger/conflict self-monitoring system.
- a helpful social problem-solving model.

Real-life situations are used to role-play various situations and practice new ways of responding to anger and stress.

Logistics

GROUP COMPOSITION

Students in grades 6 through 8 mixed with regard to activity level and behavior control. Avoid loading group with only overactive behavior-problem students. Students need multiple models of appropriate behavior. Groups with only behavior-problem students usually do not show significant gains in pro-social behavior. Mixed groups are generally very effective.

GROUP SIZE

6 to 8 students

GROUP TIME PER SESSION

45 minutes

NUMBER OF SESSIONS

Eight, with optional booster sessions spaced approximately one month apart after regular group ends.

Recommended Resources

Full bibliographic details for these publications are included in the References at the end of this book.

Begun and Huml, eds, 1999: *Violence Prevention Skills: Lessons and Activities*.

Bloom, 1984: *Community Mental Health*.

Bowman et al., 1998: *Aggressive and Violent Students*.

Goldstein and Conoley, eds, 1997: *School Violence Intervention*.

Hawkins, 1986: *Circle of Friends Project*.

Kivel et al., 1997: *Making the Peace*.

Sunburst Communications: "Anger Management Skills." (videocassette)

Sunburst Communications: "Anger: You Can Handle It." (videocassette)

Sunburst Communications: "Handling Your Anger." (videocassette)

Sunburst Communications: "When Anger Turns to Rage." (videocassette)

Sunburst Communications: "When You're Mad! Mad! Mad!" (videocassette)

Taylor, 1994: *Anger Control Training for Children and Teens*.

Whitehouse et al., 1996: *A Volcano in My Tummy: Helping Children to Handle Anger*.

Wilde, 1995: *Anger Management in Schools*.

Wilde, 1994: *Hot Stuff to Help Kids Chill Out*.

Session 1

Topic: What's this group about? Getting to know each other

Resources

- Chart paper/blackboard/whiteboard

Beginning

Introduce yourself and explain the purpose of the group.

Example: “All of us get angry, and it’s how we respond to our anger that matters. We will learn what causes our own anger, and we will learn and practice with group members good ways to respond to anger. We will ask you to give your own real-life examples of how you have responded to anger recently and—with the help of group members—we will help you figure out better ways to respond to anger.

“The group meets eight times, same place, same time, every week. As I mentioned when I met with each of you individually, there are three ways people get to participate in this group: 1) you heard about the group, thought it sounded good, and signed up; 2) your parent(s) heard or read about it and wanted you to check it out; 3) your teacher thought you’d enjoy it and that you’d be able to benefit from being in the group.

“As you probably know, this group is open to everyone. You don’t have to have a problem with your anger to be here. We are here to learn about ourselves and to help others in dealing with life’s problems that make us angry. Think of the group as ‘keeping a cool head with a little help from your friends.’”

INTRODUCTIONS

Have students pair up and interview their partners about their name, what they like to do, and what they hope to get out of the group. Then have each student introduce his or her partner, based on the interview.

Middle

GROUP RULES

1. Ask, “What are some rules you think would help our group run better? I’ve found it’s helpful to have a few rules to make our group run smoothly.” Make sure to include the following:
 - Anything we talk about here is confidential—you own what you say, but we do not talk about what anyone else says outside the group.

- You have the right to say “pass” if you do not want to share your opinion on something. We do not want to make anyone uncomfortable.
- One person talks at a time—the rest of us listen.
- We respect each other’s right to have different opinions even if we do not agree—no put-downs.
- Share the time—no monopolizing “talk time.”

2. Ask for additional suggestions—get a group consensus on all rules.

ANGER STRATEGIES

1. Have students work in pairs to generate strategies that people their age use for dealing with anger. We are trying to generate typical strategies for handling anger. The strategies could be healthy and helpful or could be unhealthy and harmful.
2. Next have pairs report and list their strategies on a flip chart or board.
3. Have the group code each idea as “H” for helpful or “HA” for harmful.
4. Then ask the group to choose the top two or three ideas that represent how most people their age deal with anger.

End

1. Ask students to share in pairs what they learned about the group and one another today and what they are looking forward to doing/learning in the group. Ask volunteers to share with the whole group.
2. Ask students to review what the purpose of the group is, how many meetings, and so forth.
3. Preview the second meeting.

Session 2

Topic: It's how you respond to anger that counts

Resources

- Prince Llewelyn and His Dog Gelert handout
- Life Problem Solver handout
- Monitor Your Anger handout
- Blackboard/whiteboard/chart paper

Beginning

1. Have students read the story of Prince Llewelyn of Wales and his beloved dog, Gelert. If they wish, they can use the lines at the bottom of the page to make notes about their reactions. Have them respond to the story and discuss if they have ever acted out of anger when they wished they hadn't.
2. Begin discussion by noting that we all become angry at times but it is how we respond that counts. Note that anger is like stress. We will always have it; what is important is how we respond to it. For example, Prince Llewelyn suffered the rest of his life because he acted in anger and killed his dog. Many past presidents (Carter, Clinton, Kennedy, Nixon) advise you not to act when you are mad or you are likely to make mistakes.
3. Note that the purpose of this group is to identify the ways we have responded to anger and, with group input, to identify other possible ways of responding to anger and discuss the outcomes.

Middle

1. Explain the Life Problem Solver handout. Model the use of the chart. Have students fill out how they responded when they last became angry.
2. After students have filled out the form, use the board and ask for volunteers to share how they responded to anger. Then identify other possible ways they could have responded.
3. Compare outcomes on the form to demonstrate that our responses to anger do affect outcomes.
4. List the different types of responses to anger and discuss with the group. Write the list on chart paper and post it on the wall for future sessions.

End

1. Have students complete the statement: "What I learned from group today was . . ."
2. Emphasize that responses to anger do affect the outcome—as with Prince Llewelyn.

LIFE GOAL* FOR NEXT WEEK

Demonstrate how to use the Monitor Your Anger handout. For this week, students need only complete Step 1, keeping track of how many times they get angry each day. Ask students to use the handout to chart the number of times they become angry during the ensuing week.

* We chose to call this exercise a "Life Goal" instead of homework because the skills learned here are to be generalized in the student's environment as life skills.

Prince Llewelyn and His Dog Gelert

In the thirteenth century, the Prince of North Wales, Llewelyn, went hunting one day without his faithful hound, Gelert. Gelert usually accompanied his master, but for some unknown reason he stayed at the prince's castle this day. On the prince's return, he found Gelert stained and smeared with blood. Gelert joyfully sprang to meet his master. The prince started to greet Gelert, but then saw that the cot of his infant son was empty and smeared with blood. Swelling with anger, the prince plunged his sword into the faithful hound's side, thinking the dog had killed his son. Gelert yelped in extreme pain and, looking into his master's eyes, fell to the floor and died. The dog's dying cry was answered by a child's cry. Prince Llewelyn searched and discovered his son unharmed. Nearby lay the body of a mighty wolf, which Gelert had slain to protect the prince's son. The prince, filled with remorse and sadness, was said never to have smiled again. Gelert is buried in Beddgelert, Wales. This story is a memorial to the life of Gelert, the faithful hound.

Life Problem Solver

Life Problem



**How I Responded
to Life Problem**

**Other Ways I Could Have
Responded to Life Problem**



**Outcome of Response
to Life Problem**

**Probable Outcomes of Other
Responses to Life Problem**

Name _____ Date _____

Monitor Your Anger

1. Look at the chart below. Each time you become angry in a given day, put a dot in the row that corresponds to that day of the week. If it is the first time you got angry that day, put a dot in the “1” box for the day. If you get angry again on the same day, put a dot in the “2” box, and so forth.
2. Each time you get angry, write a brief description of the event(s) that preceded your anger on the lines below. If you need more space, use a separate sheet of paper.

3. At the end of the week, circle the highest dot you recorded for each day. Then draw a line to connect the circles.

# of times angry	6 or more							
	5							
	4							
	3							
	2							
	1							
		M	T	W	T	F	S	S

Days of the Week

Session 3

Topic: What is my kind of anger?

Resources

- Blackboard/whiteboard/chart paper
- Completed Monitor Your Anger handouts from Session 2
- My Kind of Anger handout
- Monitor Your Anger handout (page 156)

Beginning

1. Have students complete the statement, “What I get mad about the most is . . .”
2. Review the Monitor Your Anger results for the last week.

Middle

1. Begin discussion by noting that this time we want to identify our own anger and, specifically, what causes or triggers our anger. The emotion of anger often arises when we perceive that our rights have been violated or threatened. Fear of rejection and stress are two other leading causes of anger. Sometimes anger is a secondary feeling that follows a primary feeling. For example, if we are rejected and feel hurt we sometimes change from the primary feeling—hurt—to the secondary feeling—anger. It is important to understand where the anger is coming from. Another example of primary/secondary feelings connected to anger is depression. Sometimes people

express their depression in the form of lashing out at others in anger. The purpose of today’s group is to identify which types of events or stressors cause us to feel angry (e.g., disrespect for others, teasing, time pressure, loss, stress, and so forth) and to practice good ways to respond so that we have the outcome we want.

2. Have students complete the My Kind of Anger handout.
3. When students have completed the handout, have them discuss their specific anger triggers.

End

1. Have students complete the statement, “What I learned from group today was . . .”
2. Using student responses, emphasize that each person has his or her own type of anger, in that each person usually has predictable types of triggers/stressors/events that produce anger. Note again that a first step in responding to and controlling one’s anger is to identify the triggers that are specific to oneself.

LIFE GOAL FOR NEXT WEEK

Have students list the times they became angry each day, as they did last week. This time, students should also list why or what event made them angry on the Monitor Your Anger handout.

Name _____ Date _____

My Kind of Anger

Part I

Think back to times you have become angry. Place a check mark beside any situation in which you have felt angry.

_____ Grades or academic problems

_____ Interaction with friends

_____ Interaction with parents or family members

_____ Interaction with teachers

_____ Interaction with principal

_____ Teasing/bullying

_____ Put-downs by peers

_____ Time issue

_____ Test

_____ Others—please list:

Summarize your responses: _____

Part II

What events/triggers/stressors happened to cause your anger?

Part III

Is there a pattern in your anger responses?

