

ANGER MANAGEMENT HANDOUT

WHOLISTIC THERAPEUTIC DEVELOPMENT MODEL

ELECTRONIC VERSION

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Andrew Bear at: iwhscanada@gmail.com**

10 Effective Anger Management Tips

Anger problems can cause major upset in our lives and we need to learn to control it. The following ten tips for anger management can help you learn to control your anger before it causes any more upset than it already has.

1. Keep a journal of every time you get angry. Write down the five W's of your anger. Who are you angry at? What did you do to control your anger? Where were you when you became angry? When was it that you became angry? Why are you angry? Explain your anger fully in your journal and add any additional things that might have triggered your anger outside of the situation. This can help you determine the root of your anger so that you can discuss it and take care of it before it happens again.
2. Take a moment to stop and breathe. Taking a time out can keep you from flying off the handle during an angry situation. It can also give you time to think about what you are going to say and do and prevent you from doing or saying something you will later regret. Just take a moment and count to ten, taking ten deep breaths.
3. Sit down and say these words out loud: "I am angry because..." and then finish the sentence. Communication is often a very effective form of anger management. It is hard to fight when you are in a seated position and having a calm discussion. Let your loved ones know that when they hear those words it is time to sit down and have a talk without yelling.
4. Learn to relax. This is easier said than done sometimes, but if you find something that calms you it is a good way to keep your anger under control, and a good way to maintain a calm environment in an angry situation.
5. Exercise. Daily exercise allows you to work out your stress. When you have less stress you will feel angry less often. It will also make you feel healthier, which is another way to keep the anger away.
6. Learn to meditate. Meditation is a way to clear your head and get rid of the bad thoughts that you may be harboring. You can learn to mediate by getting a video that teaches you how, or by taking a class in mediation or even yoga.
7. Walk away. Walking away from an angry situation is sometimes the only way to keep things from getting out of control or violent. Leave the house and take a walk around the block, or take a break at work and step outside for a few minutes. Where ever you are when you get angry, there is always somewhere you can walk away to.
8. Laugh. Think of something funny or put in a video of your favorite comedian and laugh out loud. It is very difficult to be angry when you are laughing.
9. Stop and think before you speak and leave any sarcasm out of the conversation. When you are angry sarcasm will only fuel the anger and it will make the person you are having a discussion with angry as well. Two people angry is doubly as bad as one.
10. Seek help. If all else fails, or if your anger is so out of control that it is affecting your relationships negatively, or if you are feeling or becoming violent when you get angry, get professional help for your anger. Anger management classes are available everywhere and can teach you techniques beyond these ten tips for anger management to help you solve your anger problems.

There's no doubt about it: we live in an angry society. Signs that anger abounds are all over the place. There is desk rage, road rage, domestic violence, spousal abuse, child abuse, sports rage and most recently spam rage. Anger is a worldwide phenomenon and referrals to anger management programs have exploded since 9/11.

Anger in its purest form makes us strong, gives us energy to fight the supposed enemy. Whereas the opposite is true when one feels helpless or fearful; that is when we displace our anger on to other people and situations. We might smash a computer or a kid or a wife or whatever happens to be nearby.

There are five distinct signs that an individual is living under the influence of anger. The first is frequency.

The second sign of an angry life is when the anger lasts too long.

Intensity is a third sign of anger.

Obviously, anytime anger leads to aggression it's a sign that something is wrong. That's the fourth sign. Spousal abuse is a major issue in our society. After the OJ Simpson case, people are super sensitive to any display of aggression in a marital relationship.

When it comes to dealing with anger, the first step is awareness; awareness of what tends to trigger intense feelings in you. When you can anticipate what is likely to occur in those situations, you can step back and take stock of the situation. Take a mental time out in which you allow yourself some time to reflect and think of the best course of action, one that will not be harmful to you or the other party.

Another important way to handle anger is self talk. This is extremely important and learning to tell yourself positive things can help you get a different perspective on the situation. Tell yourself you have a lot more to live for than the other person and find a way to detach from the other person. Other things you can say are "I don't need to prove myself in this situation, I can stay calm." Or "As long as I keep cool I'm in control of myself." "I need to take time to relax and slow things down." "The only thing I can control is myself and how I express my feelings."

So many people get angry because they're trying to get another person to change; their partner, their parents or their boss. The fact is that it's impossible to make other people change. They will only change if they want to when you change your approach and you communicate differently it pulls different behavior from the other person and it completely changes the style of interaction.

Taking responsibility for yourself and your own feelings is critical at home. Especially in relationships, partners will start escalating each other and before long you have a major conflict. Both people think they're right and justified in how they're feeling and behaving. There's no end of triggers or reasons to make you angry. At some point you have to take responsibility in order to start changing the pattern.

Anger is a normal human emotion. If one does not experience anger then it is not possible to experience joy, love or any other emotion. The problem is not to rid oneself of anger, but to manage anger in such a way that leads to a positive outcome for yourself and others.

What is anger?

Anger is a feeling of displeasure or hostility. It's a normal, healthy emotion, just like any other feeling you have.

Anger has several components:

- **Emotional.** This is the emotional component of anger, how you feel, such as sadness, disappointment or frustration.
- **Behavioural - Bodily functioning - Physiological.** This is how your body responds to anger, such as developing muscle tension or an increase in heart rate and blood pressure as your body releases adrenaline - the fight-or-flight hormone.
- **Mental - Cognitive.** This is what you think as you experience anger, such as acknowledging that it's OK to be frustrated, or, on the other end, thinking that the world is out to get you or that your spouse "never" does what you ask.

In essence, anger is a warning bell that tells you something is wrong in a situation. It's a natural response to perceived threats.

What causes people to become angry?

There's usually an activating event - something in particular that sets you off, such as a disagreement at work, being stuck in traffic or not being able to get through to an actual person on the phone. Some people may be angry about their own personal circumstances, such as financial problems.

Most people don't just walk around feeling mad all the time, though, unless it was a learned behavior. People aren't born angry.

What are common methods of handling anger, and which is the healthiest?

There are two basic ways to handle anger:

- **Expression.** This is conveying your anger. Expression occurs along a continuum, from having a reasonable, rational discussion to erupting into out-of-control violence. It's the difference between talking to someone or picking up a baseball bat and hitting them.
- **Suppression.** This is trying to hold in or ignore your anger. You may think you shouldn't be angry or that you'll lose control if you let yourself feel any anger. The danger in this passive approach is that you may not protect yourself when the need arises. You may also become passive-aggressive, where you don't express your anger assertively or directly but scheme to retaliate because you haven't learned how to express anger constructively. Trying to suppress your anger can lead to such health problems as headaches, stress, depression or high blood pressure.

Expressing yourself in an assertive - not an aggressive - manner is the healthiest approach to handling anger. Being assertive means that you state your concerns and needs clearly and directly, without hurting others or trying to exert power over them.

Why do some people snap over even minor irritations?

Reactions to anger really aren't instantaneous, even if it may appear that someone suddenly "snaps." When someone explodes with anger, there are actually a lot of feelings behind that prior to reaching that boiling point. What happens, though, is that people don't stop to examine their feelings before they explode.

Your personal history feeds your reactions to anger. That's why some people react so angrily to certain situations, like losing a parking space, while others take it in stride. You may have built up years of feeling unheard, ignored, sad, frustrated or disrespected.

From the activating event that initially triggers your anger, you move along a continuum where you feel a number of things, such as intensifying agitation or irritation, and then your personal history comes into play and you may explode, especially if you don't step back to think about where your anger is heading. Also, if you were taught that being angry was negative, you may never have learned how to express anger appropriately.

Can anger harm your health?

There is some evidence that inappropriately expressing anger can be harmful. Whether you're overly passive and keep your anger pent up, whether you're prone to violent outbursts or whether you're quietly seething with rage, you may have headaches, sleep difficulties, high blood pressure or digestive problems. There's even some evidence that stress and hostility related to anger can lead to heart attacks. That's another reason it's important to learn how to express anger constructively and appropriately - it's good for your health.

What can you do if you're confronted by someone whose anger is out of control?

Usually the most rational thing to do, if possible, is to just walk away. If you stay, the situation may escalate into violence. It's important to take reasonable precautions to protect yourself if leaving the situation is difficult or impossible, and to not engage the other person in a manner that's likely to provoke an escalation in their angry behavior.

That's not to say you should never confront someone. If someone is doing something you don't want them to do, and you confront them about it, you now have a conflict. You have to know how you're going to handle that conflict, though. Size up the person you're confronting, and be ready to protect yourself, especially if it's a stranger.

Anger management:

Introduction

- Do you slam down the phone when faced with endless computerized voice prompts?
- Have you gotten into a shouting match with a stranger over a parking space at the mall?
- Ever put your fist through the wall after an argument with your spouse?

This is not anger management at its finest.

Although anger is a natural emotion, it may be getting the best of you. Instead of expressing your anger in a healthy and assertive way, you may be expressing it in a hostile, aggressive manner - a manner that could lead to violence and a slew of personal and professional consequences.

Understand your anger

Anger itself isn't bad. Expressed appropriately, anger can be healthy. It can help protect you from dangerous situations, energize you to resolve problems or lead to sociocultural reforms, for instance.

Sure, everyday frustrations, impatience and resentment can all cause your temper to flare. For many people, these are fleeting moments. They're able to take these situations in stride and quickly return to a sense of calm without exploding.

But if your blood boils after minor irritations - such as losing that coveted parking space - or if you're constantly seething, you may need to improve how you're managing anger. Anger that's out of control can be destructive, leading to problems in your relationships, at work, in your enjoyment of life and with your health. You could even be arrested or face other legal problems.

Identify the ways you express anger to help you determine if you need to change how you respond to upsetting situations. You may react too aggressively or even too passively. In either case, you can learn new methods to replace old, unhealthy habits. If your level of anger is high or you tend to express anger in an unhealthy way, make plans to deal with your anger.

Anger management tips: Tame your temper

Introduction

If your outbursts, rages or bullying are negatively affecting relationships with family, friends, co-workers and even complete strangers, it's time to change the way you express your anger. You can take steps on your own to improve your anger management.

Anger management tips

Here are some anger management tips to help get your anger under control:

- Take a "time out." Although it may seem cliché, counting to 10 before reacting, or leaving the situation altogether, really can defuse your temper.
- Do something physically exerting. Physical activity can provide an outlet for your emotions, especially if you're about to erupt. Go for a brisk walk or a run, swim, lift weights or shoot baskets.
- Find ways to calm and soothe yourself. Practice deep-breathing exercises, visualize a relaxing scene, or repeat a calming word or phrase to yourself, such as "take it easy." You can also listen to music, paint, journal or do yoga.
- Once you're calm, express your anger as soon as possible so that you aren't left stewing. If you simply can't express your anger in a controlled manner to the person who angered you, try talking to a family member, friend, counselor or another trusted person.
- Think carefully before you say anything so that you don't end up saying something you'll regret. Write a script and rehearse it so that you can stick to the issues.

- Work with the person who angered you to identify solutions to the situation.
- Use "I" statements when describing the problem to avoid criticizing or placing blame. For instance, say "I'm upset you didn't help with the housework this evening," instead of, "You should have helped with the housework." To do otherwise will likely upset the other person and escalate tensions.
- Don't hold a grudge. Forgive the other person. It's unrealistic to expect everyone to behave exactly as you want.
- Use humor to release tensions, such as imagining yourself or the other person in silly situations. Don't use sarcasm, though - it's just another form of unhealthy expression.
- Keep an anger log to identify the kinds of situations that set you off and to monitor your reactions.
- Practice relaxation skills. Learning skills to relax and de-stress can also help control your temper when it may flare up.

What are the signs and symptoms of passive-aggressive behavior?

Passive-aggressive behavior is a pattern of expressing your negative feelings in an indirect and often obstructive way - instead of openly addressing them.

People who are passive-aggressive appear to comply with the requests of others. They may even seem enthusiastic about them. But they don't perform the requested action on time or in a useful way. In other words, they use nonverbal behavior to express anger or

Resentment that they can't express verbally. An example is showing up very late to a meeting that you didn't really want to attend and then making up excuses for your lateness that deflect attention from the real reason you were late.

Although passive-aggressive behavior can be a feature of some psychiatric disorders, it is not considered a mental illness. Researchers are studying how to classify habitual and problematic behaviors such as passive-aggressiveness. If such behavior is troublesome or interferes with your relationships or daily activities, consult a therapist who can help you identify and change the behavior.

Improving Assertive Behavior

What is assertive behavior?

Assertive behavior is:

- Standing up for one's rights no matter what the circumstance.
- Correcting the situation when one's rights are being violated.
- Seeking respect and understanding for one's feelings about a particular situation or circumstance.
- Interacting in a mature manner with those found to be offensive, defensive, aggressive, hostile, blaming, attacking, or otherwise unreceptive.
- Direct, upfront, (not defensive or manipulative) behavior. Those using assertive behavior confront problems, disagreement, or personal discomforts head on, and their intent is unmistakable to others.
- Verbal "I" statements, where individuals tell others how they feel about a situation, circumstance, or the behavior of others.
- Taking the risk of being misunderstood as being aggressive, abrasive, or attacking.

- Being able to protect one's rights while protecting and respecting the rights of others.
- Risk-taking behavior that is not ruled by fear of rejection or disapproval, but is directed by the rational belief that "I deserve to stand up for my rights."
- Rational thinking and the self-affirmation of personal worth, respect, and rights.
- A healthy style in which to conduct interpersonal relationships.
- Finding a "win-win" solution in handling problems between two individuals.

The "you win and I lose" solution is a passive solution where one individual gives up his rights to another. The "you lose and I win" solution is an aggressive solution where one individual ignores the rights of another in order to get his way. The "you lose and I lose" solution is a total passive solution where both individuals give up their rights. A healthy resolution is impossible. The "you win and I win" solution is an assertive solution where the rights of both parties are recognized, respected, and utilized in reaching a healthy compromise.

Ten assertive rights of an individual

Assertive Right #1: I have the right to judge my own behavior, thoughts, and emotions and to take the responsibility for their initiation and consequence. The behavior of others may have an impact upon me, but I determine how I choose to react and/or deal with each situation. I alone have the power to judge and modify my thoughts, feelings, and behavior. Others may influence my decision, but the final choice is mine.

Assertive Right #2: I have the right to offer neither reason nor excuse to justify my behavior. I need not rely upon others to judge whether my actions are proper or correct. Others may state disagreement or disapproval, but I have the option to disregard their preferences or to work out a compromise. I may choose to respect their preferences and consequently modify my behavior. What is important is that it is my choice. Others may try to manipulate my behavior and feelings by demanding to know my reasons and by trying to persuade me that I am wrong, but I know that I am the ultimate judge.

Assertive Right #3: I have the right to judge whether I am responsible for finding solutions to others' problems. I am ultimately responsible for my own psychological well-being and happiness. I may feel concern and compassion and good will for others, but I am neither responsible for nor do I have the ability to create mental stability and happiness for others. My actions may have caused others' problems indirectly; however, it is still their responsibility to come to terms with the problems and to learn to cope on their own. If I fail to recognize this assertive right, others may choose to manipulate my thoughts and feelings by placing the blame for their problems on me.

Assertive Right #4: I have the right to change my mind. As a human being, nothing in my life is necessarily constant or rigid. My interests and needs may well change with the passage of time. The possibility of changing my mind is normal, healthy, and conducive to self growth. Others may try to manipulate my choice by asking that I admit error or by stating that I am irresponsible; it is nevertheless unnecessary for me to justify my decision.

Assertive Right #5: I have the right to say, "I don't know."

Assertive Right #6: I have the right to make mistakes and be responsible for them. To make a mistake is part of the human condition. Others may try to manipulate me, having me believe that my errors are unforgivable, that I must make amends for my wrongdoing by engaging in proper behavior. If I allow this, my future behavior will be influenced by my past mistakes, and my decisions will be controlled by the opinions of others.

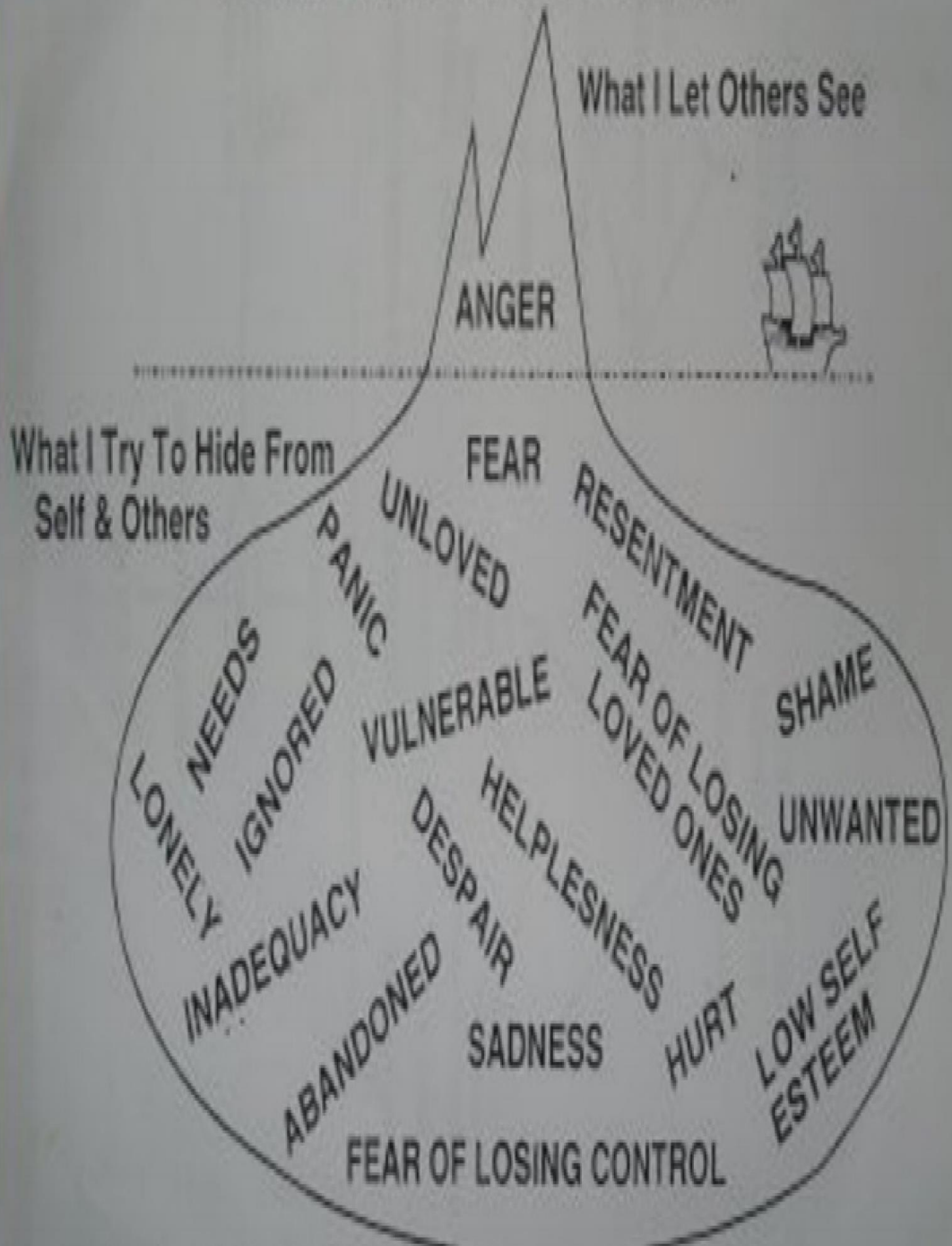
Assertive Right #7: I have the right to be independent of the good will of others before coping with them. It would be unrealistic for me to expect others to approve of all my actions, regardless of their merit. If I were to assume that I required others' goodwill before being able to cope with them effectively, I would leave myself open to manipulation. It is unlikely that I require the goodwill and/or cooperation of others in order to survive. A relationship does not require 100% agreement. It is inevitable that others will be hurt or offended by my behavior at times. I am responsible only to myself, and I can deal with periodic disapproval from others.

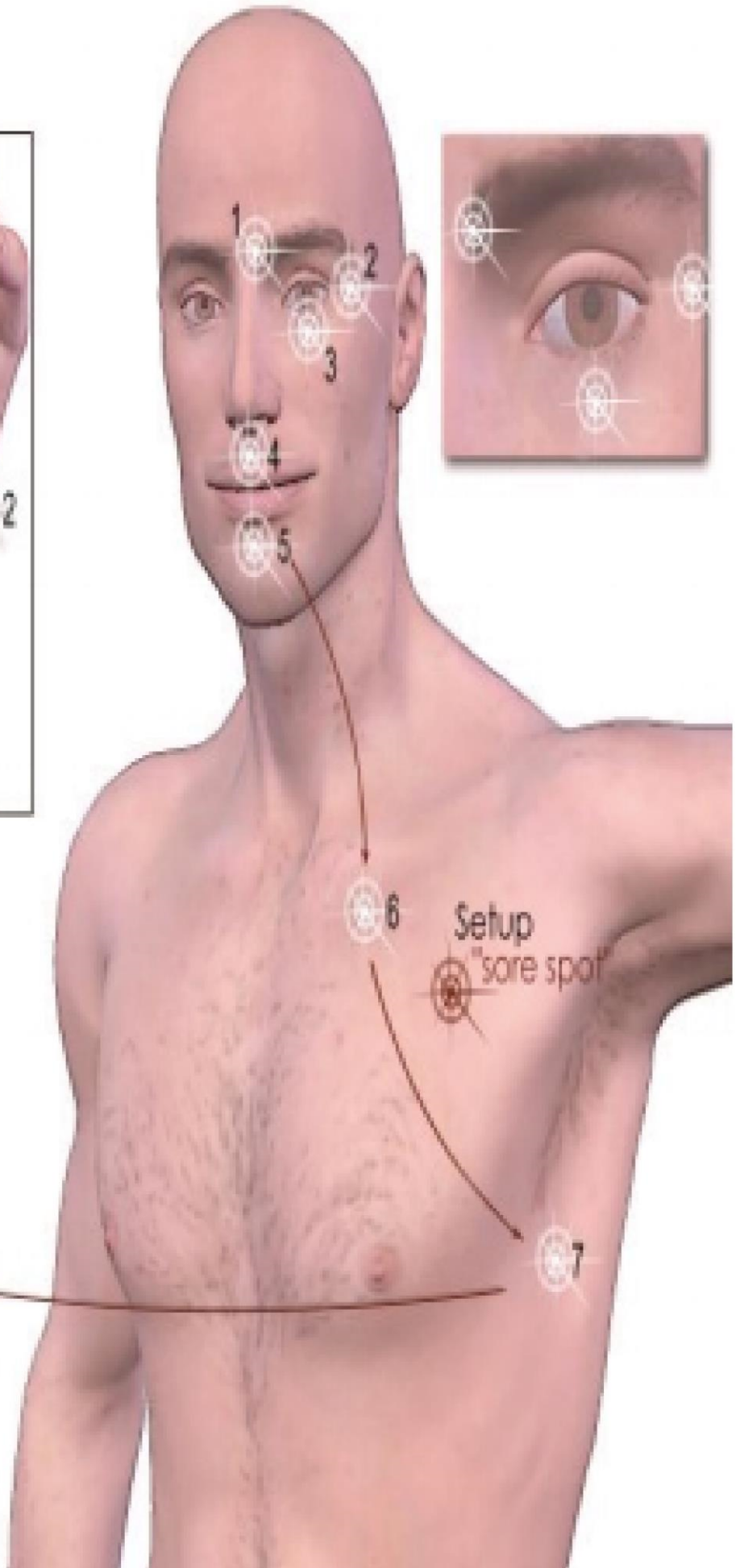
Assertive Right #8: I have the right to be illogical in making decisions. I sometimes employ logic as a reasoning process to assist me in making judgments. However, logic cannot predict what will happen in every situation. Logic is not much help in dealing with wants, motivations, and feelings. Logic generally deals with "black or white," "all or none," and "yes or no" issues. Logic and reasoning don't always work well when dealing with the gray areas of the human condition.

Assertive Right #9: I have the right to say, "I don't understand."

Assertive Right #10: I have the right to say, "I don't care."

THE ANGER ICEBERG





Recap Test Questions

1. Name the 4 ways you know anger is wrong.
2. When it comes to dealing with anger, the first step is?

3. What is a primary emotion?
4. What is a secondary emotion?
5. List 5 primary emotions.
6. What is an unmet emotional need?
7. What are cognitive distortions?
8. What do the symbols $A + B = C$ represent?
9. Name 5 Anger Management Tips?
10. Name two ways in which people convey anger.

What did you learn in this class that will help you deal with anger more appropriately in the future?

NOTES