

# ANGER MANAGEMENT

*'Anyone can become angry - that is easy; but to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time - that is not easy.'* (Aristotle. The Nichomachean Ethics)

Everyone should get angry every now and then. It's a natural response we need to be able to make use of. Without the ability to notice and then to use anger, we can tolerate far too much nonsense in personal, social and professional life. But anger that is uncontrollable and leads to rash and even dangerous action is a challenge for many people. And those who are regularly dominated by their own anger are likely to be more susceptible to a variety of restricting and even life-threatening illnesses - as well as being, at the very least, difficult for those around them.

## Forget 'Anger Issues'

Some people have been told that they have 'anger issues'. This is classic psychobabble that needs to be discarded if we are to understand what anger is and how it affects us. One doesn't have a condition called anger; one gets angry in certain circumstances - for a variety of reasons. These might include:

- circumstantial stress at work and/or at home
- difficult personal relationships
- poor sleeping
- traumatic past experiences
- inadequate meeting of personal psychological and physical needs
- lack of confidence skills
- incomplete learning of other emotional management skills
- habit

This is by no means an exhaustive list. Also some people may be more inclined, by both natural temperament and influences of upbringing and environment, to anger more easily. Regardless of this, there are always triggers for anger. It hence remains always possible to learn to recognize and then to neutralize those triggers. This is what anger management is all about - not turning off a switch called anger but learning how not to risk tripping the switch at the wrong moment.

## What is anger?

Anger is, biologically, a preparation for fight. When people lose their tempers, the thinking brain shuts down and the emotional system mobilises the classic fight or flight mechanisms. Angry people often experience an overwhelming sense of being right and may lose any sense of fear. Various other physiological reactions are typical -

sometimes trembling or shaking or a rapid heartbeat or what many now call 'adrenaline rushes', sometimes breathlessness and inability to think clearly. All these are classic survival reactions - the kinds of automatic responses that enabled our ancestors to stay alive. We are naturally keyed up to hit out or make a dash for it.

### ***Effective therapy for anger***

- teaches a thorough understanding of the fight or flight mechanism and how to work with it
- encourages clients to recognise their own anger triggers
- diffuses any harmful effects of negative past experiences through effective techniques
- does not require prolonged and painful introspection
- does require client to learn how to take responsibility for their own reactions and to balance their own needs
- teaches effective relaxation methods
- rehearses new patterns of action thoroughly
- does not take a long time

### ***How many sessions?***

Many clients find they can reach effective goals in 3 to 5 sessions and learn effective anger management in dealing with common personal concerns. However, individuals vary enormously and sometimes there are multiple accompanying challenges to meet, especially where trauma has been involved. In these cases, it is not possible to predict number of sessions but our policy is to keep treatments as brief as is appropriate and advisable. You may choose to have occasional coaching sessions following a course of treatment and to back up the effectiveness as and if necessary.