WHAT TO DO WHILE YOU COUNT TO 10: A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO ANGER MANAGEMENT

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ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR

David Walton Earle, LPC combines his counseling skills with his twenty-plus-years of executive management experience into a powerful matrix called Business Coaching. Using this technique, Earle assist leaders to increase their leadership effectiveness through people skills. He is also a teacher, trainer, author, counselor, and alternative dispute professional.

Earle earned a Master's of Science in Counseling from Texas A&M and has held executive management positions in various fields including industrial construction, private investment banking, and corporate trouble shooting. He is now the president of the Earle Company, an organization dedicated to change.

Self-published six others books: What To Do While You Count To 10, Gilligan's Notes, Simple Communications for Complicated People, and Love is Not Enough. In addition there are three workbooks entitled The Wisdom of the Twelve Steps a separate book for each of the first three steps. Earle also wrote a three-book self-help poetry trilogy: Professor of Pain, Iron Mask, and Red Roses 'n Pinstripes.

Co-authored books on leadership: Leadership-Helping Others Succeed and Extreme Leadership.

Earle has been on the panel as a mediator and/or arbitrator for various organizations such as U.S. Federal Court-Middle District, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), Financial Industry Regulator Authority (FINRA), and the Louisiana Supreme Court. He was on the faculty of the University of Phoenix for over 10 years.

His trademarked motto is My Life Ill Change When I Change™; he enjoys tennis and he lives in Baton Rouge with his wife, Penny, and their dog, Fletcher.

Anger Management and Substance Use: Updated Interventions, Cognitive Mechanisms, and Population-Specific Evidence

The anger management framework this course provides, covering the T.I.E. model, mood charting, the relationship between thoughts and emotions, and practical strategies for managing anger in daily life, addresses a clinical need that recent research has confirmed is both more prevalent and more clinically complex in substance use disorder populations than the general anger management literature typically acknowledges. Studies published since this course was written have identified cognitive bias as a specific mechanism underlying anger in addiction populations, tested novel interventions including psychodrama and inhibitory control training for angry substance users, documented the connection between cannabis use and trait anger in treatment-seeking youth, shown how PTSD symptoms moderate anger intervention effectiveness, and synthesized the evidence for cognitive-behavioral approaches to co-occurring substance use and mental health conditions.

The cognitive mechanism underlying anger, which this course addresses through its discussion of how beliefs, thoughts, behavior, and results interact, was examined in a 2023 systematic review with meta-analysis of cognitive bias modification interventions for anger and aggression, drawing on twenty-nine randomized controlled trials. The review found that these interventions significantly outperformed control conditions for both aggression and anger, though the overall effects were small, and that among the biases addressed it was interventions targeting interpretation bias that showed efficacy for aggression, an effect that did not hold once baseline aggression levels were accounted for (Ciesinski et al., 2023). For the thought-emotion framework this course teaches, which emphasizes that thoughts drive emotional responses and that changing thoughts changes feelings, this identifies interpretation bias, the tendency to interpret ambiguous social cues as hostile or threatening, as a plausible cognitive target, while cautioning that the evidence for modifying it is real but modest. Anger management programs that help clients recognize and restructure how they interpret other people's behavior are working on a mechanism the broader evidence supports, as the sources that follow make clearer.

The substance-anger connection was documented with specificity in a 2024 study of 168 treatment-seeking young people aged 14 to 26. Higher self-reported trait anger scores were associated with cannabis use, cannabis use disorder diagnosis, and more recent and frequent cannabis use, and the cannabis use disorder diagnosis was independently linked to anger measures even when controlling for other substance disorders and co-occurring mental health conditions (McKowen et al., 2024). For the anger management framework this course provides, this finding establishes that the relationship between substance use and anger is not solely a matter of substances impairing judgment during intoxication. Cannabis use disorder is associated with elevated trait anger, a stable personality-level characteristic, suggesting that chronic use may be entangled with baseline anger regulation in ways that persist beyond acute intoxication and call for ongoing anger management intervention.

The role of PTSD in shaping anger intervention effectiveness, relevant to the many substance use treatment clients who carry both anger problems and trauma histories, was examined in a 2026 study of trauma-exposed smokers with elevated anger. Interpretation bias modification produced significantly lower trait anger in participants with elevated PTSD symptoms compared to a control condition but had no such effect for those with low baseline PTSD symptoms, and changes in hostile interpretation bias fully mediated the effect on anger in the high-PTSD group (Patel et al., 2026). For the anger

management strategies this course teaches, the finding means that anger interventions may be especially powerful for clients whose anger is embedded in a trauma response, and that the mechanism is changing how these clients interpret ambiguous situations, from threatening to neutral.

The intervention repertoire was expanded by a 2025 randomized controlled trial of psychodrama-based group therapy for adolescents diagnosed with substance use disorder. The intervention group demonstrated significantly lower post-test scores in total anger, trait anger, anger expressed outward, and anger held inward, alongside reduced self-injurious behaviors (Fındık et al., 2025). For the practical anger management approach this course teaches, which emphasizes experiential learning and behavioral practice rather than purely cognitive instruction, this finding supports action-based therapeutic methods. Anger management that engages clients physically and emotionally in rehearsing new responses may reach adolescent substance users whom cognitive instruction alone would not.

The neurocognitive approach to anger and aggression in substance-using populations was formalized in a 2026 randomized controlled trial protocol testing inhibitory control training for male inpatients with co-occurring substance use disorder and gambling behavior, using a Go/No-Go paradigm delivered across repeated short sessions and targeting the behavioral control deficits that underlie both aggression and substance use (Ahluwalia et al., 2026). For the anger management model this course presents, this approach represents a distinct intervention mechanism: rather than teaching clients to think differently about anger or to practice alternative behaviors, it trains the neural circuitry of behavioral inhibition directly, strengthening the capacity to stop an impulsive response before it occurs, which is the very capacity the title of this course invokes when it asks the client to count to ten.

The broader evidence base for cognitive-behavioral approaches that address both substance use and mental health conditions, the clinical context in which anger management is most often delivered, was synthesized in a 2025 meta-analysis of cognitive-behavioral interventions for co-occurring substance use and mental health disorders. The review found that these interventions demonstrated benefit over usual care for consumption outcomes and produced psychosocial improvements when added to standard treatment, though the overall efficacy was modest (Magill et al., 2025). For the anger management framework this course provides, this confirms that cognitive-behavioral anger management delivered within substance use treatment has a genuine evidence base, while its modest effect sizes match the clinical reality that anger management is a long-term developmental process rather than a discrete intervention with a definitive endpoint.

The Nature of Anger: A Normal Emotion That Carries Information

This course opens from a premise that the research literature strongly supports: anger is a normal human emotion, not a disorder or a defect, and its presence in a client is information to be understood rather than a symptom to be eliminated. The framing of anger as a gift, which this course develops, captures a clinical truth that too much of the popular conversation about anger management misses. Anger arises when a person perceives that a boundary has been crossed, a goal blocked, or a value violated, and in that sense it carries a message about what matters to the person and where they feel wronged. A treatment approach that tries simply to suppress anger, without attending to the message it carries, addresses the surface while leaving the underlying appraisal untouched, and it asks the client to silence a signal that may be telling them something they need to know.

The clinical challenge is not that clients feel anger but that the anger, and above all the behavior it drives, becomes destructive, disproportionate, or chronic, and distinguishing healthy anger from its problematic forms requires conceptual clarity that the field has not always possessed. A careful conceptual review of irritability, a construct closely related to anger, documented that irritability appears as a symptom in fifteen separate DSM-5 disorders and is defined and measured inconsistently across the scholarly literature, with substantial overlap among the definitions and measures of irritability, anger, and aggression (Toohey and DiGiuseppe, 2017). For the counselor, this conceptual muddle is a caution: the words anger, irritability, hostility, and aggression are often used loosely and interchangeably, yet they name different things, and treatment benefits from distinguishing them. Anger is the emotion; hostility is a more enduring attitude of ill will and cynical mistrust toward others; irritability is a lowered threshold for anger, a proneness to react; and aggression is behavior intended to harm. A client may have any of these without the others, and the treatment implications differ.

For the practitioner, holding anger as a normal, informative emotion while attending to its problematic forms establishes the stance from which effective anger management proceeds. It means validating the client's anger as a real and often reasonable response rather than shaming them for feeling it, which both respects the client and models the non-judgmental self-observation that anger management requires. It means helping the client read the message their anger carries, the boundary or need or value it points to, so that they can address the underlying concern in ways more effective than the destructive expression that brought them to treatment. And it means keeping clear the distinction between the emotion, which is not the problem, and the behavior, which often is, since the goal of anger management is not a client who never feels angry but a client who feels anger and responds to it with choice rather than reflex. This distinction, between feeling and doing, between the emotion and its expression, is the conceptual heart of the approach this course teaches, and the research on the construct confirms that getting the concepts clear is a precondition of getting the treatment right.

Anger, Emotion Regulation, and the Skills That Manage It

Underneath the specific techniques of anger management lies a broader human capacity: emotion regulation, the set of processes by which people influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express them. The premise of this course, that a person can learn to let intellect manage emotional reactions rather than be swept away by them, is a premise about emotion regulation, and the research on emotion regulation gives that premise strong empirical grounding. A large meta-analytic and narrative review synthesized 212 studies involving more than eighty thousand participants and found that emotion regulation and adaptive coping were consistently associated with better psychological outcomes, encompassing both internalizing symptoms such as anxiety and depression and externalizing symptoms such as aggression and conduct problems, while maladaptive strategies such as emotional suppression, avoidance, and denial were associated with worse outcomes (Compas et al., 2017). For the anger management approach this course provides, this establishes that how a person handles emotion, not merely which emotions they feel, shapes their functioning across a wide range of domains, and that the regulatory skills anger management teaches are the same skills that protect against a broad spectrum of difficulty.

The finding that emotional suppression is associated with worse rather than better outcomes deserves emphasis, because it corrects a common misunderstanding of what anger management asks. Many clients arrive believing that managing anger means holding it in, swallowing it, pushing it down, and the

anger-in construct that this course addresses names exactly this pattern. Yet the evidence is clear that suppression is not effective emotion regulation but a maladaptive strategy associated with the very outcomes clients hope to avoid, and clinical experience confirms that swallowed anger does not disappear but leaks out sideways, in resentment, in passive aggression, in physical symptoms, and often in an eventual explosion. Effective emotion regulation is not suppression but a set of more skillful processes: recognizing the emotion, understanding what triggered it, reappraising the situation that provoked it, and choosing a response that serves the person's goals. This distinction, between suppressing anger and regulating it, is one the counselor must make explicit, because a client who thinks anger management means bottling up their feelings will experience the treatment as asking them to do the very thing that has never worked.

For the practitioner, grounding anger management in the broader science of emotion regulation offers both a rationale and a repertoire. The rationale is that the skills being taught are not arbitrary techniques for a single emotion but instances of a general capacity, well supported by evidence, that improves functioning across many domains, which helps clients understand why the effort is worth making. The repertoire is the range of regulatory strategies the science has identified, from cognitive reappraisal, which changes the interpretation that generates the emotion, to attentional deployment, which shifts focus away from provoking cues, to response modulation, which changes what the person does once the emotion has arisen. The counting-to-ten strategy that gives this course its title is, in this framework, a response-modulation technique, a way of inserting a pause between the emotion and the action so that the more deliberate regulatory processes have time to engage. Understanding it as one tool within a broader science of emotion regulation lets the counselor deploy it knowingly and supplement it with the other strategies the evidence supports.

The Neurobiology of Anger: The Prefrontal Brakes and the Limbic Accelerator

The premise that intellect can manage emotion has a neurobiological basis that helps both counselor and client understand why anger management is difficult and why it is possible. In broad terms, the brain's emotional responses, including the rapid arousal of anger, are generated by limbic structures including the amygdala, which react quickly to perceived threat and provocation, while the prefrontal cortex, and particularly its orbitofrontal region, provides the top-down regulation that can modulate, inhibit, and redirect those responses. Anger management, in this light, is the work of strengthening the prefrontal regulation of limbic arousal, of building the brakes that can slow the accelerator, and the frequent failure of that regulation under provocation is not a moral failing but a reflection of how quickly the emotional response can outrun the regulatory one.

The evidence linking prefrontal function to the control of aggression is substantial. A 2026 systematic review and meta-analysis of neuroimaging research, drawing on eighty-six studies, found that individuals with histories of violent behavior, whether or not they had mental or personality disorders, most consistently exhibited reduced volume in the orbitofrontal cortex compared to non-violent individuals, along with other alterations including differences in serotonergic function in that region (Romero-Martínez et al., 2026). For the anger management framework this course provides, this finding grounds the intellect-over-emotion model in brain structure: the orbitofrontal cortex is a central part of the neural system that inhibits impulsive and aggressive responses, and its compromised function is

associated with the failures of control that violent behavior represents. The prefrontal brakes are real, they are located in identifiable brain regions, and their strength varies among individuals and situations.

For the practitioner, the neurobiology carries several useful implications, offered with appropriate caution about not overstating what brain findings mean for any individual client. First, it reframes anger dyscontrol as a problem of regulation that can be strengthened rather than a fixed character flaw, which supports both the counselor's hope and the client's, since regulatory capacity, like other capacities, can be developed through practice. Second, it explains why techniques that create a delay, such as counting to ten, stepping away, or taking slow breaths, are effective: they buy time for the slower prefrontal regulation to catch up with the faster limbic arousal, and they interrupt the cascade before it reaches action. Third, it clarifies why anger control fails most readily under conditions that impair prefrontal function, including intoxication, exhaustion, and acute stress, which is directly relevant to substance use populations in whom alcohol and other drugs pharmacologically weaken the very prefrontal regulation that anger management seeks to build. The counselor who understands that substances disable the brakes can help clients see why their most destructive anger so often occurs when they are using, and why sobriety and anger management reinforce each other.

Cognitive-Behavioral Anger Management: The Evidence

The approach this course embodies, helping clients change how they think in order to change how they feel and act, belongs to the cognitive-behavioral tradition, and it is worth the counselor knowing that this tradition rests on a solid evidence base for anger specifically. A review of the meta-analytic literature on psychosocial interventions for anger and aggression concluded that cognitive-behavioral treatments are the most commonly disseminated interventions for both anger and aggression, and that anger treatments have consistently demonstrated at least moderate effectiveness among both non-clinical and psychiatric populations, while the results for aggression treatments have been less consistent (Lee and DiGiuseppe, 2018). For the counselor delivering the approach this course teaches, this is important reassurance: cognitive-behavioral anger management is not a folk remedy but the most-studied and most-supported approach available, with a track record of at least moderate benefit across the range of populations in which it has been tested.

The distinction the review draws, between the consistent effectiveness of anger treatments and the more variable results for aggression treatments, carries a clinical lesson worth absorbing. Anger, the emotional experience, appears more tractable to these interventions than aggression, the behavior, which is shaped by many factors beyond the emotional state, including situational opportunity, social context, substance use, and entrenched behavioral patterns. This does not mean anger management cannot reduce aggression, since reducing the anger that drives much aggression is a reasonable path to reducing the behavior, but it does mean the counselor should hold realistic expectations and recognize that a client whose aggression persists despite reduced anger may need additional intervention targeting the behavior directly. The modest-to-moderate effect sizes that characterize this literature, echoed in the meta-analysis of cognitive-behavioral interventions for co-occurring substance use and mental health conditions discussed earlier, are a realistic anchor: anger management helps, meaningfully, but it is not a cure, and framing it to clients as a set of skills to be practiced over time rather than a quick fix aligns expectation with evidence.

For the practitioner, the evidence base supports both confidence and humility. The confidence comes

from knowing that the approach works, that its effectiveness is documented across populations, and that the specific techniques this course teaches, cognitive restructuring, self-monitoring through tools like the mood chart, and the practice of alternative responses, are the active ingredients of an evidence-based treatment. The humility comes from the modest effect sizes and the greater difficulty of changing behavior than emotion, which argue against overpromising and for a long-term, skills-building stance. The counselor who conveys to clients that anger management is a genuinely effective approach, grounded in decades of research, while also being honest that it requires sustained practice and does not eliminate anger or guarantee the disappearance of every aggressive impulse, sets an expectation the evidence can sustain, and avoids both the cynicism that undersells the approach and the overselling that sets clients up for disappointment.

Interpretation and Hostile Attribution: The Story We Tell

Central to the cognitive model this course teaches is the recognition that emotions follow not directly from events but from the interpretations placed on them, and the research on anger has identified a specific interpretive habit that drives much anger and aggression: hostile attribution bias, the tendency to interpret others' ambiguous behavior as intentionally hostile. When another driver cuts in, when a colleague fails to respond, when a partner arrives late, the event itself is ambiguous, and the anger a person feels depends heavily on the story they tell about why it happened. A person who reads the ambiguous act as a deliberate slight, an intended disrespect, or a hostile provocation will feel anger that a person who reads it as carelessness, circumstance, or accident will not, and this interpretive step, largely automatic and often unnoticed, is where much anger is born.

The evidence that hostile attribution drives aggression is robust. A multilevel meta-analysis of 111 studies, encompassing 219 effect sizes and more than twenty-nine thousand participants, found a positive association between hostile intent attribution and aggressive behavior, with the association operating as a general disposition guiding behavior across a broad range of contexts, and with its strength depending on the level of emotional engagement in the situation (Verhoef et al., 2019). The finding that the link is stronger when emotional engagement is higher is clinically telling: it is precisely when a person is emotionally aroused, when the situation matters to them and their feelings are activated, that the hostile interpretation most strongly drives the aggressive response, which is the moment anger management most needs to intervene. A separate 2026 study of college students found that negative life events predicted aggressive behavior in part through hostile attribution bias, alongside anger rumination, situating the hostile interpretive habit within a broader chain from life stress to aggression (Yuan and Wang, 2026).

For the practitioner, hostile attribution bias offers one of the most concrete and teachable targets in all of anger management, and it connects directly to the thought-emotion framework this course develops. The clinical work is to help clients notice the interpretive step, to catch the story they are telling about an ambiguous event before it hardens into certainty, and to consider alternative explanations that fit the facts equally well. The counselor can guide a client to ask, of a provoking event, whether the hostile interpretation is the only one available, what other reasons might explain the behavior, and what evidence actually supports the assumption of hostile intent, which is often thinner than the anger suggests. This is not naive optimism or a demand that clients excuse genuine mistreatment, since some behavior really is hostile and warrants a response, but a discipline of checking the automatic interpretation against reality before acting on it. Given that hostile attribution and

interpretation bias recur across the evidence as drivers of anger and aggression, and that modifying interpretation shows genuine if modest benefit, teaching clients to question their hostile attributions is anger management aimed at a target the research consistently identifies.

Anger Rumination: Feeding the Fire

If hostile attribution is where anger is born, anger rumination is often where it is sustained and amplified, and the counselor working with angry clients must attend to what happens after the provoking event as much as to the event itself. Anger rumination is the tendency to dwell on anger-provoking experiences, to replay the offense repeatedly in the mind, to rehearse grievances, and to keep the anger alive through repeated mental attention long after the triggering event has passed. Where a person who lets go of an offense may feel a flash of anger that subsides, a person who ruminates keeps the anger burning, returning to it again and again, each rehearsal reactivating the emotional response and often intensifying it, so that a single provocation becomes hours or days of sustained anger.

The evidence links anger rumination to aggression and to the broader dysregulation of anger. The study of college students found that anger rumination, alongside hostile attribution bias, mediated the relationship between negative life events and aggressive behavior, functioning as one of the mechanisms through which life stress translates into aggression (Yuan and Wang, 2026). A 2026 mixed-methods investigation into rage in a sample of five hundred forty-five people found that angry rumination, together with emotion dysregulation, trait aggression, and other factors, was among the correlates of both anger and rage, situating rumination within the cluster of processes that drive the most intense and least controlled anger states (Denson et al., 2026). Rumination, in other words, is not a harmless mental habit but an active contributor to the escalation and persistence of anger and to the aggression that can follow.

For the practitioner, anger rumination is a target that the counting-to-ten framing of this course does not by itself address, and recognizing it extends the counselor's reach beyond the moment of provocation into the aftermath where much anger is actually maintained. The clinical work involves helping clients notice when they are ruminating, recognize that the repeated mental rehearsal is feeding rather than resolving the anger, and develop alternatives to it, whether distraction, deliberate disengagement from the grievance, problem-solving that addresses the underlying concern, or the cognitive reappraisal that reframes the offense. It also involves helping clients understand that rumination often feels productive, as though replaying the offense were working toward justice or resolution, when in fact it typically accomplishes nothing but the perpetuation of their own distress. For substance use populations, the link is particularly important, because rumination on grievances, resentments, and perceived wrongs is a well-recognized relapse risk, a state of sustained negative affect that a client may seek to escape through use, so that helping clients interrupt anger rumination serves both their anger management and their recovery.

When Anger Escalates: Rage and the Loss of Control

The title of this course, invoking the moment before an angry reaction when a person might count to ten, points to a phenomenon that recent research has examined directly: the escalation of anger to a state of such intensity that control is lost, and the impulsive, sometimes violent behavior that can follow. Clients often describe this as a point of no return, a moment when the anger takes over, when they see red, when they act in ways they later regret and sometimes barely remember, and understanding this escalation is central to helping clients intervene before it occurs. A 2026 mixed-methods study of rage in five hundred forty-five people asked whether rage is simply extreme anger or a qualitatively different phenomenon, and concluded that rage is largely best understood as a type of extreme anger, sharing most of its correlates, but with some additional features including loss of control, tunnel vision, and aggression (Denson et al., 2026).

This finding, that rage lies on a continuum with ordinary anger but adds the crucial features of lost control and narrowed attention, has direct clinical value. It means that the destructive rage states clients fear are not entirely separate from the everyday anger they can learn to manage but are its extreme end, which implies that intervening earlier on the continuum, before anger escalates toward rage, is both possible and essential. The study found that emotion dysregulation, trait physical aggression, trait displaced aggression, and borderline personality disorder traits predicted both anger and rage, identifying the dysregulated aspects of personality as the appropriate targets for reducing the risk of rage. The tunnel vision that characterizes rage, the narrowing of attention onto the object of anger to the exclusion of consequences, alternatives, and the perspective of others, explains why people in a rage state make choices they would never make when calm, and why creating any interruption, any pause that widens attention back out, is so valuable.

For the practitioner, the continuum model of anger and rage translates directly into the strategy this course embodies. Because rage is the extreme end of a continuum rather than a bolt from the blue, clients can learn to recognize the early and middle stages of their own escalation, the physical, cognitive, and behavioral signs that anger is building toward the point of lost control, and to intervene while intervention is still possible. The counting-to-ten technique, and the broader family of pause-and-step-back strategies, works precisely by interrupting the escalation before it reaches the rage state where control is gone and tunnel vision has set in, which is why timing matters so much: the same technique that works at the early stages of arousal is useless once rage has taken over. Teaching clients to map their own escalation, to identify their personal early warning signs, and to deploy their interruption strategies early, while the prefrontal brakes can still engage, is the practical application of understanding rage as extreme anger with a threshold beyond which control is lost. For substance-using clients, the added danger is that intoxication both lowers that threshold and impairs the regulation that might prevent crossing it, making the combination of substance use and anger escalation especially perilous.

Anger and Substance Use Disorders: A Bidirectional Comorbidity

The clinical reason anger management matters so much in substance use treatment is that anger and substance use are deeply and bidirectionally entangled, each contributing to the other, and the recent evidence documents this comorbidity with increasing specificity. Substances contribute to anger and aggression through several pathways: acute intoxication disinhibits behavior and impairs the prefrontal regulation that controls anger, withdrawal states produce irritability and heightened reactivity, and chronic use appears associated with elevated trait anger, as the finding on cannabis use disorder and stable anger discussed earlier illustrates. Anger, in turn, contributes to substance use, as a source of the negative affect that drives use, as a relapse trigger, and as part of the emotional dysregulation that both conditions share. The result is a reinforcing cycle in which anger drives use and use worsens anger, a cycle that treating either condition alone may fail to break.

The empirical link between substance use and anger dysregulation appears across substance classes. A 2026 cross-sectional study comparing forty men with methamphetamine use disorder to forty-one non-using controls found that the methamphetamine group scored significantly higher on emotion dysregulation and on aggression than the controls, situating impaired emotion regulation and elevated aggression as correlates of the disorder (Akbas Cakmak et al., 2026). A separate 2025 study of one hundred fourteen patients with methamphetamine use disorder found that anger, along with childhood emotional abuse and neglect and certain affective temperaments, significantly and negatively predicted psychological resilience, while aggression, impulsivity, and depression were also correlated with lower resilience, and, notably, resilience showed no significant correlation with the daily amount or duration of methamphetamine use (Şenormancı et al., 2025). This last detail is clinically striking: it was the anger, the trauma history, and related emotional and characterological factors, not the quantity or chronicity of drug use, that tracked with lower resilience, suggesting that the emotional factors anger management addresses may matter more for recovery capacity than the substance use metrics that treatment often foregrounds.

For the practitioner, the bidirectional comorbidity establishes that anger management is not an optional add-on to substance use treatment but an integral part of it, and that the two must be addressed together. It means understanding a client's anger in the context of their substance use, recognizing how intoxication, withdrawal, and chronic use each shape the anger, and helping the client see the cycle in which their anger and their use feed each other. It means recognizing that reducing anger may support recovery, both by removing a relapse trigger and by improving the emotional regulation that sobriety requires, and that supporting recovery may reduce anger, by removing the pharmacological disinhibition and withdrawal irritability that fuel it. And it means attending to the shared roots, particularly the trauma histories and emotion dysregulation that underlie both conditions in so many clients, since addressing those roots may improve both the anger and the substance use at once. The counselor who treats anger and substance use as two faces of a single dysregulation, rather than two separate problems, is working with the grain of the evidence.

Anger, Resilience, and Relapse: The Recovery Stakes

The relationship between anger and recovery from substance use runs deeper than the moment-to-moment relapse trigger, reaching into the psychological resources that sustain recovery over time. The finding that anger and aggression negatively predicted psychological resilience in people with methamphetamine use disorder, more strongly than the substance use itself did, points to anger as a factor that may undermine the very capacity to recover, and not merely a proximate cause of individual lapses (Şenormancı et al., 2025). Resilience, the ability to cope with stress and adversity and to recover from setbacks, is central to sustained recovery, which is itself a long process marked by stress, setback, and the need to persevere, and a person whose anger and aggression erode their resilience is a person whose recovery rests on a weakened foundation.

A related mechanism connects anger to relapse through the concept of experiential avoidance, the tendency to evade or suppress unpleasant internal experiences. A 2026 systematic review synthesizing evidence from 2000 through 2026 found that higher levels of experiential avoidance were consistently associated with greater substance use across studies, and that acceptance-based approaches which reduce avoidance showed promise in reducing use (Sequeda et al., 2026). Anger is precisely the kind of unpleasant internal experience that a person high in experiential avoidance may seek to escape, and substance use is a common means of that escape, so that a client who cannot tolerate the discomfort of their own anger, and who reaches for a substance to avoid feeling it, is enacting the avoidance pathway the review describes. This connects anger management to recovery at a mechanistic level: teaching a client to experience, tolerate, and regulate their anger rather than avoid it addresses the same experiential avoidance that drives use.

For the practitioner, the recovery stakes of anger management extend the rationale for the work beyond the prevention of angry outbursts to the strengthening of recovery itself. It means framing anger management for clients not only as a way to avoid the trouble that anger causes but as a way to build the emotional resilience and tolerance that recovery requires, which may be more motivating for a client focused on staying sober than an appeal to anger control alone. It means recognizing that a client's difficulty tolerating anger, their impulse to escape the feeling rather than sit with it, is both an anger problem and a relapse risk, and that building the capacity to experience anger without being overwhelmed by it or driven to use serves both aims. And it means attending to the long arc of recovery, in which anger unaddressed can slowly erode the resilience that sustains sobriety, so that anger management becomes an investment in the durability of recovery and not merely a response to acute episodes. The counselor who helps a client learn to feel and regulate anger rather than avoid it is building recovery capital that reaches well beyond anger itself.

Trauma, PTSD, and Anger

For a large share of substance use treatment clients, anger cannot be understood apart from trauma, and the counselor who treats anger without attending to the trauma beneath it will often be working at the surface of a deeper problem. Trauma, and particularly post-traumatic stress, is strongly associated with anger, for reasons that are both psychological and physiological: trauma primes the threat-detection system to fire readily, lowering the threshold for the perception of danger and hostility that generates anger, and it leaves many survivors in a state of chronic hyperarousal in which anger is quick to ignite

and hard to control. The high co-occurrence of trauma, substance use, and anger in treatment populations means that for many clients these three are not separate problems but a single, interwoven presentation, and the earlier finding that interpretation bias modification reduced anger specifically in trauma-exposed individuals with elevated PTSD symptoms locates the trauma-anger link at the level of the hostile interpretive habit (Patel et al., 2026).

Recent research illuminates the moment-to-moment role of anger in trauma symptoms. A 2026 ecological momentary assessment study of fifty-one individuals with PTSD or complex PTSD, capturing five hundred fifty-three intrusive memories in daily life, found that anger occurring before an intrusive memory predicted greater subsequent distress and heightened perceived loss of control following the intrusion (Dietiker et al., 2026). Anger, in this finding, is not merely a downstream consequence of trauma but an antecedent state that worsens the intrusive symptoms at the heart of PTSD, which suggests that helping a trauma survivor manage their anger may reduce not only the anger itself but the severity of their trauma symptoms. On the treatment side, a 2026 randomized controlled trial of two hundred nine patients with co-occurring PTSD and substance use disorder found that adding trauma-focused treatment, specifically EMDR or imagery rescripting rather than prolonged exposure, to substance use treatment produced improvements across several psychosocial outcomes, among which anger control was one of the domains assessed (Faber et al., 2026), supporting the broader point that treating the trauma can improve a person's overall psychosocial functioning, just as attention to anger can complement trauma treatment.

For the practitioner, the trauma-anger connection carries clear clinical direction. It means screening for trauma in angry clients and for anger in trauma survivors, since the two so often travel together and each can mask or be mistaken for the other. It means understanding a trauma survivor's anger in its proper context, not as mere hostility or poor character but as an understandable feature of a threat system shaped by what happened to them, which changes both the counselor's stance and the client's self-understanding. It means recognizing that anger management for a trauma survivor may need to be embedded within or coordinated with trauma treatment, since addressing the anger without addressing the trauma that drives it may yield limited results, while treating the trauma can improve the anger as the trial on co-occurring PTSD and substance use showed. And it means holding a trauma-informed stance throughout, attending to safety, avoiding retraumatization, and recognizing that a survivor's anger may flare in response to cues the counselor cannot see. The counselor who treats anger as sometimes the visible surface of an underlying trauma reaches a depth that surface-level anger management cannot.

Anger and Interpersonal Violence: The Stakes for Others

Anger management carries a weight beyond the well-being of the client, because the destructive expression of anger harms other people, and nowhere is this clearer or more consequential than in intimate partner violence, an outcome to which anger and hostility are meaningfully linked. The stakes of the counselor's work include the safety of the client's partner, children, and others in their life, which raises anger management from a matter of the client's personal functioning to a matter of others' welfare and, at times, safety. A comprehensive meta-analytic review examining the relationship between anger and intimate partner violence, drawing on one hundred five effect sizes from sixty-four independent samples, found that intimate partner violence perpetration was moderately associated with anger, hostility, and internalizing negative emotions, with the association appearing stronger for those who perpetrated moderate to severe violence, and holding consistently across perpetrator sex, measurement

method, relationship type, and population (Birkley and Eckhardt, 2015).

The role of substance use in this link deserves particular attention given the populations this course serves. A 2021 laboratory study of two hundred forty-nine heavy drinkers who had perpetrated intimate partner violence in the past year examined how trait anger, psychological flexibility, and alcohol intoxication interact, and found that alcohol intoxication predicted higher levels of violence perpetration specifically among those low in psychological flexibility, while higher psychological flexibility appeared to buffer against the effect of intoxication (Grom et al., 2021). This finding carries a hopeful implication within a sobering domain: the psychological flexibility that acceptance-based and cognitive-behavioral approaches cultivate, the capacity to experience difficult internal states without being driven to act on them rigidly, appears to protect against the alcohol-facilitated escalation of anger into violence. It also underscores the danger of the combination this course's population so often faces, in which alcohol removes the regulation that might otherwise hold anger short of violence.

For the practitioner, the link between anger and interpersonal violence establishes both a responsibility and a caution. The responsibility is to take seriously the potential for a client's anger to harm others, to assess for a history and risk of violence, particularly intimate partner violence, and to recognize that anger management in a client who is violent toward others is not only about the client's well-being but about the safety of those around them. The caution is that anger management alone is not a treatment for intimate partner violence, which is a complex behavior shaped by factors beyond anger, including power, control, and entrenched patterns, and the counselor should not assume that reducing a client's anger will by itself make a violent client safe. Specialized batterer intervention, safety planning for potential victims, and appropriate coordination with other systems may be required, and the counselor must know the limits of anger management in this domain and the mandatory-reporting and duty-to-warn obligations that may apply. Holding the stakes for others in view, while recognizing what anger management can and cannot accomplish, is part of responsible practice with angry clients.

Third-Wave and Mindfulness Approaches to Anger

Alongside the cognitive-behavioral tradition that this course exemplifies, a newer family of approaches, often called third-wave, has developed and accumulated evidence for the treatment of the emotional dysregulation that underlies anger, and the counselor benefits from knowing these approaches and the skills they offer. Where traditional cognitive-behavioral therapy works largely by changing the content of thoughts, third-wave approaches such as acceptance and commitment therapy, dialectical behavior therapy, and mindfulness-based interventions work substantially by changing a person's relationship to their thoughts and feelings, cultivating the capacity to observe internal experiences, including anger, without being controlled by them. A 2026 systematic review of third-wave therapies for substance use disorders, drawing on forty-seven studies including thirty-five randomized trials, found that these interventions produced small-to-moderate benefits on substance use outcomes and larger, more consistent gains in psychological flexibility, emotion regulation, and mindfulness (Calderone et al., 2026), the very capacities most relevant to managing anger.

The mindfulness component of these approaches has been tested for its effect on anger specifically. A 2026 randomized controlled trial of an eight-week app-based mindfulness intervention for working women found that the intervention reduced trait anger, among other mental health benefits, compared to a waitlist control (Uwagawa et al., 2026), and a separate 2026 crossover trial of a four-week app-based

mindfulness intervention found reduced angry reactions among women, with a moderate effect size, though the study noted that the effects did not survive correction for multiple comparisons and that men did not show the same benefit (Adachi et al., 2026). These findings should be read with appropriate caution given the statistical limitations the authors themselves note, but they add to the picture of mindfulness as a plausible tool for reducing anger reactivity, consistent with its mechanism of cultivating a non-reactive awareness of internal experience. The connection to the experiential avoidance discussed earlier is direct: mindfulness teaches the tolerance of uncomfortable internal states, including anger, that is the opposite of the avoidance associated with substance use.

For the practitioner, the third-wave approaches offer both specific skills and a complementary stance that can enrich the cognitive-behavioral anger management this course teaches. The specific skills include mindfulness practices that build the non-reactive observation of anger, allowing a client to notice anger arising and to create space between the feeling and the response, which is another route to the pause that counting to ten seeks to create. They include the acceptance and psychological flexibility that the intimate partner violence research suggests may buffer against anger-driven harm, and the distress tolerance skills of dialectical behavior therapy that help clients endure intense emotion without acting destructively. The complementary stance is one of acceptance rather than struggle, in which the goal is not to eliminate or win a battle against anger but to change one's relationship to it, holding it with awareness rather than being ruled by it. The counselor need not choose between cognitive-behavioral and third-wave approaches, since they address anger through partly different mechanisms and can be combined, and the counselor who can draw on both, teaching clients both to restructure their angry interpretations and to hold their anger with mindful acceptance, offers a richer repertoire than either alone.

Anger as a Safety Concern: The Link to Suicide

A dimension of anger that counselors can easily overlook, focused as anger management naturally is on the outward expression of anger toward others, is the link between anger and self-directed harm, and the evidence establishes that anger is a genuine safety concern reaching inward as well as outward. A 2025 meta-analysis examining the relationship between anger-related affect, encompassing anger, hostility, and irritability, and suicidal thoughts and behaviors, drew on one hundred seven studies with a combined sample exceeding one hundred forty-one thousand people and found a moderate average correlation of point three one between anger-related affect and suicidal thoughts and behaviors, with the relationship holding across the separate anger constructs and functioning as a transdiagnostic risk factor (Dillon et al., 2025). Anger, in other words, is not only a risk to others but a marker of risk to the self, and a client presenting with significant anger warrants attention to suicide risk that the focus on outward-directed anger might otherwise lead the counselor to miss.

This link has particular weight in substance use populations, in whom suicide risk is already elevated and in whom the anger-in pattern this course addresses, anger turned inward rather than expressed, may be especially relevant. The client who holds anger inward, who turns their rage against themselves in self-blame, self-punishment, and self-destructive behavior, is enacting a pattern that connects the anger management framework directly to suicide risk, and the substances that so many of these clients use both worsen the negative affect that drives suicidal states and disinhibit the behavior that can turn suicidal thoughts into acts. The convergence of anger, substance use, and suicide risk marks a subset of clients whose safety requires vigilant attention, and the counselor who thinks of anger only as an

outward-directed problem will not be looking in the right direction for this danger.

For the practitioner, the anger-suicide link argues for incorporating suicide risk assessment into work with angry clients as a matter of routine rather than exception, particularly for clients with substance use disorders and for those whose anger turns inward. It means recognizing that a client's anger, especially anger directed at themselves, is a potential indicator of suicide risk and responding with the assessment and safety planning that risk requires. It means understanding that helping a client manage their anger may reduce not only the harm they might do to others but the harm they might do to themselves, which adds a further dimension to the value of the work. And it means holding anger management within the broader frame of client safety, attending to the full range of harm that dysregulated anger can produce, inward as well as outward. The counselor who recognizes anger as a transdiagnostic risk marker for suicide, and who assesses accordingly, may catch a danger that a narrower view of anger would let pass unseen.

The Body's Signals: Recognizing Physiological Arousal

Anger is not only a mental event but a physical one, and the counselor who helps clients recognize the bodily signature of their anger gives them one of the most reliable early warning systems available. When anger arises, the body mobilizes for action through the sympathetic nervous system, producing a cascade of physical changes: the heart rate climbs, breathing quickens, muscles tense, the jaw clenches, the face flushes, the hands may ball into fists, and a sensation of heat or pressure often builds in the chest, neck, or head. These changes are the physiological accompaniment of the limbic arousal that the neurobiology of anger describes, the body preparing for the fight that anger evolved to support, and they typically begin early in the anger episode, often before the person is fully aware of being angry. This early onset is what makes bodily awareness so valuable, because the physical signals can alert a client to rising anger while there is still time to intervene, before the escalation reaches the point of lost control.

Many clients, however, are poorly attuned to these signals, having spent years either ignoring their bodies or being aware of their anger only once it has already boiled over. Part of the work of anger management is therefore building interoceptive awareness, the capacity to notice the body's internal state, so that clients can catch their own anger in its early physical stages rather than discovering it only in the aftermath of an outburst. The mood chart this course teaches can be extended to include these physical cues, asking clients to note not only what they felt and thought but what happened in their bodies, which builds the pattern recognition that lets a client eventually feel anger coming the way one feels a storm in the air. Over time, a client who learns to recognize the particular way their own anger announces itself in the body, the specific tension, the specific heat, the specific quickening, gains an early warning that no external cue can provide, because it comes from within and precedes the behavior.

For the practitioner, the physiology of anger offers both an assessment tool and an intervention point. As assessment, asking clients to describe what anger feels like in their bodies, where they feel it first, and how it builds surfaces the individual physical patterns that will become their early warning signs, and it often helps clients who struggle to identify their emotions in psychological terms to recognize them in physical ones. As intervention, the bodily dimension of anger is directly addressable through the arousal-reduction techniques that lower sympathetic activation, of which slow, deep, diaphragmatic breathing is the most accessible and best known, working by engaging the parasympathetic system that counteracts the fight-or-flight response. The counting-to-ten strategy that

names this course is often most effective when paired with such breathing, so that the pause it creates is not merely a mental delay but an active calming of the body's arousal, giving the prefrontal regulation both the time and the physiological conditions it needs to reassert control. Teaching clients to read and to soothe their own physical arousal addresses anger at the bodily level where much of it lives.

The Anatomy of an Anger Episode

Anger is often experienced as a single overwhelming event, a sudden flood that arrives and takes over, but it is more accurately understood as a sequence that unfolds over time, and helping clients see the sequence, rather than the flood, is what makes the anger available to intervention. An anger episode can be understood as moving through stages: a triggering event, whether external or a memory or thought; an appraisal or interpretation of that event, which is where the hostile attributions discussed earlier do their work; the emotional and physiological arousal that the appraisal generates; the escalation of that arousal, sometimes fed by rumination and further hostile interpretation, toward the peak of intensity; the behavioral expression, whether controlled or destructive; and the aftermath, in which the person deals with the consequences and often with guilt, shame, or renewed grievance. Seeing anger as this sequence, rather than as an indivisible event, reveals multiple points at which intervention is possible, which is precisely what a client who feels ruled by their anger needs to discover.

Each stage offers its own opportunities and its own appropriate techniques, and matching the intervention to the stage is part of the skill the counselor teaches. At the trigger stage, some intervention is possible through anticipating and avoiding or preparing for known triggers, though many triggers cannot be avoided. At the appraisal stage, the cognitive work of examining and restructuring hostile interpretations is most powerful, because it addresses anger at its cognitive source before the arousal has fully built. At the arousal and escalation stages, the pause-and-calm techniques, counting to ten, stepping away, deep breathing, become central, working to interrupt the escalation and reduce the arousal before it reaches the peak. At the expression stage, having rehearsed alternative responses gives the client something to do other than the destructive default. And at the aftermath stage, the work involves repairing damage, learning from the episode, and avoiding the rumination and shame spirals that can either reignite the anger or drive a client toward substance use. A client who understands the anatomy of their anger episode can intervene at whichever stage they catch it, rather than believing that if they have started to feel angry it is already too late.

For the practitioner, teaching the anatomy of the anger episode transforms anger from an overwhelming given into a process with handles a client can grasp. It means working with clients to map their own typical episodes, identifying their characteristic triggers, appraisals, arousal patterns, escalation dynamics, and expressions, so that the abstract sequence becomes a concrete map of the client's own anger. It means helping clients recognize which stage they are in when they catch their anger, since the appropriate response differs by stage, and building their repertoire of stage-appropriate techniques. And it means conveying the crucial and hopeful message that catching anger later is better than not catching it at all, that even in the aftermath there is work that prevents the next episode, so that a client who fails to intervene early is not thereby doomed but simply working at a later stage. The anatomy of the anger episode gives both counselor and client a shared framework for understanding where a given piece of anger management work is aimed and why.

Cognitive Restructuring in Practice

The cognitive heart of the approach this course teaches, changing the thoughts that generate anger, is powerful but not simple to do well, and translating the principle that thoughts drive emotions into actual change in a client's thinking requires a practical method that the counselor can teach and the client can use. Cognitive restructuring begins with the identification of the thoughts that accompany and generate anger, which are often automatic, rapid, and outside the client's usual awareness, so that the first task is simply catching them. The mood chart and similar self-monitoring tools serve this end, asking clients to record, as close to the moment as possible, what they were thinking when the anger arose, which over time reveals the recurring thought patterns, the characteristic interpretations, demands, and judgments, that drive the client's anger. A client who has never noticed their own angry thoughts is often surprised to discover how consistent and how questionable those thoughts are once they are written down and examined in a calmer moment.

Once the angry thoughts are identified, the work is to examine and, where warranted, revise them, and the evidence on interpretation bias points to the most productive targets. The hostile interpretations of ambiguous events, the assumption that others acted with deliberate malice, disrespect, or hostile intent, are prime candidates, because they so often drive anger and so often rest on thin evidence. The counselor guides the client to question these interpretations: to ask what actually happened as distinct from the story they told about it, what other explanations might fit the facts, what evidence supports the hostile reading, and how they might see the situation if they were calmer or if it had happened to someone else. Beyond hostile attributions, the demanding and absolutist thoughts that often accompany anger, the shoulds, musts, and cannot-stands through which a person insists that reality conform to their wishes, are similarly examinable, and helping clients hold their preferences as strong preferences rather than as absolute demands often reduces the anger that the violated demand generated. This is not a matter of forcing false positivity or excusing genuine mistreatment, but of replacing distorted or extreme interpretations with more accurate and flexible ones.

For the practitioner, cognitive restructuring is a skill to be taught patiently and practiced repeatedly rather than explained once and expected to take hold. It means modeling the process, working through real examples from the client's life, and letting the client practice catching, examining, and revising their angry thoughts with the counselor's guidance before doing it alone. It means recognizing that the goal is not to eliminate every angry thought but to build the client's capacity to step back from their thoughts, to hold them as interpretations rather than facts, and to consider alternatives, which is a general skill that serves the client across many situations. It also means acknowledging the limits of purely cognitive work, since a client in the grip of intense arousal may be unable to think clearly enough to restructure anything, which is why cognitive restructuring is best done either before arousal has built or after it has subsided, and why it complements rather than replaces the in-the-moment arousal-reduction techniques. The counselor who teaches cognitive restructuring as a practiced skill, grounded in the client's own recurring thoughts and aimed at the hostile and demanding interpretations the evidence identifies, delivers the active ingredient of cognitive-behavioral anger management.

From Anger-In and Anger-Out to Assertive Expression

This course addresses the distinction between anger expressed outward and anger held inward, and the research on emotion regulation clarifies why neither uncontrolled expression nor suppression serves the client well, pointing toward a third path that is the practical goal of much anger management. Anger-out, the uncontrolled outward expression of anger through aggression, hostility, and destructive behavior, produces the interpersonal harm, the damaged relationships, and the consequences that bring many clients to treatment, and it often fails even on its own terms, rarely achieving the respect or redress the angry person sought. Anger-in, the suppression and internalization of anger, avoids the immediate external damage but, as the evidence on suppression as a maladaptive strategy indicates, is associated with worse rather than better outcomes, leaking out in resentment, passive aggression, and physical symptoms, feeding the rumination that sustains anger, and connecting, through the anger turned against the self, to the self-directed harm and suicide risk the research documents. Neither the explosion nor the swallowing resolves the anger or addresses the concern beneath it.

The third path, assertive expression, is the constructive alternative that anger management ultimately aims to build, in which the person expresses their anger and addresses the concern it signals directly, honestly, and respectfully, without either the aggression of anger-out or the suppression of anger-in. Assertiveness means stating one's feelings, needs, and boundaries clearly and firmly while respecting the other person, standing up for oneself without attacking, and pursuing the legitimate concern that the anger points to through communication rather than through hostility or silence. This connects the emotion of anger back to its function as a signal about boundaries and needs, since assertive expression is precisely the constructive response to that signal, addressing the boundary violation or unmet need that generated the anger in a way that might actually resolve it. For a client caught between exploding and swallowing, discovering that a third option exists, that they can be angry and express it and pursue their concern without either damaging others or damaging themselves, can be genuinely liberating.

For the practitioner, developing assertive expression is a substantial and rewarding part of anger management work. It means teaching the distinction among aggressive, passive, and assertive responses, helping clients recognize their own default pattern and the costs it carries, and building the specific communication skills that assertiveness requires, from stating feelings in the first person to making clear requests to setting boundaries respectfully. It means practicing these skills, since assertiveness is a behavioral capacity built through rehearsal rather than a concept absorbed through explanation, often through role-play and graded real-world practice. And it means addressing the beliefs that keep clients trapped in aggression or suppression, whether the belief that anything short of aggression is weakness or the belief that expressing anger at all is dangerous or wrong, both of which foreclose the assertive middle path. The counselor who helps a client move from the false choice between exploding and swallowing to the real option of assertive expression addresses not only the management of anger's arousal but the constructive channeling of its energy toward the concerns it signals.

Anger in Families and Around Children

Much of the anger that brings clients to treatment plays out in the family, in the relationships with partners, children, parents, and others closest to the client, and these are both the relationships most damaged by dysregulated anger and the ones whose repair matters most, which gives family-focused attention a central place in anger management. The home is where people are most themselves, where guards are lowest and provocations most frequent, and where the anger a person controls in public is most likely to escape, so that a client whose colleagues see only calm may direct their worst anger at the people they love most. The consequences reach across the family, straining and sometimes breaking the partner relationship, as the research on anger and intimate partner violence makes clear, and shaping the development of children who witness or receive the anger, with effects that can extend into the next generation.

The impact on children deserves particular attention because it is both serious and often invisible to the angry parent. Children exposed to a parent's frequent, intense, or frightening anger may experience fear, insecurity, and distress, may learn that anger is expressed through aggression and carry that lesson into their own lives, and may in various ways be harmed by an emotional environment dominated by a parent's dysregulated anger. The research on the intergenerational patterning of aggression, and on how children learn emotional regulation substantially from their caregivers, indicates that a parent's anger management is also, in effect, a contribution to their children's emotional development, for better or worse. A parent who manages their anger models regulation and provides a safe emotional environment, while a parent whose anger is dysregulated may transmit both the behavior and its costs. For many clients, the recognition that their anger is affecting their children, and shaping the adults those children will become, is among the most powerful motivators for change that anger management can invoke.

For the practitioner, the family dimension of anger both raises the stakes and offers leverage. It means assessing how a client's anger plays out at home, with whom, and with what effects, since the family is often where the most consequential anger occurs and where the client may be least aware of its impact. It means attending to the safety of family members, particularly partners and children, and recognizing the point at which anger management alone is insufficient and safety planning, specialized intervention, or reporting obligations come into play. And it means, where appropriate and safe, engaging the family dimension in the work, whether by helping the client understand and repair the harm their anger has done, by drawing on the client's love for their family as motivation, or by recognizing that a client's anger may itself be entangled with family dynamics that treatment should address. The counselor who holds the family in view understands that anger management is rarely only about the individual client but reaches into the web of relationships where the anger lives and where its costs, and the rewards of managing it, are most deeply felt.

Motivation, Ambivalence, and Engagement

Anger management occupies a peculiar position among treatments in that many of the clients who most need it are the least eager to receive it, arriving mandated by courts, pressured by employers, or pushed by families rather than seeking help of their own accord, and the counselor who does not attend to motivation and engagement will often find the most anger-prone clients the hardest to reach. Anger has a particular relationship to motivation that complicates the work: it frequently feels justified to the

person experiencing it, who sees their anger as a reasonable response to genuine provocation and locates the problem in the people and circumstances that anger them rather than in themselves. A client who believes their anger is entirely warranted, and that others are to blame, has little reason to change their own behavior, and may experience anger management as an unjust demand that they surrender a legitimate response to real mistreatment. Meeting this stance with confrontation or with a demand that the client accept blame typically deepens the resistance rather than resolving it.

The more productive approach draws on the principles of motivational work, meeting clients where they are and helping them find their own reasons for change rather than imposing the counselor's. Even a client who believes their anger is justified usually recognizes that its consequences have cost them something they value, the relationship strained, the job threatened, the child frightened, the legal trouble incurred, and these costs, which the client can acknowledge without conceding that their anger was wrong, are the leverage for change. The counselor can help the client see that whatever the justice of their anger, the way they have been expressing it is not getting them what they want and is costing them what they value, which reframes anger management not as a moral correction but as a way to pursue their own goals more effectively. This approach respects the client's perspective, sidesteps the unproductive argument about whether the anger is justified, and locates the motivation for change in the client's own values and interests rather than in the counselor's judgment.

For the practitioner, attending to motivation and engagement is often the difference between anger management that works and anger management that the client merely endures. It means expecting and accepting ambivalence rather than treating it as a problem, recognizing that a mandated or pressured client's reluctance is a normal starting point rather than a sign of bad faith. It means avoiding the trap of arguing with clients about whether their anger is justified, which is both unwinnable and beside the point, and focusing instead on the consequences and the client's own goals. It means building the therapeutic alliance that engagement requires, treating even a hostile or resistant client with the respect that makes change possible, and recognizing that a client's anger may be directed at the counselor and the treatment themselves, which the counselor must be able to receive without retaliation. And it means holding a long view of engagement, understanding that a client who begins mandated and resistant may, if the alliance holds and the work speaks to their own interests, come to engage genuinely over time. The counselor who can engage the reluctant, justify-their-anger client reaches exactly the population that anger management most needs to serve.

Individual Differences and Context

Anger is a universal human emotion, but the way it is experienced, expressed, and understood varies considerably across individuals and contexts, and the counselor who applies a single template to every angry client will fit some poorly and misunderstand others. People differ in their temperamental proneness to anger, in the situations that trigger them, in the intensity and duration of their anger, and in the ways they characteristically express or contain it, so that anger management must be individualized to the particular client rather than delivered as a uniform program. The assessment that maps a client's specific anger patterns, their triggers, appraisals, arousal, escalation, and expression, is what makes this individualization possible, and it is why generic anger management, however evidence-based its techniques, must be tailored to the person in front of the counselor to be fully effective.

Cultural context shapes anger in ways the counselor should hold with humility rather than

assumption. Cultures differ in their norms about the expression of anger, about who may express anger to whom and in what circumstances, about what counts as a provocation and what response is considered appropriate, and about the very meaning attached to anger and its display. What reads as dangerous dyscontrol in one cultural frame may be within normal expressive range in another, and what one culture considers appropriate assertiveness another may consider unacceptable aggression or, conversely, weak passivity. The counselor working across cultural difference must be careful not to impose their own culture's norms as universal standards, and must instead understand the client's anger within the client's own cultural context, while still addressing the behavior that is genuinely harmful to the client or others regardless of cultural frame. This requires the cultural humility of asking and understanding rather than assuming, treating the client as the expert on their own cultural world.

For the practitioner, attending to individual and contextual difference means resisting the pull toward a one-size-fits-all approach and instead building each client's anger management on an accurate understanding of that client's particular patterns, circumstances, and cultural context. It means recognizing that the techniques this course teaches are tools to be selected and adapted to the individual, not a fixed protocol to be applied uniformly, and that the art of anger management lies substantially in the matching of tool to person and situation. It means holding awareness of the counselor's own cultural assumptions about anger and its proper expression, which are as culturally shaped as the client's, and not mistaking them for objective standards. And it means keeping in view the distinction between the culturally variable norms of anger expression and the genuinely harmful behavior that anger management legitimately targets regardless of culture, so that respect for difference does not become a reason to ignore behavior that is hurting the client or others. The counselor who individualizes and contextualizes their anger management work meets each client as the particular person they are rather than as a generic instance of an angry client.

Anger Management as Ongoing Development

The framing of anger management as a discrete intervention with a beginning and an end, a course completed and a problem solved, misrepresents both the nature of the work and what the evidence indicates about it, and the counselor who conveys a more accurate picture serves clients better in the long run. The modest effect sizes that characterize the anger management literature, and the greater difficulty of changing entrenched behavior than of changing momentary emotion, both point toward anger management as a long-term developmental process rather than a quick repair, a matter of building capacities and habits over time through sustained practice rather than of acquiring a technique that immediately and permanently solves the problem. Anger, as a normal emotion woven into a person's temperament, relationships, and circumstances, is not eliminated by a course of treatment, and the realistic goal is not its disappearance but the steady growth of the client's capacity to feel it and to respond to it with increasing skill and choice.

This developmental framing carries a hopeful implication alongside its sobering realism. If anger management is a matter of building capacity over time, then progress is measured not by the achievement of a perfect and permanent calm but by growth in the client's ability to recognize their anger earlier, to interrupt its escalation more reliably, to restructure their angry interpretations more readily, and to express their concerns more constructively, capacities that can continue to develop across a lifetime. Setbacks, the episodes of anger that break through despite the client's growing skill, are then not evidence of failure but expected features of a developmental process, occasions for learning rather

than for despair, which is a far more sustainable stance for a client than the all-or-nothing expectation that treatment should have made them incapable of anger. The client who understands that they are building a capacity, and that the building continues, can absorb the inevitable lapses without abandoning the work.

For the practitioner, holding anger management as ongoing development shapes how the work is framed, paced, and sustained. It means setting expectations honestly at the outset, presenting anger management as a set of skills to be practiced and developed over time rather than a fix to be installed, so that neither counselor nor client is disillusioned by the absence of an immediate and total cure. It means measuring and celebrating progress in terms of growing capacity rather than perfect performance, helping clients recognize the gains they are making even as anger episodes continue to occur. It means treating setbacks as learning opportunities within a long process rather than as failures that undo the work, which both matches the reality and sustains the client's engagement. And it means, particularly for the substance use populations this course serves, recognizing the parallel with recovery itself, which is likewise a long developmental process marked by growth and setback rather than a single decisive cure, so that anger management and recovery can be understood as two facets of the same sustained work of building a more regulated and more chosen life. The counselor who frames anger management developmentally gives clients a realistic and durable understanding that can carry them through the long work that lasting change requires.

Vulnerability Factors: The Conditions That Lower the Threshold

Anger does not arise in a vacuum but against a background of physical and emotional states that raise or lower a person's threshold for it, and the counselor who helps clients recognize their vulnerability factors gives them a way to prevent anger before any trigger appears. The same provocation that a rested, fed, calm person absorbs without difficulty can ignite explosive anger in a person who is exhausted, hungry, stressed, in pain, or emotionally depleted, because these states erode the regulatory capacity that holds anger in check. The prefrontal regulation that manages limbic arousal is not a constant but a resource that fluctuates with the body's condition and the demands placed upon it, and when that resource is depleted, by lack of sleep, by chronic stress, by physical illness or pain, by hunger, or by the accumulation of unaddressed emotional strain, anger breaks through more easily and more intensely. Recognizing this, clients can understand why their anger sometimes seems wildly out of proportion to its apparent trigger: the trigger was small, but the vulnerability was large, and the anger reflected the sum.

For substance use populations, the vulnerability factors carry additional weight, because substance use and its aftermath directly degrade the conditions that keep anger regulated. Intoxication impairs prefrontal function and disinhibits behavior, withdrawal produces irritability and heightened reactivity, and the disrupted sleep, poor nutrition, and chronic stress that so often accompany active addiction all lower the anger threshold, so that the substance-using client is frequently operating in a state of maximal vulnerability to anger. Recovery, conversely, tends to restore these conditions over time, which is part of why anger management and recovery reinforce each other, and the well-known recognition in recovery culture that being hungry, angry, lonely, or tired increases relapse risk maps directly onto the vulnerability factors that also increase anger. Helping a client see how their substance use and their anger both feed on the same depleted states, and how caring for those states supports both their anger management and their recovery, connects the two forms of work at a practical daily level.

For the practitioner, the vulnerability factors offer a preventive dimension of anger management that complements the in-the-moment and cognitive techniques. It means helping clients identify their own vulnerability factors, the specific conditions under which their anger threshold drops, whether particular kinds of stress, poor sleep, hunger, pain, or emotional depletion, so that they can recognize when they are operating in a vulnerable state and exercise extra care. It means addressing those factors directly where possible, since improving sleep, managing stress, attending to physical health, and maintaining emotional replenishment are all, in effect, anger management, working upstream of any trigger to raise the threshold at which anger breaks through. And it means helping clients anticipate high-vulnerability periods and either avoid unnecessary provocations during them or approach them with heightened awareness and prepared strategies. The counselor who incorporates the vulnerability factors extends anger management from the management of individual episodes to the cultivation of the daily conditions under which anger is less likely to arise in the first place, which is both preventive and, for the substance use client, doubly protective.

Sustaining Change: Practice, Support, and the Role of the Group

The skills that anger management teaches, like all skills, are built and maintained through practice, and the counselor who attends to how clients will practice and sustain their new capacities beyond the counseling session addresses what often determines whether the work endures. A client can understand cognitive restructuring, recognize their vulnerability factors, and know the value of the pause without any of it changing their behavior in the heat of a real provocation, because knowing a skill and being able to deploy it under pressure are different achievements, and only the second changes lives. The bridge between them is practice, the repeated rehearsal of the skills, first in the calm of the session and then in progressively more challenging real situations, until the new responses become available under the arousal that once triggered only the old ones. The counselor who builds deliberate practice into anger management, through rehearsal, role-play, homework, and the graded application of skills to real situations, helps clients cross from understanding to capacity.

The social dimension of sustaining change deserves particular attention, because anger is enacted in relationships and change is easier to sustain with support. Group formats for anger management, common in both clinical and mandated settings, offer specific advantages that the counselor can draw upon: the group provides multiple perspectives on each member's anger, a degree of confrontation and support from peers that can reach a client differently than the counselor's input, opportunities to practice new responses with others, and the recognition, often powerful, that one is not alone in struggling with anger. Group members can serve as models for one another, demonstrating both the anger patterns to be changed and the skills being built, and the group can become a source of ongoing support and accountability that sustains change beyond what individual work alone provides. For substance use populations already engaged in group-based recovery, anger management delivered in a group format can integrate naturally with the recovery community that supports their sobriety.

For the practitioner, sustaining change means designing anger management as a practice to be built rather than a lesson to be delivered, and attending to the supports that will carry the client's new capacities into their daily life. It means assigning and reviewing between-session practice, since the skills develop through use rather than through discussion, and helping clients apply the techniques to the real provocations of their lives in a graded way that builds capacity without overwhelming it. It means drawing on the advantages of group formats where they are available and appropriate, and helping

clients build the social supports, whether in a group, a recovery community, or their own relationships, that make sustained change more likely. And it means recognizing that the counselor's role is ultimately to work themselves out of a job, building in the client a set of capacities and supports that the client can carry forward independently, so that anger management becomes not a treatment the client receives but a practice the client owns. The counselor who attends to practice and support gives the skills the conditions they need to take root and to last.

The Counselor Working with Anger: Reactions and Self-Care

Working with angry clients places particular demands on the counselor, and attending to the counselor's own reactions is part of doing the work well rather than a separate concern. Anger is contagious and provoking in a way that many other clinical presentations are not, and a client's hostility, whether directed at the world, at others in their life, or at the counselor and the treatment themselves, can readily evoke the counselor's own anger, defensiveness, fear, or withdrawal. A counselor who reacts to a client's anger with anger of their own escalates rather than de-escalates, models the very dyscontrol the treatment aims to change, and ruptures the alliance on which the work depends, while a counselor who reacts with fear or withdrawal may avoid the direct engagement that angry clients need. Recognizing that angry clients will at times provoke the counselor, and preparing to receive that provocation without being ruled by it, is therefore a core competence for this work, not an optional refinement.

The counselor's capacity to remain regulated in the presence of a client's anger is itself therapeutic, offering the client an experience that may be rare in their life: someone who can receive their anger without retaliating, crumbling, or fleeing, and who remains steady and respectful in the face of it. This steadiness models the emotional regulation the treatment teaches, demonstrates that anger can be met with something other than counter-anger or capitulation, and provides the safety within which the client can begin to examine their own anger rather than merely defend it. Achieving this steadiness draws on the same skills the counselor teaches, the recognition of one's own arousal, the examination of one's own interpretations of the client's behavior, and the deliberate choice of a regulated response, so that the counselor working with anger is in a sense practicing anger management alongside the client, which both improves the work and deepens the counselor's understanding of what they ask of clients.

For the practitioner, working with anger sustainably requires attention to self-care and to the counselor's own support, because the demands of receiving hostility and holding steadiness are real and cumulative. It means recognizing and processing the reactions that angry clients evoke, rather than denying them, so that they can be managed rather than enacted, which often benefits from consultation, supervision, and the counselor's own reflective practice. It means attending to the counselor's own vulnerability factors, since a depleted, stressed, or exhausted counselor is as prone to dysregulated reactions as a depleted client, and the counselor who is not caring for themselves will struggle to remain the steady presence that angry clients need. And it means holding the boundaries that keep the work safe, recognizing the point at which a client's anger crosses into threat that must be addressed directly, and not confusing therapeutic steadiness with the tolerance of genuine danger. The counselor who attends to their own reactions and sustains their own regulation and well-being is able to offer angry clients the steady, respectful, regulated presence that is among the most valuable things the treatment provides.

Applying the Model: Integrating the Evidence with the Course Framework

The framework this course provides, built around the T.I.E. model of thoughts, intellect, and emotions, the mood chart, and the practical strategies for managing anger in the moment, gains both depth and precision when integrated with the evidence assembled here, and drawing the connections together shows how the research refines rather than replaces the course's approach. The core insight of the T.I.E. model, that thoughts drive emotions and that intellect can be trained to manage emotional reactions, is exactly the insight the research on interpretation bias, cognitive-behavioral treatment, and prefrontal regulation confirms, and the evidence sharpens it by identifying the specific thoughts that most drive anger, the hostile interpretations of ambiguous events, and by grounding the intellect-over-emotion model in the neurobiology of prefrontal regulation of limbic arousal. A counselor teaching the T.I.E. model can now do so knowing which thoughts to target most precisely and why the model works at the level of the brain.

The mood chart, this course's tool for tracking emotional patterns, aligns with the emphasis across the research on self-monitoring and the recognition of one's own escalation, and it can be enriched by the specific things the evidence suggests are worth tracking. Beyond mood itself, a client might track the situations that provoke anger and the interpretations they placed on them, surfacing the hostile attribution patterns that drive their anger; the early warning signs of escalation, building the self-awareness that allows early intervention before anger reaches the rage state where control is lost; and the role of substance use, sleep, and stress in their anger, revealing the conditions that weaken their regulation. The mood chart becomes, in this light, not merely a record of feelings but an instrument for discovering the client's personal anger patterns, the triggers, interpretations, escalation signs, and vulnerability factors that the evidence identifies as the levers of change.

The in-the-moment strategies this course teaches, epitomized by counting to ten, find their rationale and their refinement in the research on escalation, prefrontal regulation, and the continuum from anger to rage. The evidence explains why these strategies work, by creating the pause that lets slower prefrontal regulation catch up with faster limbic arousal, and it clarifies when they work, early in the escalation before rage and tunnel vision take over, which tells the counselor to emphasize early recognition and early deployment. It also situates these acute strategies within a fuller repertoire, the cognitive restructuring of hostile interpretations that addresses anger at its cognitive source, the interruption of rumination that keeps anger from being sustained, the mindfulness and acceptance that change the client's relationship to anger, and the attention to trauma, substance use, and safety that addresses the conditions in which anger arises. The counselor who integrates the course framework with the evidence offers clients not a single technique but a coherent, evidence-grounded approach in which each element has its rationale and its place, and in which counting to ten is understood as one valuable move within a larger and well-supported strategy for the management of anger.

Assessment, Common Pitfalls, and the Counselor's Stance

Effective anger management begins with assessment, and the evidence points to what a thorough assessment of a client's anger should encompass. It should distinguish among the related constructs the research clarifies, anger the emotion, hostility the attitude, irritability the proneness, and aggression the behavior, since a client may present with any of these and the treatment implications differ. It should map the client's anger patterns, the situations that provoke it, the interpretations that generate it, the rumination that sustains it, the escalation that carries it toward loss of control, and the behavior it produces. It should assess the surrounding conditions the evidence identifies as central, the substance use that both fuels and is fueled by anger, the trauma that so often underlies it, and the risk of harm to others and to the self, including the intimate partner violence and suicide risk that the research links to anger. And it should identify the client's existing strengths and regulatory capacities, since anger management builds on what the client can already do. An assessment this thorough produces an individualized understanding of the client's anger that generic anger management cannot match.

Several pitfalls recur in anger management work, and naming them helps the counselor avoid them. The first is treating anger as the enemy, framing the goal as the elimination of anger rather than the management of its expression, which both misunderstands anger as a normal and informative emotion and asks of the client something neither possible nor desirable. The second is mistaking suppression for regulation, teaching or allowing clients to bottle up anger, which the evidence shows is a maladaptive strategy associated with worse outcomes, when the goal is skillful regulation rather than containment. The third is addressing anger in isolation, treating it as a standalone problem while ignoring the substance use, trauma, and safety concerns that the evidence shows are so often entangled with it, which leaves the roots of the anger untouched. The fourth is overpromising, presenting anger management as a quick fix rather than the long-term, skills-building process the modest effect sizes and the developmental nature of the work indicate it to be. Each of these pitfalls is avoidable by a counselor who holds the evidence-grounded understanding this material develops.

The counselor's stance, finally, shapes the effectiveness of anger management as much as any technique. The evidence supports a stance that validates the client's anger as a normal and often reasonable emotion while helping them change its destructive expression, that conveys genuine confidence in the approach's effectiveness while remaining honest about its modest and gradual nature, and that holds the client's anger within the fuller context of their substance use, their trauma, their relationships, and their safety. It supports a stance of collaboration, in which the counselor helps the client discover their own anger patterns and develop their own strategies rather than imposing a generic program, since the individualized understanding the evidence calls for can only be built with the client. And it supports a stance of hope grounded in evidence, in the knowledge that anger management is a genuinely effective, well-researched approach, that regulatory capacity can be strengthened through practice, and that clients who feel ruled by their anger can learn to feel it and choose their response to it. The counselor who brings this stance to the evidence-grounded techniques this course teaches offers clients the most that anger management, at its best, can provide: not the elimination of a normal human emotion, but the freedom to feel it fully and to respond to it with choice.

What to Do While You Count to 10

Manage your Anger -

Change your Life

David W. Earle, LPC

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this book to all the people I have ever harmed with my unmanaged anger, especially my daughter, Ginger, and son, Garrett.

During the writing of this book, my granddaughter, Whitney Dean, who was adopted at birth, has reconnected with our family and a hole in my heart was healed with her arrival. I thank her wonderful parents who raised her and are now woven into the fabric of my life.

I could not have completed this project without the loving encouragement of Penny, my wife. Her laughter at my grammatical mistakes kept my head from expansion. She told me the first edition sounded like one of my lectures; that was valuable feedback so I rewrote it with a twinkle in my eye. Penny embraced this project and she is as much a part of this book as I am.

And Thanks

I owe my gratitude to the “Book Committee” for their valuable insight, humor, and most of all, encouragement.

The committee members are: David Abbott, Michael Atchison, Marc Biondo, Bob Breaux, Graeme Crawford, Dennis Daigle, Garrett Earle, Connie Fabre, Bill Golden, Summer Johnson, Judith Kenyon, Bob Leibforth, Vint Massimini, Connie & Ralph Murphy, Jonathan Repa, Janet Repa, Bill Schulenberg, Ron Schenk, Bob Slaven, Van Landry, Donna Freeman and Jan Zeringue.

Out of that group, I would like to make special mention. I received a very encouraging note from Jan Zeringue; arriving at a moment of extreme doubt. My two Florida friends’ challenging comments really made me think, Bob Leibforth and Bob Slaven. My sister Connie and her husband Ralph Murphy gave me their feedback when I visited them in Virginia and I read their many suggestions at 30,000 feet returning to Louisiana. Bill Schulenberg was the grammar cop who faithfully prepared this book for the professional editor. Bill’s spirit left this earth before he could see the result of his influence and I miss his wisdom and friendship.

I had two outside consultants: Trent Didier did the graphic design on the illustrations and book cover and Cliff Carle (the Sherlock Holmes of Editing) did the professional editing, both were instrumental in the ultimate outcome of this book.

Introduction

Counting to Ten Myth

When anger is used correctly, it can have positive results! However, this is a strange reality for some people. If you had told me during the first half of my life that there is a positive side to anger, I would have thought you were crazy.

All of us have witnessed anger destroying relationships, pushing people away, causing pain and hardship. Thinking about anger in positive terms is alien in most people's experiences. However, a healthy expression of anger is a component for building and maintaining successful relationships! If you want to use anger in a healthy and constructive manner, this book contains techniques necessary for that change. People who manage their emotions are calmer, the people they love are happier; and this book provides a blueprint for that change.

As a little boy, when I would get angry, my mother would say, "Count to ten". Try as I might, I could not make this advice work for me. By the time I reached the number ten, I was madder than when I started!

Numerous attempts at managing my anger by counting to ten continued well into my forties. With my long history of blowing my top, I often hurt the very people I loved the most. I knew I had to change.

Over 25 years of working as a therapist helping my clients manage their anger, I have discovered some powerful anger management tools. I will show you the coping skills necessary to change anger and other powerful and sometimes destructive emotions into a positive force for good. I had to learn what was necessary to do while I counted to ten and I now help others

manage their emotions. The simple formula has proven successful for many of my clients.

When people use the lessons in this magical little book, they are able to express love instead of destruction. I firmly believe you are that person.

Is anger ever appropriate? Yes. What kind of anger is appropriate? Is anger selfish? Often it is considered selfish but what it really conveys is caring; if a person did not care, why would they be angry? Granted, anger can be misplaced and is often destructive, but anger generates passion, and that energy, if used correctly, can be highly constructive.

What about other emotions? Can this system work for the management of grief, revenge, jealousy, despair, etc.? Yes, this system is effective with the full rainbow of human emotions.

Setting the Conversation

On this adventure into anger management, you will experience mental health counseling sessions where two men discuss anger. The client has a very destructive anger problem and is devastated with the realization of the damage his anger has caused his family.

Although these characters assume different names to protect their anonymity, they are both real people and the dialogue is actual. Both have provided their permission to share this spotlight and they agreed to share this very personal experience with you.

Characters:

In these therapy sessions, Mr. Jack Walton is the mental health client and Mr. Eli Carlson is the licensed Professional Counselor.

Jack Walton is the client. Jack is a recently separated man in his early 40's with two children and a history of volatile anger that he acknowledges to be a significant part of the reason for the breakup of his marriage, and the estrangement from his children. Although no physical abuse occurred, he is aware of the emotional abuse his behavior caused.

His son went through treatment for substance abuse, but has recently relapsed back into his drug addiction. Jack is now attending the family portion of his son's treatment program, and is attending weekly Al-Anon meetings where he is learning how to deal with his son's substance abuse problem and how to develop healthy relationship skills. Jack recognizes he has a severe anger problem that needs to be changed. At this moment, he is unaware of his daughter's addiction to alcohol and drugs.

Jack is a successful executive, but the severe economic downturn has substantially affected his earnings. Because of his company's current financial trouble, he was terminated, ending a 10-year employment history.

His 20-year marriage was always rocky. Both he and his wife misused their anger and other strong emotions, and this constant tension turned the love they once had into bitterness and disdain. Although he wants to reconcile with his wife, he knows the hostile atmosphere they created is not good for the healthy exchange of love that he desperately craves, but doesn't know how to obtain.

Jack is a good man with a bad temper; a man who has a great deal of love in his heart, but his strong unmanaged emotions keep getting in the way, and cause his love to be destructive, exactly the opposite of want he wanted.

Both his teenage children are acting out with alcohol, drugs, truancy, and sexual activity. With the loss of his employment, he is experiencing intense financial pressure that has significantly contributed to the fracturing of his family. He feels guilty and blames himself for all that has happened to his family.

Eli Carlson, LPC is the counselor. Eli specializes in anger management, substance abuse treatment, and relationship issues, He is in his mid-60's, once divorced, and currently enjoying his second marriage of almost 20 years. Many years ago, he experienced a very intense anger problem that he has since learned to manage.

Setting:

They meet in an old house converted to an office building on a busy street located in the state capital of a Deep South state. They previously had a consultation visit where Jack's background information was obtained and a degree of trust was established. The story opens with Jack's first actual counseling session with Eli.

Chapter I

The Gift of Anger

First counseling session—September 30th

ELI: Good seeing you again.

JACK: I'm glad I'm back. I now realize that I am a large part of my problems, and more importantly, no one can change them but me. What is on the agenda today?

ELI: Whatever you want to work on.

JACK: Well, until I learn how to control my anger, I will continue to piss everyone off!

ELI: Well then, should we start on anger management today?

JACK: Anger management? Isn't that an oxymoron?

ELI: Although they may seem to be conflicting, they actually belong together. Let's talk about why anger is a human trait. Why were we created with the ability to get angry?

JACK: Beats me. Anger never worked for me. When I get angry, it seems to hurt everyone, and doesn't do any good.

ELI: Do you think the ability to get angry is something good, or something evil . . . even something demonic?

JACK: I know no good has come from my anger! I get depressed when I think about the harm it has done to my family.

I'm sure it contributed to the failure of my marriage, and I know I've harmed my kids.

ELI: You've certainly paid a high price for your anger.

JACK: Yes . . . you can say that again . . . for both me and the people I harmed.

ELI: What does anger do for us? Is there any value in anger, and if so, what is it?

JACK: "Do for us"? Come on, Eli, I'm paying good money for these sessions! Anger does something for us. Forgive my sarcasm, but does anger make our wives love us more? Do our children think we are "cuddly" and "cute" when we shout at them? Is that what you mean?

ELI: No, I was thinking something more in the positive sense. Can anger somehow build a relationship? You certainly seem to have experience with the opposite effect.

JACK: Yeah, I really blew it. It was my entire fault. That is why she left me. Sometimes I wish there was a way to remove my anger—permanently!

ELI: Can anger ever be positive?

JACK: I have never seen it.

ELI: Anger provides two benefits. There are two reasons why we need anger. Two reasons why humans have the ability to get angry.

JACK: Two? Benefits?

ELI: Yeah, two benefits. Could you survive in this world without the ability to get angry?

JACK: I think I'd like to try.

ELI: Okay, maybe it is not the anger itself, but how we use the anger that is the problem. Let's talk about what would happen if a person did not have the ability to get angry.

JACK: I'd like some of that!

ELI: Before you sign up for losing your ability to get angry, you might want to hear this:

Before the invention of psychotropic drugs, back in the 30's and 40's, in mental health hospitals, there was very little doctors could do for a violent patient—other than put them in straight jacks and confine them to padded cells.

Doctors believed they had no other choice than to perform what's called a frontal lobotomy. The operation consisted of cutting the nerves to the frontal lobes, the area of the brain that experiences feelings.

JACK: Maybe that's what I need . . . a frontal lobotomy. No feelings.

No anger. Simple, problem solved!

ELI: It's only used now in extreme cases, and your anger does not qualify, The key for you is the management of emotions, not the elimination.

Now, getting back to the old mental health wards—after the operation, the patients could not get angry. You could slap them in the face and they would register no emotion. That operation allowed them to be cared for in the mental health hospital, but could that person survive on the street?

JACK: I don't think so.

ELI: Of course not. Anger is a key survival tool in any culture with any group of people. So, anger does two things for us. First,

anger is an early warning system. Anger is your radar for incoming insults, threats, or other attacks. Without this radar, we could not react in time, and might be consumed by today's equivalent of Tyrannosaurus Rex.

JACK: So you're saying I couldn't survive without anger.

ELI: Correct, you need your anger to protect yourself.

The key word is manage, Jack. You need the ability to get angry. But just because you are angry doesn't mean you have to continue to hurt the people you love.

JACK: I really don't believe you. Sorry.

ELI: Quite all right, just don't discount what I am saying. Try not to judge it.

JACK: Okay . . . just trust you . . . as in "The check is in the mail"?

ELI: Good one, but yes, you can trust me!

Once the anger alerts us to the threat on our radar screen, the second gift of anger is the necessary energy to deal with the attack. Should I fight or should I run? Do I need to face T. Rex head-on or run for my life? Just like the fight or flight syndrome, anger is natural. It is another way we respond to threats, or perceived slights, offenses, etc. What are some of the symptoms of anger?

JACK: You mean like yelling and screaming.

ELI: Yes, those are definite signs of anger. What I was thinking about were symptoms such as a rush of adrenalin, shortness of breath, racing heart, temperature change, muscle tension, clenched fists, agitation, and shaking.

JACK: Oh yeah, like when I'm angry I clench my teeth, it causes my jaw muscles to ache.

ELI: Exactly.

JACK: I grind my teeth at night. Is that a sign?

ELI: Anger is one of the causes. And when anger is triggered it evokes some or all of these other emotions: irritation, tension, frustration, hurt, fear and rage. Those strong emotions often are the reasons people can act aggressively, out of control, and say or do something that is not normal for them, which they later regret.

JACK: Do you have an example of how it can be used correctly? I am still having trouble seeing any merits to anger.

ELI: Do you remember seeing Dr. Martin Luther King and his followers marching in Selma, Alabama during the Civil Rights Movement back in the 60's? People my age watched it on small black and white TV sets where we had to adjust the rabbit ears to get the reception just right.

JACK: Is that when they came over that bridge and all the cops, with fire hoses and guard dogs, attacked them?

ELI: That is what I was remembering. Can you imagine the courage it must have taken, walking arm-in-arm off that bridge, singing "We Shall Overcome", and marching into that sea of angry white faces?

JACK: Yeah, that would have taken guts.

ELI: Yes, I don't know if I could have been that courageous marching off the Pettis Bridge. Their basic desire was for a better life with equality and respect. The energy that propelled these courageous people was their collective anger. Black people had hundreds of years of abuse, and it was that anger that gave

them the necessary courage. This residual store of anger provided the energy they needed to demonstrate their plight to the world.

They were not armed, nor did they wish to inflict harm on those who tormented them. They used this anger to summon the courage and strength to stand up for themselves. In this case, anger was used correctly.

JACK: Okay, I never thought about that.

ELI: Mahatma Gandhi used that same collective nonviolent anger in the fight to gain independence from Great Britain after the Second World War.

So, back to my point: to have a successful relationship you need anger.

JACK: In that case, my marriage was a resounding success! I had a lot of anger!

ELI: The operative word in using anger to build relationships is correctly. What you experienced was allowing anger to destroy your love. The anger in itself was not the problem. The lack of anger management and the inappropriate expression of this anger is what doomed your relationship . . . sucked the love right out of it!

JACK: "Sucked the love out" is definitely correct. So . . . can you show me how to control my anger?

ELI: Let's discuss a time that you lost it because of your anger. Think of a time you got angry—a memorable time that you lost it

Exhibit I

T.I.E. - Anger Management Model

JACK: Okay, my teenage daughter was going to sneak out of the house one night, and her older brother tipped me off about her intentions. I waited downstairs and when she reached the door, I surprised her, and began yelling and screaming. I'll never forget the look on her face as she ran for her room . . . total fear. She shrunk into a corner with a look of absolute terror on her face.

As I look back on that experience, the sad part is the satisfaction I felt about how well I'd taught her this lesson. Time would prove that I had not, but at that moment, I was sure she would never try this again.

ELI: Jack, look at this feelings chart, and under the MAD column, tell me what emotions you were experiencing when you caught your daughter attempting to sneak out.

MAD	GLAD	SAD	FEAR	HURT
	Affection	Agonized	Anxious	Ashamed
Angry	Ardor	Bored	Apprehension	Belittled
Annoyed	Confident	Crushed	Bashful	Burdened
Antagonism	Cordiality	Deflated	Bewildered	Cheated
Arrogant	Curiosity	Depressed	Cautious	Contempt
Bitter	Delight	Disconnected	Confused	Denied
Contempt	Desire	Disparaged	Distraction	Deserted
Defiant	Devotion	Distant	Dread	Disappointed
Disapproving	Ecstasy	Distraught	Embarrassed	Dismay
Disdain	Ecstatic	Distressed	Envious	Embarrassed
Disgust	Elation	Downcast	Evasive	Exhausted
Disgusted	Enthusiasm	Forlorn	Fearful	Guilty
Enraged	Excitement	Gloomy	Flustered	Humiliated
Flustered	Fervor	Grieving	Frightened	Hurt
Frustrated	Flush	Helpless	Horrified	Insulted
Furious	Generosity	Hopeless	Hysterical	Lonely
Hostile	Happy	Ignored	Inadequate	Mean
indignant	Hope	Isolated	Insecure	Pain
Irritated	Hopeful	Jealous	Menaced	Pained
Livid	Inspiration	Melancholy	Overwhelmed	Regret
Mad	Love-Struck	Miserable	Panic	Shame
Mischievous	Passion	Mournful	Pathos	Suffering
Rage	Pride	Remorse	Shock	
Resentful	Sympathy	Sad	Shocked	
	Thrilled	Unwanted		

JACK: Angry. Disapproving. Enraged. Furious. Hostile, Rage . . . yeah, lots and lots of rage!

ELI: Now, look at the chart and see what feelings you might have had that are listed under the columns of H URT, SAD, and FEAR.

JACK: Just angry . . . really angry!

ELI: Humor me, Jack. Put yourself back in that moment and look at the FEAR column. See anything that you might have been feeling?

JACK: Okay, I was alarmed. I mean, she was a teenage girl . . . it was the dead of night.

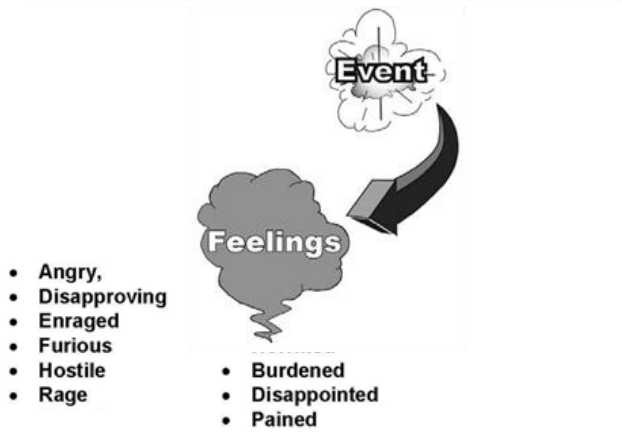
ELI: Alarm. Okay, what else? And in this discussion you don't have to explain your feelings, just identify them.

JACK: Alarmed. Fearful. Frightened. . . . Horrified. And in the HURT column: Burdened, Disappointed, and Pained. Is disrespected on this list?

ELI: No, it is not, however your experiencing disrespect is important. But let's put that aside for a few minutes. Alarmed. Fearful. Frightened. Horrified. Burdened, Disappointed, and Pained. I am going to use the T.IE. Anger Management Model and I'll explain what the "T.I.E." means later but here are the emotions you listed:

Exhibit II

T.I.E. – Anger Management Model



ELI: You had the event, your daughter trying to sneak out, and then you had the feelings. Now, if we are not careful, we tend to have a reaction.

JACK: I had a reaction all right!

ELI: When we react emotionally, we often say or do something that we later regret, and probably would not have done if we were not so emotionally charged. Exhibit III shows the reaction.

T.I.E. – Anger Management Model

Exhibit III

- Angry,
- Disapproving
- Enraged
- Furious
- Hostile
- Rage

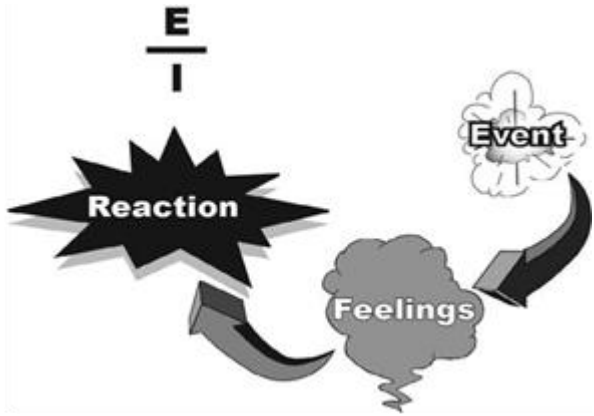
- Alarmed
- Fearful
- Frightened
- Horrified
- Burdened
- Disappointed
- Pained

JACK: I really hurt her with my reactions. . . my anger was an explosion! That is what made me realize that something was wrong with me . . . like I was some kind of a monster.

ELI: Emotional reactions can be very destructive. When we allow our emotions to control us, then we react as in "E over I" . . . Emotions over Intellect.

T.I.E. – Anger Management Model

Exhibit IV



- **Angry,**
- **Disapproving**
- **Enraged**
- **Furious**
- **Hostile**
- **Rage**

- **Alarmed**
- **Fearful**
- **Frightened**
- **Horrified**
- **Burdened**
- **Disappointed**
- **Pained**

JACK: So the "E" in this model stands for our emotions and the "I" stands for intellect—how we think?

ELI: Yes. When a person's emotions are in control, it is very similar to a person who is inebriated. For the purposes of this lesson, people who are "E over I" we are going to call "emotionally drunk". Even when a person has not had alcohol in 20 years, they still can be "emotionally" drunk when their emotions are in control.

JACK: I see. I was hurting the people I loved with my emotions so badly, they had to join me! We all were emotionally drunk.

ELI: Your love was real, but because you were not managing your emotions, the love you were trying to express came out as "Nazi nurturing."

JACK: Yes, I see. I wanted to express the nurturing love of a father, but the way it came out is not the way I wanted . . . like a Nazi Storm Trooper.

ELI: Sometimes when we are trying to do our best, we end up doing the wrong thing—often for the right reasons.

JACK: My heart says what I was trying to do was right, but my mind can't let go of the image—that look on her face. I wish I could take it all back. But I can't. Just talking about it is helping, though.

ELI: Good. Getting honest about what is in our heads and in our hearts provides some relief to the pain and shame we experienced in these situations.

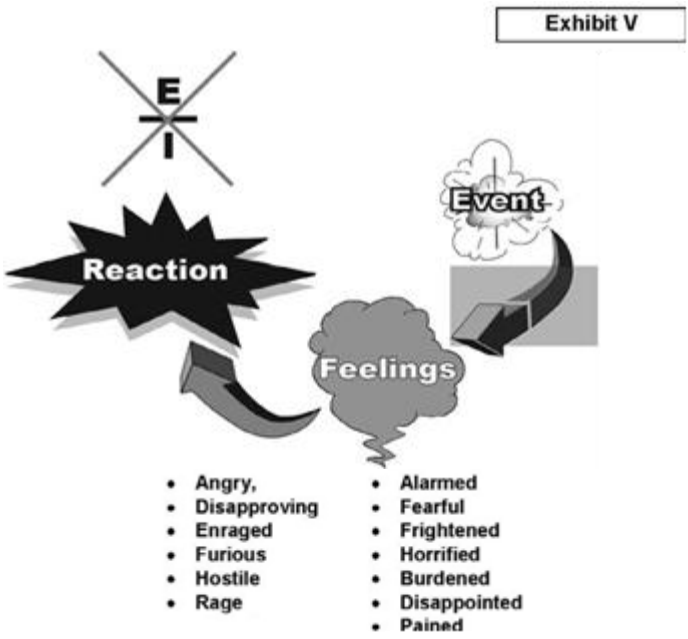
JACK: Spilling my guts helps?

ELI: Yes, honesty is very cathartic. One of the slogans of a 12-Step program is "We are as sick as our secrets." Okay, if being "E over I" is where we don't want to be, let's now discuss where we want to be.

I' m going to draw a big "X" over the E over I. (See Exhibit V)

T.I.E. – Anger Management Model

Exhibit V



ELI: Okay, tell me, what happens in your brain between the actual event and the feelings?

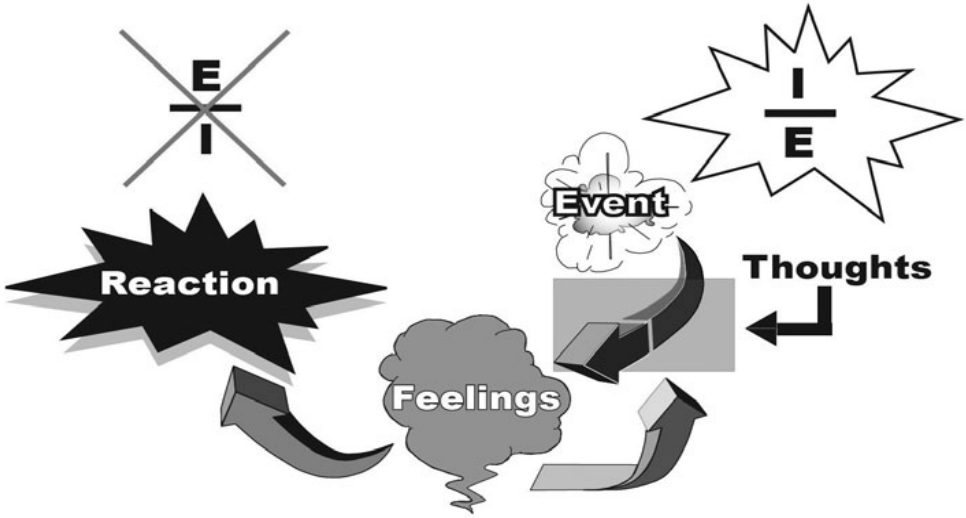
JACK: I'm not sure if I understand you. ELI: I'll put it another way: your feelings . . . your emotions, what are they based upon? What is happening in your head that is causing these feelings?

JACK: Expectations?

ELI: Close. How about thoughts? Your feelings and emotions are based upon your thoughts. Two people can witness the same event and have two different thoughts about it, which can create different emotions.

T.I.E. - Anger Management Model

Exhibit VI



- Angry,
- Disapproving
- Enraged
- Furious
- Hostile
- Rage
- Pissed

- Alarmed
- Fearful
- Frightened
- Horrified
- Burdened
- Disappointed
- Pained

JACK: So, when I have feelings, they are based upon thoughts.

ELI: Correct. Now, think back to the third grade when you studied icebergs. You found out that ninety percent of the iceberg is under the water. The expression "tip of the iceberg" refers to that part of the iceberg that's out of the water, what we can see. Emotions are like the iceberg with anger being the tip. When a person is angry, it is often the anger that is so visible and easily observed. However, beneath the anger there are other feelings driving the anger.

Take your example: in the experience you had with your daughter sneaking out, you were, by your own account very angry.

JACK: I'll say.

ELI: I wrote down the words you used to describe what you were feeling. They all were found in the MAD column. You listed, "Angry, Disapproving, Enraged, Furious, Hostile, Rage". These emotions are what your daughter observed that night. She saw your anger.

JACK: Yes.

ELI: For the purpose of this exercise, the angry feelings you expressed are the tip of the emotional iceberg. Let's ignore these emotions, and explore the feelings that were driving that strong anger reaction. What emotions are under the anger? A little while ago, I wrote down that you said you were "Alarmed, Fearful, Frightened, Horrified, Burdened, Disappointed, and Pained".

Now, take off the anger words in your list and pick out one or two of the other emotions that best describe what you were feeling that night.

JACK: Afterwards, when I reflected upon that night, it was the Pain and Shame. However, when I caught her sneaking out, well it was Fear. That is the best word to describe it—just a lot of Fear.

ELI: You felt the shame after the event, but during the sneaking out caper you felt fear. Now, in order to get to the thought, you need a certain realization and it comes in a two-part sentence.

The first part of the sentence is: our feelings do not lie to us. Whatever you are feeling . . . you are feeling! Now, I will get to the second part in a few minutes.

Some people may attempt to squash your feelings with statements such as "You're not really feeling that way!" or "You shouldn't feel that way"! The truth is, whatever you are feeling is yours and no one has the right to tell you how to feel.

JACK: I like that.

ELI: Is it okay for people to be angry?

JACK: Well, no . . . look at all the damage I caused.

ELI: Was it the anger that caused the problem, or was it how you expressed that anger?

JACK: How I expressed it.

ELI: All right then, is it okay to hurt someone when you are angry?

JACK: No.

Anger is a choice.

ELI: So, it's obvious that no one has the right to hurt someone else with their anger. Some people, however, are surprised to know that it is okay for us to be angry.

JACK: That's a shock to me!

ELI: Remember, you were born with the ability to get angry. Humans could not survive without it. You need your anger. Civilization just needs a better method for expressing this anger because hurting another person just because we have angry feelings cannot be justified. As simple as these concepts appear to be, many people have never thought it through and are confused with devastating results!

You keenly felt the destructive force of your anger, how it enslaved you with destructive results. Tell me, Jack, would you like some freedom?

JACK: Freedom? Yes.

ELI: Have you ever heard someone say, "He makes me so angry? "or "She really makes me mad?"

JACK: I say that all the time, people really can get my goat. I know people who consistently make me angry . . . like about half the drivers on the freeway.

ELI: Let me give you some wonderful information . . . some great freedom will come from knowing this.

JACK: I'm waiting.

ELI: Here it is: No one can "make" you angry! No one can "make" you mad!

JACK: Sorry, but I know some people who certainly can! My family knows my buttons and boy, can they push them!

ELI: Let me clarify what I just said. No one can make you angry without your permission. Don't get me wrong, some people give us great opportunity to be angry, especially our loved ones who know where all our buttons are located, and what reaction comes with each button they push. What I mean is that anger . . . your anger . . . is a *choice*! You can *choose* to be angry or you can *choose* not to be angry.

I remember when I first learned this profound wisdom. I did not believe it when I first heard it. I had spent forty-two years easily being angered.

So the idea that I had some degree of control over my anger was completely alien to my experiences. Even though I did not believe it, I was fortunate in that I did not discount that concept, for as life would have it, very shortly afterwards I had the chance to prove that concept for myself.

I locked my keys in the car! I felt that old rage come up inside me and I was ready to smash my car window. Looking back on my reaction, it's obvious that breaking the window didn't make sense. But at the time it was exactly what I wanted to do.

Then I somehow remembered to ask myself, "Do you really want to be angry about this, or not?" And I said, "No!" And I stopped being angry! I was then free. I knew then, that I could choose to be angry, or I could choose not to be angry. What freedom!

JACK: Wow! I never knew that I had a choice. If I can do that, if I can choose, you're right . . . that is freedom.

ELI: Okay, our time is up for today shall we make another appointment?

JACK: Can't wait.

Chapter 2

The Guiding Force of Emotions

Second counseling session—October 7th

JACK: Okay, Eli I'm back . . . ready to get my head shrunk!

ELI: Glad to have you back . . . and contrary to popular beliefs, I do not shrink heads.

JACK: I know you don't . . . just had to get my jab in early. What are we going to learn today?

ELI: Here is another simple yet profound idea. If someone else is angry, do you have to be angry?

I spent 20 years in a marriage where every time she got angry, I did too. As obvious as it seems on this side of discovery, I did not know that I had a choice to get angry or not when she did.

JACK: Me too! When she got angry, I did too.

ELI: Now for the second part of that sentence I wanted d to give you.

Your feelings do not lie to you was the first part.

To help us with the second part, try to remember a situation like this. Most people don't remember an exact instance of this, but all say they have had this experience. Have you ever had a friend that you got into an argument with, had hard feelings toward them, stomped away, and then did not speak to that person for a few days?

JACK: Of course.

ELI: Did you later discover that what you got mad about really didn't happen as you first thought?

JACK: Yeah.

ELI: Okay, when you got angry with your friend, your feelings of hurt and anger did not lie to you. However, those feelings were based upon a false thought.

Okay, the complete sentence I want you to have is: "Your feelings do not lie to you . . . however, they may be based upon one of three premises: (1) a false thought, something that is not true (2) something that is true, or (3) sometimes more information is needed."

In order to put the first and second part of the sentences together, you must understand that it is the thoughts that are driving the emotion . . . as shown in Exhibit VI. When using this sentence with our model, we can now judge our thoughts. Are they true? Are they false? Or do I need more information?

JACK: That answers my question about your feelings not lying to you.

Your feelings are true but the problem comes from thoughts that are not true. Using my example, if I feel confident, but if the thought providing that confidence is incorrect then that confidence is false and unrealistic.

ELI: Great. Once we understand what emotion(s) we are feeling, then they become our guides to recognize what thought(s) caused us those feelings.

JACK: I follow you.

Your feelings do not lie to you;
however, they may be based upon a false thought,
or a true thought,
or based upon incomplete information.

ELI: When using this technique, the emotions are the guide to discovering the thought driving the emotion. This allows decisions based upon logic and intellect instead of raw emotion. Just wallowing in feelings is being emotionally drunk. However, if we acknowledge and identify the emotions, they can return us to the thoughts that are creating the emotions.

A person's internal radar set is working when their emotions guide them back to the thoughts creating the emotions. Thoughts are the home of logic where better decisions are made.

JACK: So I can use my radar set to guide me?

ELI: Exactly. Now let's go back to that episode of your daughter sneaking out. What thoughts were driving that intense feeling of fear you had? Why were you afraid?

JACK: Well, she's a young kid, a girl, sneaking out in the middle of the night, to what I haven't a clue, but I can imagine. I'm guessing there was some boy involved.

I was trying to protect her. I thought if I could scare her, then maybe she wouldn't want to sneak out like that.

ELI: When I first asked you about your feelings concerning that night, if you remember, you said "disrespect"?

JACK: And you said to ignore it for a while.

ELI: Now it is time to add it to your list of thoughts. Did you think your daughter sneaking out was disrespectful of you?

JACK: Yes, most definitely.

ELI: So, while your thoughts were about her getting hurt and wanting to protect her, you also thought she was disrespecting you.

JACK: Yeah, that's it.

ELI: Challenge those thoughts: were they true thoughts, false thoughts, or did you need more information?

JACK: They are all true.

ELI: Once the emotions have guided you to your thought, you can challenge and judge your thoughts. When this is occurring, you have arrived at "I over E", Intellect over Emotions. Your rational mind is now managing your emotions. You are not emotionally drunk and reacting. You can now know what thoughts were driving your feelings.

JACK: So . . . our emotions can guide us to the thoughts that are the driving force of our behavior.

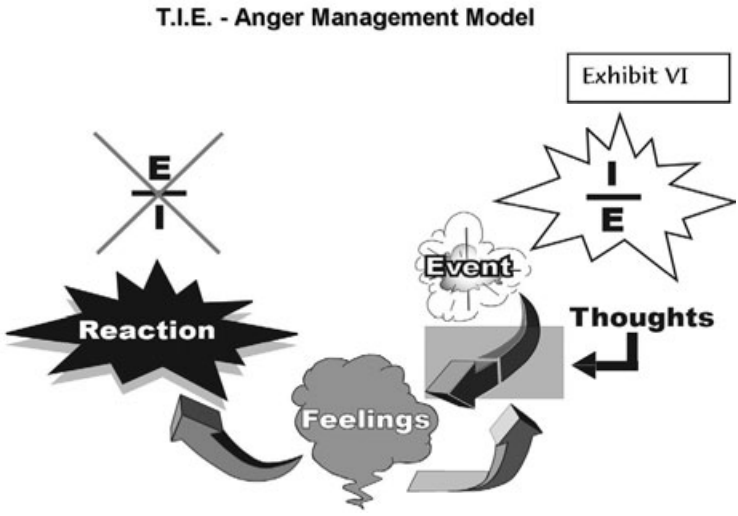
ELI: Well said.

JACK: Looking at the T.I.E. Model, I think I could have reacted differently if my rational mind were in control. (See Exhibit VI)

ELI: Most people have the same realization.

When you are in your rational mind, you are able to challenge your thinking. You can ask, "Is this thought true? Is it false? Do I need more information?"

"Is the thought that my daughter could face unknown dangers sneaking out at night a true thought, a false thought, or do I need more information?"



JACK: I think my thoughts on that night were absolutely true!

ELI: Now you can decide what to do about it. In your rational mind, you have the ability to make calm and well thought-out choices. When emotionally drunk you often act on impulse and the results are, at best, suspect.

JACK: "Suspect?" You have a gentle way of saying I screwed up . . . completely overreacted!

ELI: Are you sometimes too hard on yourself?

JACK: Most of the time. And usually I deserve it!

ELI: Are you now "emotionally drunk" about yourself?

JACK: Own! That hurts . . . but it's true.

ELI: In our rational minds, we can now challenge our thoughts. Just then, what feeling did you have about yourself?

JACK: Anger, bitterness, disgust, contempt, hate, you want more?

ELI: What thoughts are driving that hate? What is the hate based upon?

JACK: I'm a no good SOB! I screwed up my marriage, screwed up my kids, I'm worthless . . .I can't do anything right!

ELI: Let's challenge that. What part of screwing up your marriage is true?

JACK: She left me, didn't she? I must be worthless, discarded trash! That's what she thinks, that's what I think.

ELI: In the light of day, were all the problems of your marriage your fault? Were you, alone, responsible for the negativity your children received?

JACK: Of course it wasn't my entire fault, but I'm the man in the family, and I should have handled it differently.

ELI: Therefore, what is bothering you is the way you handled it.

JACK: Yeah, my behavior.

ELI: If you had to do it over again, would you have done it the same way?

JACK: No, of course not.

ELI: Now that you are in your rational mind and you can make a better determination, ask yourself: "What part of this problem is mine and what do I need to work on? What part is someone else's problem, and what part are they responsible for changing?"

When you do that, it allows you to have the freedom . . . the freedom to change.

JACK: I think I get it. Get out of being emotionally drunk . . . towards myself . . . and instead get into my rational mind. When I am emotionally sober, I can make decisions based upon facts and not emotional reactions.

ELI: "Boom goes the dynamite!"

JACK: Funny! Where did that come from?

ELI: Will Smith, the actor, say it when he made a mistake; I think it sounds kind of cool.

JACK: "Boom goes the dynamite" . . . sounds like my anger explosion!

ELI: The three parts of this model are as follows; Feeling, Thoughts, and Action.

What am I feeling? What thoughts are driving those feelings? What am I going to do about it?

Let me tell you a couple of stories about "I over E". A young man who came to see me had stolen a jet ski, and his parents thought it would be a good idea if he had some counseling before appearing before the judge. One of the topics we worked on was this exact model. The judge sentenced him to thirty days in the juvenile justice system. After his release, he came back to see me and told me this story.

He said that for most of his life, his coping skills could best be described as "E over I"—emotionally drunk. He knew, in the juvenile facility his poor coping skills would cause him more problems that he did not want.

Instead of his normal emotionally drunk behavior, when confronted by potentially destructive emotions and reacting in an emotionally drunk manner; he repeated this phrase to himself again and again: "I over E" . . ."I over E" . . ."I over E". That mantra was successful for that young man, and I'm sure he wouldn't mind if you used it as your reminder not to become emotionally drunk.

JACK: If I just say it over and over, will it really work?

ELI: It has worked for many others. Here is the other story; a couple came to me because of anger issues with their son. In their first visit, I found out that Mom had an anger problem as well as Dad. Junior learned it from two experts! I made an appointment with Dad on a Thursday and scheduled Junior on Friday afternoon. In Dad's session, we worked on the "I over E" model.

The next morning I got a phone call from Dad. That night, Junior had pitched one of his famous temper tantrums, physically attacked his mother, and was arrested for his behavior. As Dad described how out of control his son was, and that his wife was right in the middle, he told me that he was amazingly calm . What kept him calm was repeating the mantra to himself, "I over E". That simple saying worked wonders for him!

Later that afternoon when I visited with Junior, I showed him this same model, and then asked, "Do you think, "I over E", will work for you? In his seventeen-year-old wisdom, he said, "No!"

I said, "Last night was rough for you."

He responded with, "Yeah, I didn't mean to hurt my mother, but she made me so mad!" As he described this incident, his pent up emotions kicked in and he got angry all over again.

When I asked what his mother was doing, he said, "She was in my face, yelling, and I was hollering back".

When I asked him what Dad was doing, a strange look came over his face. Junior replied, "He was calm!"

"Oh, so he was calm?" I reiterated "And is he usually like?" Junior was again animated and said, "Oh, he'd be in my face, yelling, pushing me . . . just daring me to hit him."

I asked, "Do you know what he was thinking then?"

He said, "No, what?"

I said, "He was thinking . . .'I over E'"!

A smile of recognition came over his face and let loose with a big smile. He finally got it.

So Jack, this simple little formula works when it is used. You always have the ability to be "emotionally drunk". However, when you can add "I over E" to your emotional toolbox, now you have another choice.

JACK: Wow, so it really does work!

ELI: It worked for that family. Nine months later, I had the occasion to ask Dad if he was still emotionally sober. He grinned and said, "Yes, sober . . . although I had a few buzzes!"

JACK: Emotional buzz, I live with a perpetual emotional buzz!

ELI: I hope you now know you have a choice. Do you want to live with an emotional buzz or be emotionally sober? It's your choice.

JACK: I've been emotionally drunk for over forty years, I think I'll try being emotionally sober for the next forty. When I'm eighty then I can decide which worked better for me!

ELI: One last story: A client who works for a building supply store said that on a frustrating day, with many more customers than salespeople, he was at the register besieged with a myriad of different demands. He was quietly saying aloud to himself "I over E" . . . "I over E" in his attempt to stay emotionally sober.

A puzzled customer looked at him and asked, "Instrumentation over Electrical?" My client laughed to himself, and then said, "Yeah, I'm hoping we have a big sale in those departments".

JACK: Many people seem to be getting benefits from "I over E." I sure hope I do.

ELI: You will.

JACK: So in reality this technique is not just for anger management. It can be used for all feelings?

ELI: Absolutely. Recently, a client told me of her irritation toward her aging mother when her mom repeated herself. We put this experience through this same model and discovered that under the feeling of irritation, this woman was feeling fear. Once she understood it was fear driving her irritation, she then discovered the thought causing the fear. She realized it was when her mother showed her age, she knew someday soon she was going to lose her mother, her mother was going to die. That thought scared her. Her irritation was really a misdirected expression of love that came out as irritation and impatience toward her mother.

JACK: I guess that is like the Nazi nurturing you talked about, having loved come out in hurtful ways.

I can see my time is up for today. But before I go, I'm going to give myself a homework assignment and try this "I over E" tool. See you next week.

ELI: I look forward to hearing how it turns out.

We are as sick as our secrets.
12-Step slogan

Chapter 3

Fingers vs. Thumbs

Third counseling session — October 15th

JACK: Good morning, what's in store for today?

ELI: How did your homework work out? Did you use the "I over E" since our last session?

JACK: I thought about it . . . but only after I lost it.

ELI: Tell me what happened.

JACK: I got so angry with my son. He stole about three hundred dollars from me.

ELI: So you got angry.

JACK: Yeah, don't I have the right to get angry when someone steals from me?

ELI: Just because we are learning to manage our emotions doesn't take away our right to have emotions.

JACK: Well, I had all of them and then invented a few emotions of my own. I was so shocked and disappointed. When I found out what he had done, I changed the locks on the apartment.

ELI: You made a statement to him that his behavior was not acceptable.

JACK: Is that what I did? I wanted to hit him.

ELI: But you didn't.

JACK: No.

ELI: What made you think you "lost it"?

JACK: I was hollering and screaming, ranting and raving like a mad man. Then I remembered "I over E".

ELI: And what happened then?

JACK: That's when I calmed down and had the locks changed.

ELI: So you didn't use this model perfectly, you didn't remember until after you "lost it".

JACK: Yeah.

ELI: Jack, I think you had a successful learning experience. Often it's when we fall down that we begin to learn. Isn't that how you learned to ride a bike . . . by falling down?

JACK: Well, I guess you're right because after that incident, every time I started to lose it, your voice popped into my mind and I could hear you saying, "I over E". . . "I over E". . . "I over E". And it was just as you said with that little saying, I could now choose whether I wanted to lose it or not! Amazing!

ELI: Good, I am glad it worked for you.

JACK: I also realized that this technique is good for managing any emotion, not just anger.

ELI: You got it.

JACK: Where did this T.I.E. Anger Management System come from?

ELI: I believe the basic format came from a Divorce Adjustment Seminar I attended in Houston, Texas. Where they got it I don't know. I've modified and added to it over the years.

JACK: Where does T.I.E. mean?

ELI: Oh, my friend Bill Schulenberg thought up that name. It stands for: "Think I over E as in T.I.E.

JACK: I feel much more empowered. Now I can make this anger thing work for me instead of against me.

ELI: You are much more powerful when managing your emotions. Today, we are going to work on: Half the battle of life.

JACK: Excuse me?

ELI: This one sentence I'm about to give you, contains a technique that helps people achieve a successful life, all this in one short sentence.

JACK: That's a promise I'd like to see you fulfill.

ELI: There is a little catch, however.

JACK: I thought as much.

ELI: The catch is . . . you'll have to change. You'll have to incorporate this little sentence, or mantra, into your thinking, and live the message as part of your coping skills, if you want the full benefit.

JACK: Okay, I'm game.

ELI: Here's the sentence . . . drum roll please . . .
JACK: Rat-ta-tat, rat-ta-tat, rat-ta-tat, rat-ta-tat.

ELI: "My Life Will Change When I Change."™ Although I was not the first person to make that statement, I thought it summed up my life's motto so well that I had it trademarked.

JACK: Really?

ELI: Not that I wanted exclusive rights to that coping skill, I just wanted to market the life changes I advocated under a unifying statement.

JACK: It is a powerful statement.

ELI: That little sentence is at least one-half of the battle of life. And as in most simple concepts, there is a great deal of hidden depth within the application. In the mental health field, the definition of this concept is known as "Locus of Control".

ELI: A person with an external "Locus of Control" thinks their success and their happiness is somewhere outside of themselves. All romantic notions are predicated on some prince in shining armor, or a fair damsel, will bring us the happiness we seek. As wonderful as this person may be, no other human being can bring us happiness.

When we find a wonderful person who makes us happy, we marry them, and live happily ever after, right?

JACK: Yeah, right!

ELI: And this happiness happens just like our culture promises . . . for a while anyway . . . then reality sets in!

JACK: Yeah, I know about reality. My roommate, John Williams, is a songwriter and one of his lyrics is, "When reality hits, it's not always what we want it to be." I know I did not make my wife happy, yet I think that she married me because she thought I would make her happy.

ELI: That is not uncommon. In fact, I would say it is true in most cases. Were you ever able to make your wife happy?

JACK: I did for the first three days of our marriage, and then reality set in. I failed and she got angry, and then stayed angry for twenty years.

ELI: That is a long time. At the beginning of our discussion, didn't you take all the blame for the breakup of the marriage?

JACK: Yeah, I did. Just as she thought, I should make her happy.

Now that I think about it, I assumed that was my job . . . to make her happy. I got irritated when I disappointed her, and then she got angry, so I got angry. Kind of screwed up, weren't we?

ELI: Until we step back and look at the system we're in, it's very hard to see what is happening. Screwed up? I'd say your pattern is unfortunately all too normal. We humans are locked into these patterns of expectations and disappointments. And whom do we attack if they don't come true?

JACK: The people we love the most . . . I know that answer!

ELI: When the happily-ever-after fairy tale explodes, Prince Charming and the Fair Damsel come to me for marriage counseling . . . often too late. Boiled down, their basic complaint is that "He is not making me happy." Or, "She is not living up to my expectations of the magical bliss her feminine wiles so promised." They point at one another and declare, "Not fair. This person I married is not making me happy!"

They don't use those particular words, but underneath many matrimonial discords are these exact thoughts.

JACK: You've hit the nail on the head.

ELI: I am labeling this behavior "finger pointing". It happens when we look outside of ourselves, pointing the finger and shifting the blame. Their finger pointing is a perfect example of an "External Locus of Control". With this mindset, their happiness is invested outside of themselves in someone else.

JACK: We did a lot of finger pointing!

ELI: Easy to do. Another way of saying that is "taking someone else's inventory".

JACK: Like saying, "You know what your problem is . . . !"

ELI: Good example. We bring our empty bucket of unmet needs to another and expect them to fill it. As wonderful as this person may be, they are inadequate to fill our empty bucket. They can dash some water in it, or sprinkle in a few raindrops, but they are incapable of filling that bucket.

We had these expectations of how wonderful life was going to be and that failed to be realized.

JACK: I tend to get down on myself when I fail.

ELI: Do you see yourself as making a mistake, or do you see it as being a mistake?

JACK: Oh, I see that I am a mistake, but maybe that is really not correct, is it?

ELI: There is a big difference between the two, as divergent as the difference in being sad and happy.

JACK: That makes sense. I expected to make her happy, she expected me to make her happy, and when I did not, I saw myself as a failure, and she certainly saw me as a failure.

ELI: One of the wonderful sayings found in 12- Step programs is "Expectations are resentments under construction!"

JACK: That's a good one.

ELI: And how do we express our dissatisfaction . . . this pervasive feeling of unrequited needs?

JACK: With anger of course!

ELI: That is a normal reaction and we often express this as destructive rage.

The opposite of finger pointing is looking at us! Turning it around and pointing our thumbs at ourselves. This is an "Internal Locus of Control" as in, "My Life Will Change . . . When I Change." ™ This paradigm shift from external to internal, from finger pointing to thumb declaration is the hardest work we have to do. However, like most hard work, it is incredibly rewarding. I call this "Thumb Work".

JACK: So, Finger Work creates resentment and Thumb Work makes changes, right?

ELI: Well said. Now think of a person you have conflict with. Get someone firmly in mind. For most of us, that is easy to do.

JACK: Yeah, I'll focus on my ex-wife. She certainly fits the description of "difficult".

ELI: So, we'll label her a "difficult person". Now, what would happen if you changed this label?

JACK: Changed it to what?

ELI: Changed your description of this "difficult person" to . . . "your teacher"?

JACK: Seeing the Wicked Witch of the West as my teacher?

ELI: Yes, what would happen if you were to make this change and start seeing this so-called difficult person as someone who has something to teach you? Would there be a shift in your attitude?

JACK: My "ex" as my teacher? Yeah, if I made that change, I would see our relationship differently.

ELI: Would you have come in to see me if your relationship with her had not turned out like it did?

JACK: No, certainly not, I would not have come to counseling otherwise.

I guess you could say I was desperate when I walked through your door.

ELI: If she had not been the person she was, and if the breakup did not hurt so much, would you be here today?

JACK: No, it took the breakup to open my eyes.

ELI: Very good, Jack . . . Well, it's all the time we have for today . . . See you next week.

Focus on Thumbs,
not Fingers

Chapter 4

Radar Set

Fourth counseling session—October 21st

ELI: Comfortable, Jack? Okay . . . at birth, everyone gets a radar set called "feelings". Most people have never been taught to use this internal radar set. Many of us are unaware that we even have one!

Did you see the movie, Titanic? JACK: Who didn't?

ELI: The Titanic did not have radar, and ran into the iceberg with disastrous results. Not knowing how to use our radar . . . our feelings, causes us to run into life's icebergs. When we do not know how to use our emotions, we, like the Titanic, sink into the Sea of Despair.

The feeling language has five main words: Mad, Sad, Glad, Hurt, and Fear.

JACK: You remember, at our first session, when you first asked what I was feeling? I had a hard time identifying what I was experiencing. I think I was numb then. However, last night when I was returning from my AL-Anon meeting, I was crying big alligator tears.

There is so much pain in my life now. I do not often cry, but the strange part is that at the same time, I experienced a sense of joy or gladness. Isn't that weird? How can you have two completely different feelings at the same time?

ELI: You were feeling hurt and joy at the same time?

JACK: Yeah.

ELI: Were you emotionally numb at that time?

JACK: No, I had all strong feelings coming out all over.

ELI: Did you feel alive when you were numb?

JACK: Ah, now that I think about it, no. When I went numb it was like a color TV that suddenly changed to black and white.

ELI: So you were feeling pain last night?

JACK: Yeah. When I was numb, the pain wasn't so acute, but last night it was very painful. I felt the pain. I wasn't hiding anymore. Is that what it was? I was actually feeling my feelings. I felt alive! That was so much different from being numb. I felt the joy of now being alive . . . it was such a relief.

ELI: Wow! You allowed yourself to feel the pain, to become real, and you felt alive.

JACK: Yeah, numb no more!

ELI: It all started with those five words of the feeling language.
JACK: Mad, Glad, Sad, Fear, and Hurt.

ELI: You're learning well! The path of internal discovery is to claim our self-love, Self-worth begins with the Locus of Control pointed inward, thumb work. The portal to this inward journey is through the doorway of emotions.

JACK: Being emotionally numb kept me moving in the wrong direction, not real, not alive, and especially for me, incredibly unhappy.

ELI: You got it.

All decisions involve a large component of emotions often either overlooked or not dealt with. Just witness the stock market gyrations. Its excessive highs and lows are guided by either unbridled euphoria or the "sky is falling" fear mentality, neither proving true over time. These reactions are led by the feelings of euphoria or fear.

JACK: I lost a bunch of money in the stock market when Chicken Little cried, "The sky is falling", and I believed that damned chicken.

ELI: You had a lot of company.

I helped Gulf Coast petrochemical company's employees in their Louisiana refinery to improve their plant culture by changing from the command/control style to one that increased employee empowerment, responsibility, and communications. In a meeting with their senior directors, I asked them what they were feeling about the concept of empowering their employees.

JACK: You asked managers to express their feelings? I can't picture that. What response did you get?

ELI: Many expressed thoughts as opposed to feelings, as to why this will never work. But one got honest with the answer, "Stark raving fear!" Once that honest emotion was expressed, it gave everyone else permission to be emotionally honest. Then these managers began to deal with their fears.

JACK: I'd like to have been a fly on that wall!

ELI: Since all decisions involve a large component of emotions, often the very feelings that are driving these decisions lack acknowledgment, lack expression. The results are reactions to these hidden feelings rather than the cool calculated thought process. When emotions are not dealt with they are exhibited in unintentional and destructive behavior.

Knowing we have this hidden radar set capable of navigating through life is a powerful realization. When we begin to acknowledge our emotions, our radar set, and understand how it operates, we then have a powerful guidance system.

JACK: I guess I'll have to dig out the manual to my radar set!

ELI: Very good, Jack. Well, our time is up. See you next week.

Acknowledge feelings;
use your radar set.

Chapter 5

Command Phrases

Fourth counseling session—October 22nd

ELI: Okay, Jack, let's go back to the anger model again, and talk about command phrases. . . what we tell ourselves about a situation.

JACK: Sounds like self-talk, which I do a lot. Usually what I tell myself is negative.

ELI: Well, this time we have the power of decisions based upon knowledge, not *knee—jerk* reactions.

There are several categories of command language: withdrawal, outward, divert, internalize, and healthy.

Withdrawal is hiding from the threat, running away, or the inability to address the problem directly.

Withdrawal command phrases are expressed like this:

- "I can't deal with this"
- "This is dangerous"
- "I'm being attacked"
- "Let me out of here"

JACK: Like saying, "I'm out of here", or threatening to leave someone?

ELI: Exactly. Making threats you have no intention of carrying out, using them as a method to control others . . . for example, when couples use the threat of divorce to win the argument.

JACK: You nailed me . . . guilty on that count.

ELI: The outward focus is directing the energy toward another person and becoming the aggressor.

Outward command phrases may sound like this:

- "I'll show him"
- "You can't push me around"
- "It's not fair"
- "That #%@*$ jerk"
- "I hate him"
- I'll show her"

Another command phrase tactic is changing the subject, or ignoring the attack. This is attempting to divert, diffuse, or keep the energy from focusing.

Diverting command phrases often sound like this:

- "Can't you take a joke?"
- "I was only kidding"
- "My stomach hurts"

JACK: Oh, that is what she and I would do! We would make jokes about one another that were hurtful, and when the other would complain, we'd say "I was only kidding", or "What's the matter with you, don't you have a sense of humor?" Actually, they were verbal barbs. Were those expressions of anger?

ELI: What do you think?

JACK: I think they were. We weren't expressing our anger toward one another directly. Instead, we used this hurtful humor to express ourselves, throwing anger spears at one another.

ELI: Okay, the next category of command phrases is getting angry with you, resulting in self-abuse expressed as inner anger.

Self-abuse command phrases often take this form:

- "I'm wrong"
- "I'm no good"
- "I can't do anything right"
- "No one cares"
- "I always screw up"
- "No one could love me"

JACK: Playing the victim, I've done that.

ELI: Did it work?

JACK: I was a great victim, until now I could not understand why she said she lost respect for me. When she said that, it hurt more than when she told me we were through.

ELI: So what you're telling me, when you acted like a victim, she lost respect for you.

JACK: She never put it in those terms, and at that time I didn't see it that way, but yeah, that makes sense.

ELI: Your being a victim drove your wife away?

JACK: Yeah, that and my anger. Sad isn't it?

ELI: Very sad.

Now, contrast the first four categories of command language: withdrawal, outward, divert, and internalize with this last one, the healthy.

JACK: Healthy . . . that has a nice ring to it.

ELI: Yes, it's something we all are striving for. In the midst of your worst day when you screamed at your daughter, you were really trying to do the right thing.

JACK: I don't quite believe you, but man, do I want to! Wait a minute, if I accept that I really was trying to do the right thing, and then I would begin forgiving myself. Wow!

ELI: Good insight. Don't reject that notion of self-forgiveness; allow it to bubble through your consciousness.

JACK: Pardon?

ELI: It's an expression, but yeah, let it bubble through your thought process.

JACK: I'm bubbling!

ELI: Okay, since we are now talking about healthy, when a person's intellect is managing their emotions, as in "I over E", the reaction is different. There is a calmness tempered with understanding.

Healthy command phrases sound like this:

- "Tell me more"
- "I understand"
- "Let's talk about that"
- "That must have upset you"

JACK: Those sound so much more peaceful than the angry reactions. I was so good at.

ELI: Think about when President Kennedy was shot, or when the Challenger blew up, or 9-11? You probably can remember what you were doing, where you were, and what was said when you heard about at least one of these tragic events.

JACK: Sure can.

ELI: Most everyone can remember those traumatic events with great clarity. During 9-11, did you have strong emotions when you saw people jumping out of windows, the Twin Towers collapsing, and witnessing the fatigue on the firefighters' faces?

JACK: I can remember exactly what I was doing that morning. Why is that? And yeah, I had very strong emotions . . . anger, rage, shock, disgust were just a few.

ELI: Traumatic events create strong feelings and lead to emotional learning. These strong feelings glue the experience forever into memory. We do not forget those events. What happens to these command phrases you say to yourself in the heat of your anger?

JACK: They are also "glued" into your memory. I love that, "glued" into memory. That's rich.

ELI: Yes, they enter the unconscious mind as facts!

JACK: Is that what you called emotional learning?

ELI: Exactly. Now go back to that terrible night you described to me when your daughter tried to sneak out. Do you recall what

you told me you were feeling? I've written it down if you'd like me to recall it for you.

JACK: Please do, I'd really like to forget that night . . . but I guess I can't.

ELI: Let's see . . . under the Mad feelings you were "angry, disapproving, enraged, furious, hostile, feeling rage, and under the other feelings you were "alarmed, fearful, frightened, horrified, hurt, burdened, disappointed, and in pain", sound right?

JACK: Yeah.

ELI: Often when emotionally drunk we are . . . RUI . . . "Reacting under the Influence"!

JACK: Oh, clever, not D U I —*Driving Under the Influence* but RUI—*Reacting Under the Influence*. Yeah, I spent a lot of time there.

ELI: When you were RUI, what were you saying to yourself when you were so full of emotions?

JACK: Like self-talk?

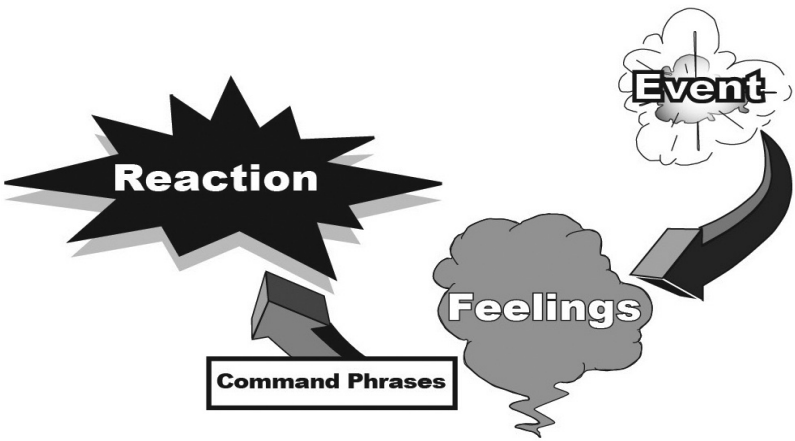
ELI: Yes.

JACK: "She can't do this to me!" "I'll teach her to have no respect for me!" "She thinks she runs this family but she doesn't!"

ELI: Let me write them into our model under the command phrase.

T.I.E. – Anger Management Model

Exhibit VII



- She can't do this to me!
- I'll teach her not to disrespect me!
- She thinks she runs this family but she doesn't!

ELI: All of these statements fit into the Outward Focus category.

JACK: Yeah, and oh, one I just thought of . . . man, it's hard to say. This hurts even to recall. I was thinking my wife to proud of me on how well I handled this. Remember, she had lost respect for me.

ELI: You were handling this. . . protecting your daughter, and expecting your wife would be pleased with what a good father you were?

JACK: Yeah, sick wasn't it. Man, until this moment, I never thought of that.

ELI: Let me say it another way. Your best attempt to show love for your daughter and wife turned out disastrous.

JACK: Yeah, neither felt love.
ELI: How do you feel right now?

JACK: Sick . . . with lots of regret and shame. Hurt. Yeah, I feel hurt.

ELI: Hurt and pain. Sometimes we have to understand it differently before we can allow healing to happen.

JACK: I guess the results are what I am experiencing now. Kind of like a hangover after being emotionally drunk.

ELI: Well, said. So, using your hangover analogy, you now have a bad headache and are sick to your stomach with regret.

JACK: Yeah, I look forward to that healing you promised, although I don't see how they can forgive me or how I can forgive myself.

ELI: Actually you are working on forgiveness right now.

JACK: I am? How?

ELI: The forgiveness process has three parts. The first part is saying the words, admitting your error, and asking for forgiveness. The second part, and perhaps the hardest, is to be willing to listen to how your behavior affects the other person. That takes broad shoulders and not everyone is willing to endure that experience. I hope you have the opportunity to listen to them.

JACK: I would like that opportunity to make my amends, and I am now willing to listen to how my behavior made them feel. Yes, I'm ready. But you said I'm already working on forgiveness. How's that?

ELI: The third part of forgiveness, which you are working on, is to change behavior.

JACK: Making amends is not only saying the words but also being willing to listen, and then changing behavior.

ELI: You've got it.

JACK: Simple, but not easy. Do you think they will listen to what I was feeling?

ELI: They won't until you listen to them, will they?

JACK: Did you think up this concept of the command phrases?

ELI: No, they came from the book *How to Solve Problems and Prevent Trouble,* by Richard Wetherill.

JACK: Who came up with the "I over E" theory?

ELI: I don't know the author, but I learned the basics of it in a seminar. Over the years, I've added several parts to this model. When I read about the command phrases, they begged to be included in the model, so I borrowed them from Mr. Wetherill.

Okay, see you next week, Jack.

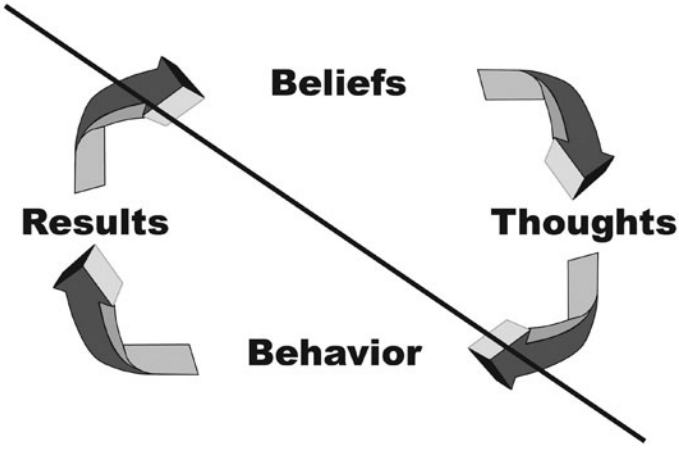
Chapter 6

Beliefs—Behavior Continuum

Sixth counseling session—November 7th

Beliefs – Behavior Continuum

Exhibit VIII



ELI: Good to see you, Jack. Let's start this session with the BBC Model. The bottom left half of this figure is obvious to most people. . . from behavior comes results. A student, who studies hard, attends classes, pays attention, will usually perform with greater results than one who goofs off. For the most part, this is a fact of life; the rewards belong to those who behave in a certain manner. Good behavior gets good results and bad behaviors are equally rewarding but with negative results.

JACK: Why is it called BBC?

ELI: Oh, that stands for *Beliefs—Behavior Continuum*. It's a collection of several other people's work such as Patrick Carnes and his Addictive Cycle, and Albert Ellis with his Rational Emotive Therapy. Like this one, so many theories are based upon other people's work. We each add a little more to the knowledge base.

JACK: So results follow behavior, what's the rest of this model?

ELI: Everyone has certain beliefs about life, their worldview. This view is based upon their education, experiences, parental messages, and their own thought processes. These beliefs tend to dictate their thinking. Faulty belief systems tend to cause faulty thinking. Beliefs based upon truth drastically improve thinking. Tying it all together, human behavior is based upon how a person thinks. A man sat upon a cactus and suffered the consequence of thorns. When asked why he did that he replied "It seemed like a good idea at the time!"

JACK: I know that cactus!

ELI: Yeah, we're trying to get those thorns out of your butt!

JACK: Thanks, I feel better already!

ELI: You're welcome. Now, to complete the cycle, the result of the behavior reinforces a person's belief system.

JACK: I get it. Until that belief system is challenged, the cycle continues, it doesn't matter if it is correct or not. We believe it is so because it fits our worldview.

ELI: Great. Now here's an example: take the elephant at the circus, when they are not performing they are kept outside the tent with a rope tied around one of their legs and anchored to

the ground with a large stake. Just looking at that elephant, it would be logical to assume an animal that strong could break the rope, but they don't, how come?

JACK: Don't know.

ELI: When the elephant was a baby the same rope was tied to the same leg. The baby tugged and tugged on the rope but was not strong enough to break it. One day it learned that no matter how hard it pulled on the rope it was stuck. On that day, the baby elephant knew that when tied to a rope, escape was impossible.

JACK: What leg?

ELI: Now I really don't know, let's say the left one.

JACK: I'm pulling your chain; you're easy to do that with.

ELI: Yes, you are good at that. Some people are and you're one of them. You evidently have my combination!

JACK: Got you irritated?

ELI: Is it that obvious?

JACK: Are you "I over E" now?

ELI: I am now, and thanks for the reminder that I still need to work on the control of my own anger.

JACK: Control or management?

ELI: Management. You're learning very fast. Here . . . you hold the clipboard and be the therapist. I'll be the client.

Another example: When my nineteen-year-old son helped me give a talk to a singles group, I planned to use this model and showed it to him. After I explained the model, he said, "Oh, I know how that works. When I was ten, you told me I couldn't save money."

Sheepishly, I said, "I did?" And he said, "Yeah, you did." Although I did not remember the incident, I knew what he said was true. In my frustration with his ten-year-old lack of fiscal responsibility, I probably said that. What a message! Here was the man who he respected, and who loved him, making that statement. Dad said it, and then it must be true!

With that firmly embedded in his belief system, his thoughts were all about spending. And since thoughts dictate behavior, he never let a nickel stay long enough to burn a hole in his pocket. What was the result of spending everything he had? He was constantly broke! That result reinforced his belief system, that he could not save money.

When he told me that, I declared in my most emphatic voice: "Son, I was dead wrong, I truly believe you can save money!" Ten years later, he was laid off at his job. He did not call me for help because he used his SAVINGS!

JACK: Man, it sounds like you screwed up your kids as badly as I did mine! Then again, you had a chance and corrected that mistake.

ELI: Where do you think my wisdom comes from? It's from what I've done wrong and the lessons learned because of those mistakes. What I do now as a therapist is penance for all the harm I've done. It is my way of apologizing and making amends. Maybe, just maybe, I can help someone else avoid hurting

someone. And when that happens, I can add a little more forgiveness toward myself.

JACK: I really appreciate what you just said. You're not perfect and have much regret, just like me.

ELI: More than you know, my friend.

JACK: Maybe I can forgive myself.

ELI: I know you can. If I can, I know you can!

JACK: I want to believe you.

ELI: Trust the process, keep working, and it'll happen.

JACK: Trust the process?

ELI: Yeah, trust the process!

Now think of the command phrases you used in the anger example. As I recall, it was: "She can't do this to me! I'll teach her to disrespect me! She thinks she runs this family but she doesn't!"

JACK: And don't forget "My wife will respect me for the way I'm handling this."

ELI: How could I forget?

JACK: Remember, we have established that you are not perfect!

ELI: Yes, I'm not perfect. Definitely not. Not Gandhi, Lincoln, or MLK.

JACK: Human.

ELI: Yeah. I've committed more than my share of mistakes.

JACK: You don't have a retro-spectra-scope?

ELI: If I had one, knowing me back then, I would not have used it!

See, I knew better. I had the answers. If you don't believe me, just ask me and I'll set you straight.

But let's get back . . . those command phrases were embedded into your belief system in the moments of strong emotions. Your subconscious mind now has those command phrases as your truth.

JACK: So that is why what I think is real . . . because it is embedded in my emotional memory?

ELI: Exactly.

Like when we are angry with our boss and call him a "jerk" under our breath. In our subconscious mind, over time and with repetition, that definition becomes a belief about him. Then whenever we think about the boss, our subconscious mind searches for his image and comes up with the belief that says, "Jerk!" If that belief were strongly held, how would it affect the way we interact with him?

JACK: I would expect him to be a jerk and would look for evidence that proves my belief.

ELI: You got it! When we are emotionally drunk, what we say to ourselves and to others often has lasting and sometimes devastating effects.

JACK: Wow! All the horrible messages I've given to those I love. My gut hurts!

ELI: Words are powerful, especially when they affect those who are close to us.

JACK: I need to go home and lick my wounds.

ELI: Think about that for a moment. If you are operating out of excessive guilt . . . are you emotionally sober or emotionally drunk?

JACK: I see what you are saying . . . not forgiving myself keeps me emotionally drunk.

ELI: That is correct. . . shall we make another appointment?

JACK: Absolutely!

Chapter 7

Smorgasbord

Seventh counseling session—November 12th

JACK: Okay, I'm back for another lesson. What's on the menu today?

ELI: Funny you should ask. Today I have a banquet for you. It's a smorgasbord of some other wonderful anger management tools you can use while you count to ten.

JACK: I love smorgasbord; did you know I'm one-half Swedish?

ELI: Really, so am I.

Okay, now let's start with the appetizer. How do you breathe when you are angry? How do you breathe when you are anxious?

JACK: Breathe? . . . When I'm angry or anxious . . . hmmm . . . it's with short and quick breaths . . . almost a pant. Sometimes, if I'm mad enough I don't breathe at all!

ELI: That's right, when someone is angry they breathe shallow and rapidly. However, when we breathe deeply and slowly, a corresponding calming effect occurs. This calmness helps us to manage those strong emotions.

You can tell how deeply you are breathing by watching your stomach. If it rises when you inhale, you will experience an enjoyable relaxing sensation.

JACK: How do you do that?

ELI: Put your hands on your stomach . . . now breathe deeply. . . get your stomach to push your hands up.

JACK: My stomach has been pushing up all by itself for years!

ELI: Well, many people suck in their stomachs when breathing and it is hard to change that habit and push out instead.

Okay, now take three or four deep breaths as you get your stomach to push up when you breathe . . . deeply and slowly.

JACK: Yeah, doing deep breathing really works, I do feel rather relaxed.

Use deep breathing to manage strong emotions, such as anger and anxiety.

ELI: For many years, I taught a court-ordered anger management course for the Baton Rouge City Court. Part of the course curriculum was teaching deep breathing. After demonstrating this principle in one session, one participant came back the second day with this story:

He said, "I came home very late and discovered I was locked out of my house! I felt rage boiling up inside of me. I was going to bust down that door! I thought, 'They can't do that to me!' Then I remembered to use deep breathing.

I want you to picture this". . . he went on to say, "It is 2:30 in the morning, I'm in my backyard locked out of my house, doing deep breathing and I'm thinking about you, Eli!"

By doing the deep breathing, he was able to calm down enough to do something appropriate, like maybe knock on the door.

JACK: Deep breathing can do that?

And he was thinking about you. He doesn't sound like someone I would want to be thinking about me.

ELI: True. I hadn't thought about that until you mentioned it.

So now, let's continue the smorgasbord with the salad. If a person is sitting down in a chair and someone says something disrespectful, what might you expect their reaction to be?

JACK: Instant anger, especially if they were emotionally drunk!

ELI: Correct. Would they remain sitting or would they get on their feet?

JACK: They would jump up to confront this insult, right?

ELI: Right. They would jump up . . . getting to our feet is a normal reaction when our anger is triggered.

JACK: That is a natural protection, getting ready for fighting or running away.

ELI: Correct. We stand up when we are angry, probably because the anger is providing a warning. We are not that many generations removed from swinging out of the trees expecting to be attacked by "lions, and tigers, and bears"!

JACK: Oh, my! Are we still in Kansas, Toto?

ELI: How we physically react can help us to manage our emotions.

When we want to manage our anger, we can do the opposite of what the anger tells us. Instead of standing up, we can remain seated . . . or if we're already standing, we can just sit down.

JACK: Like when we see the weigh-in of a professional boxing match and the two fighters go nose to nose staring at each other, trying intimidation tactics or before two guys get into a

schoolyard fight, there is a lot of posturing, like stepping forward into the other guy's space.

Exactly, if you find yourself in that situation and want to de-escalate the probability of going to "fist-city", take a step backward. This does not decrease your ability to defend yourself, but it does send a message that you are willing to diffuse the situation.

JACK: The message is "I'm willing if you're willing."

ELI: And hopefully, the other person will want a way out of the conflict. So by stepping back you provide the space, the reason, to slow the action.

JACK: Hopefully, indeed.

ELI: Here's a little lagniappe. (/'laenjaep/*LAN-yap*)

JACK: A lawn-a-who?

ELI: It's what Cajun people say. . . It means providing something extra. The kids want their "lagniappe" when they are in the grocery store, usually in the form of candy.

JACK: Okay, so what's the lagniappe today?

ELI: Let's use your ex-wife for the example.

JACK: Do we have to? Just kidding.

ELI: Okay, when she would get angry, what would you do?

JACK: Of course. . . I'd get angry . . . I didn't know I had a choice.

ELI: Well, here is something you can say to yourself whenever the opportunity occurs. So when she's angry, now you will know you have a choice. . . you can get angry with her, or you can use

this wonderful little statement. . . a phrase from the book, *Crucial Conversations*. . . "You can get furious. . . or. . . you can get curious." The co-author, Kerry Patterson, calls it a "Decision Question".

Remember that you can choose to be angry . . . or you can choose not to be angry.

JACK: I got that one. It's up to me.

You told me in our very first session that life is simple . . . not easy, but simple.

ELI: We're not talking rocket science here.

JACK: So, if I choose to be curious, then I have to wonder why she is angry. Instead of reacting to her anger, I can be curious about her feelings.

ELI: Right.

JACK: You know, although I didn't know about this technique, I actually did that the other day.

ELI: You did? Tell me about it.

JACK: Well, she called me when she was angry about something, and instead of reacting to her anger as I normally did, I listened. Because I was listening, I did not hear the anger. This time I heard something that was beneath her anger.

ELI: What did you hear?

JACK: I heard fear. All these years I thought she was an angry person. She wasn't angry. She was fearful. When I heard the fear, I reacted differently and said, "This is scary for you." Know what she said?

ELI: What?

JACK: She said “Yes, I am afraid,”. . . and then we talked about what was so frightening for her.

ELI: Instead of getting furious, you got curious.

JACK: Yeah.

ELI: That fits into another little gem.

JACK: Another? You collect these gems of wisdom.

ELI: Right, I can’t be much help to others if I don’t have some tools that work.

JACK: You’re giving me my money’s worth.

ELI: Glad you think so.

Take the example you just gave. Your normal pattern of conversation would be to react angrily, correct?

JACK: Yeah, I’d have jumped all over her.

ELI: If you had “jumped all over her”, you would have bitten the bait she put out for you.

JACK: The bait?

ELI: Yes, the invitation to join them in chaos. People often get into patterns, recognizable patterns of how they deal with one another. She says this and you do that, or you do this and she says that. A pattern. It’s as if you two are in a dance and you both know the steps so well, you’re doing them unconsciously or by rote. If I were watching you dance, it would be a graceful dance because you have danced together for so long. Unless you told me, just watching you glide across the dance floor, I wouldn’t know if it was a painful dance for one or both of you.

JACK: Like a dance of anger.

ELI: Correct. In fact, this little analogy came from a book entitled *The Dance of Anger* by Dr. Harriet Lerner.

JACK: My steps sure were painful, and I guess her steps were as well.

ELI: And yet you both kept dancing.

JACK: For twenty years . . . that same painful dance.

ELI: Well, many people make that choice. When people come in for marriage counseling it's because the steps have become too painful. They seldom seek counseling when things are wonderful. They come in expecting some relief, but often flee the process when they discover they have to take action, and do something to make the pain go away.

Change is hard. The process of learning to act in responsible ways can be overwhelming. There is a strong tendency to go back to their old dance steps rather than to make changes. Only when you start to choose do you have a choice.

JACK: I'd never have come here if she hadn't kicked me out.

ELI: Exactly. So, the person with the painful dance steps has three choices. One is to continue the old painful but familiar dance steps . . . remember change can be frightening. The second choice is to develop new dance steps. If that happens, one person has the old steps and the other is dancing new steps, so the dance has now become awkward.

It is easy to see when treating substance abuse clients. If one person in a relationship enters treatment, attends a 12-Step program, and makes significant changes, and the other one does not, it puts tremendous pressure on the relationship. This is why most marriages break up in active recovery, not during the active addiction phase!

The third choice of this Dance of Anger is to stop dancing.

JACK: That's what she did, she quit dancing with me.

ELI: Right. But let's look at her other options. She could have continued dancing the old steps as she'd been doing for so many years, or she could have developed new steps that were no longer painful, and hoped you would change yours.

JACK: So, if I had changed my dance steps there was a chance she might have had a corresponding positive change.

ELI: There are no guarantees, but that's a distinct possibility.

Sometimes I have people phone me for marriage counseling and their partner refuses to participate.

JACK: What do you do then?

ELI: I tell them that one person can have a tremendous affect on changing the relationship. Take you and your ex-wife for example. What percentage of the problem between the two of you was hers and what part was yours?

JACK: When I first came in here, I thought it was entirely mine, but you have opened my eyes. I'd say now it was closer to fifty-fifty.

ELI: Okay, let's say that your part of the problem was fifty percent. If you worked on solving your part of the problem, what happens to the size of the problem? Is it larger or smaller?

JACK: Smaller, of course.

ELI: Right. She may not have done a bit of work on her part, but what is separating the two of you now is a much smaller problem, now a good deal easier to deal with.

JACK: I just change my dance steps.

ELI: It's that simple.

Mad	Glad	Sad	Fear	Hurt
Agitated	Admiration	Abandoned	Alarm	Aloof
Angry	Affection	Agonized	Anxious	Ashamed
Annoyed	Ardor	Bored	Apprehensive	Belittled
Antagonized	Confident	Crushed	Bashful	Burdened
Arrogant	Cordiality	Deflated	Bewildered	Cheated
Bitter	Curiosity	Depressed	Cautious	Denied
Contemptuous	Delight	Disconnected	Confused	Deserted
Defiant	Desire	Disparaged	Distracted	Disappointed
Disapproving	Devotion	Distant	Dread	Dismay
Disdainful	Ecstasy	Distraught	Embarrassed	Embarrassed
Disgust	Elation	Distressed	Envious	Exhausted
Enraged	Enthusiasm	Downcast	Evasive	Guilty
Flustered	Excitement	Forlorn	Fearful	Humiliated
Frustrated	Fervor	Gloomy	Flustered	Insulted
Furious	Flushed	Grieving	Frightened	Lonely
Hostile	Generosity	Helpless	Horrified	Mean
indignant	Happy	Hopeless	Hysterical	Pained
Irritated	Hopeful	Ignored	Inadequate	Regret
Livid	Inspired	Isolated	Insecure	Shame
Rage	Love-Struck	Jealous	Meanced	Suffering
Resentful	Passion	Melancholy	Overwhelmed	
	Pride	Miserable	Panic	
	Sympathy	Mournful	Pathos	
	Thrilled	Remorseful	Shocked	
		Unwanted		

ELI: Now for the meat and potatoes. Look at all those feeling words on the feeling chart.

When a person experiences any of these emotions, there is energy associated with each one. Some feelings have more energy than others do. One of the simplest but most effective methods of maintaining emotional sobriety is to express what you are feeling. Just start saying aloud what you are feeling. For example, "I'm feeling angry, resentful, hurt, disgusted!"

Instead of feeling words, often a person says, “I feel like . . .” That is a dead giveaway that they are expressing a thought and not an actual feeling. So be sure you are using the actual feeling words found on the feeling chart.

JACK: Wait a minute, you mean just by saying these words aloud, I can manage my emotions? I’m sorry, Eli, but that is hard to believe.

ELI: It may be hard to believe, but it is true.

I had a couple in my office. The man was as mad as anyone who has ever been there. He couldn’t sit down, he was hollering at his wife, cursing, shaking his fist at her. I put the feeling chart in his face and said, “What are you feeling?” He just pushed my hand away and continued to berate his cowering wife. I again stuck the chart in his face and raised my voice. “What are you feeling?” He again pushed my arm away and this time cursed at me. Again I put that chart in his face, and cussed back at him . . . I called that technique “therapeutic-cursing” . . . and demanded that he tell me what he was feeling!

JACK: I can see you cursing at him!

ELI: He grabbed the chart and hollered, “I’m angry! Hurt! Enraged!

Humiliated!” What was amazing to see, was that with each word he said, his overinflated physical bearing decreased, just like a balloon when the air is slowly released. In a few moments, he sat down, and I thanked him for letting us know what he was feeling.

Just saying the words is a wonderful release of energy, allowing the calmness to return, and sobriety to find its way back.

JACK: So by saying the words aloud, I can maintain my emotional sobriety?

ELI: Yes, and again that simple.

JACK: I need to have one of those feeling charts with me at all times.

ELI: The chart helps, but all you really need is five words: Mad, Glad, Sad, Hurt, and Fear.

JACK: So, it really is all so very simple.

ELI: Not rocket science. Simple . . . but not easy.

JACK: Simple, just don't become negative.

ELI: Exactly. Just remember that negativity and happiness cannot exist in the same person at the same time.

JACK: Wow! Now that is profound. I can choose to be negative but if I do, by that action I have chosen not to be happy.

ELI: You've got it.

JACK: It's my choice.

ELI: Your choice.

JACK: What's next for dinner, when do we get to have dessert?

ELI: Not now! We have to eat our vegetables.

I once worked for a counseling agency. The very first day I was there, the office manager told me about her pet peeve. She said, "I hate to come into the bathroom and see the commode seat lifted. Will you remember to lower it?" In this office we had only one bathroom, so I understood her concern. I like it when people tell me what they need, so I granted her request. For three years, I faithfully lowered the commode seat. I was proud of myself!

JACK: Proud. . . for putting down the toilet seat?

ELI: Yep, proud of myself. One day when I finished, my usual practice after washing my hands was to lower the commode seat, but that day I was mad at her.

I thought, "I'm never going to lower the toilet seat again. In fact, I'll go in after others and raise the commode seat!" Fortunately, a little sentence flashed through my mind that said, "If you don't speak it out, you'll tend to act it out."

So, I lowered the seat, went into her office, and said, "I have a problem." By doing that, I didn't have to act it out!

I told this story to a teenage girl and she looked at me, smiled, and said, "I've been lifting a lot of commode seats!"

Lifting commode seats is passive aggressive behavior and is an indirect expression of strong emotions.

JACK: Well, I've certainly lifted my share of commode seats!

ELI: Until we have that wonderful little sentence, "If you don't speak it out, you'll tend to act it out", it is easy to do.

JACK: So vegetables are like commode seats?

ELI: I'm not going there! Now we get to the dessert.

JACK: I thought you'd never get here.

ELI: A good question that comes out of the 12- Step movement is, "How important is it?" It is a powerful question to ask. My son learned to assess his anger by putting a point value to the circumstances. He ranks each situation from one to ten with ten being the most severe, and one very insignificant. What was amazing to him was that he was expressing anger at situations he had only rated as twos and threes!

JACK: You know, as I think about it, I'll bet most of my anger is also about the small numbers! How ridiculous!

ELI: If everything seems important, then nothing is important. Until we practice discernment, our mental stress is increased as we place the required energy onto all these competing demands.

JACK: I have to admit it but I wasted a lot of energy on unimportant things and my stress increases unnecessarily.

ELI: One of my clients created a question she would ask herself when she faced multiple demands: "Is anyone going to die if I do not react to this?" If no one was in danger of getting blood on the ground, she relaxed and asked of each competing demand, "How important is it? Will someone die?"

JACK: So is that it? Are we finished with the smorgasbord?

ELI: Not quite. In some cultures, it is considered impolite unless there is a belch in appreciation of the meal. Therefore, we need…

JACK: A Burp?

ELI: As we did in the third grade when burps and farts were fascinating.

So, here's our burp: If you ever listen to radio or cable TV talk show hosts, most have a certain attitude. They can be a flaming liberal, or politically to the right of Genghis Khan. It doesn't matter. Most demonstrate this trait.

JACK: As in, "I' m right, and anyone who disagrees with me is wrong?"

ELI: Yes. These electronic personalities express their opinions as facts. If they say something with enough emphasis, with enough conviction, and then repeat it often enough, what they say becomes fact to them, and often in the minds of their listeners.

JACK: You're not saying they are opinionated are you?

ELI: Indeed, I am. I see our country becoming increasingly more polarized. This polarization, this black and white point of view, or all or nothing thinking, creates a great potential for conflict. It occurs when we hold absolute positions and do not allow or respect the beliefs of others. In a political spectrum, listen to what the speaker is really screaming: "I'm right and you're wrong".

JACK: You get pretty worked up about this, don't you?

ELI: Perhaps, but when opinions are expressed as facts then they must be defended. Anger is often the emotion used to convey this defense. That puts people on opposite sides of an argument and creates hostility. Politics and religion are two topics fraught with opinions we think we must defend as absolutes. If a person is emotionally drunk and is into absolutism, there is little room for understanding or healthy debate and communication ceases . . . a recipe for disaster.

Do you know what the world's largest addictions are?

JACK: Alcohol and gambling?

ELI: No, not even close . . . The two largest addictions affecting more people are . . . . Looking good, and being right!

JACK: Ha! All of us have one or both of those.

ELI: My counselor used to say that.

JACK: You've been to counseling?

ELI: Sure, doing just what you are doing, working on improving myself. I've also been to many 12- Step programs. Let me tell you . . . Eli is a work in progress!

JACK: So, you are not perfect, and you still need help.

ELI: We established that previously!

JACK: Am I committing myself to a lifetime of work on Jack?

ELI: Only if you choose to commit. Life is about choices.

Looking good, and being right. You see this problem with opinionated talk show hosts. They are so certain that what they say is correct; they are totally convinced they are right! They want to look good by being right, they want that sense of omnipotence. When awarded with a worshipful audience, they begin to see their own faces in the constellations. Put this compulsive need to be right together with an over-inflated ego and guess what happens if anyone has a contrary opinion?

JACK: Arguments happen. Those talk show hosts do not seem to be happy people. To maintain that angry edge they also have to be negative, and as you say, "Negativity and happiness cannot exist in the same person at the same time!"

ELI: You learn well. How about in a close relationship? Does having to be right cause problems?

JACK: It did in mine.

ELI: Think of the times you and your wife argued.

JACK: The thousands of times?

ELI: If you are very honest, and are looking down on yourself from above during one of your arguments, how much of the quarrel is about the topic of disagreement, and how much of it is just you arguing about your need to be right?

JACK: Most of it is about my being right . . . now that I think about it. I think she also argued to be right.

ELI: When my wife and I first got married, she presented a slogan sentence that really helped us not fall into the "being right" trap.

JACK: Hey, that trap is where I live!

ELI: Is that where you want to be? Would you like to move?

Here is the little sentence that offers a completely different awareness . . .

JACK: Do I need a drum roll for this one too?

ELI: Yes, maestro . . . Hit it!

JACK: Ka-boom, ka-boom, ka-boom!

ELI: Here it is: "Would you rather be right . . . or would you rather be happy?"

JACK: Oh, I'm happy when I'm right! Man, there are many times we fought over such stupid, silly things, and I thought they were so important but it was really my need to be right. Somehow, if I could prove my "rightness" to her obvious "wrongness" then with my shallow self-esteem, I could feel better. By putting her down somehow, I would feel better.

ELI: So, being right . . . did it work for you?

JACK: Not at all, because even when I won the fight, even when I could prove my magnificence compared to her . . . in the end, I lost.

ELI: Even when you won, you lost what an insight that is!

JACK: So many wasted moments, wasted opportunities, and my God, a lot of wasted love. I wonder what had happened if instead of arguing with her, I just held her hand and discussed our differences?

ELI: How beautiful, maybe you could use that technique in your future?

JACK: Thank you for all your help.

ELI: You are welcome.

Chapter 8

Jack's Notes

September 30th

- When you use anger correctly, you get positive results.
- Anger has two benefits: it provides a warning and the necessary energy for change.
- All feelings are based upon the thoughts we have.
- Anger is a natural feeling.
- Anger can enslave us, or it can provide freedom, all depending upon how it is used.
- No one can make you angry! No one can make you mad! You get to choose.
- There is freedom knowing that anger is a choice.

October 7th

- If someone else is angry, you have a choice to be angry or not—this is freedom!
- Your feelings do not lie to you, however they may be based upon:

- False thought
- True thought
- Incomplete information

- If a person changes their thinking, it can have a great effect on their reactions.
- When confronted with strong emotions, especially anger, repeating to yourself "I over E" (Intellect over Emotions) is an excellent way to maintaining your cool.
- We are as sick as our secrets.

October 15th

- "My Life Will Change . . . When I Change"™
- Locus of Control is where people place their personal power:
  - External—blaming others—victim mentality
  - Internal—being responsible—responsible for changing self
- In the end, no one can make anyone happy. A person's happiness is their responsibility not yours.
- Listing someone else's faults is taking someone else's inventory, and usually starts conflict.
- Expectations are resentments under construction.
- Rather than pointing fingers, focus on our thumbs:

- Finger Work = creates resentments
- Thumb work = makes changes in ourselves

October 21st

- There are five basic words in the feeling language: Mad, Sad, Glad, Hurt, Fear
- Emotionally numb people are:
  - Heading in the wrong direction
  - Not real / not alive
  - Unhappy
- All decisions involve emotions, ignoring emotions decreases the quality of the result.
- When we acknowledge our feelings, we can use them like an internal radar set to guide us.
- When we are not connected with our emotions, we are not connected to ourselves.
- A command phrase is an internal message of what we tell ourselves, and is embedded into our belief system when associated with strong emotions. Unless these phrases are challenged, they become our truth, what we believe.
- Self-forgiveness is a choice.
- Strong feelings associated with an event can keep memories alive forever.

- RUI—Reacting Under the Influence—This happens when we are emotionally drunk and automatically react to something or someone.

November 7th

- From our behavior, we obtain certain results, and these results reinforce our beliefs. What we think is based upon on how we see life, our beliefs.
- Not forgiving yourself is a form of being emotionally drunk.

November 12th

- Deep breathing creates a calming effect to help manage strong emotions such as anger or anxiety.
- To de-escalate a potential conflict, one method is to take a step backwards.
- A great tool from the book, Crucial Conversations is: "You can get furious or curious". You can get mad, or choose to wonder why this person is behaving the way they are.
- It is only when you start to choose . . . do you have a choice.

- In the book: Dance of Anger there are three recognizable patterns to a conflict:
    - Continue old dance steps
    - Develop new dance steps
    - Stop dancing.

- If you don't speak it out, you'll then act it out. Example: lifting the commode seat to express anger.

- A good question to gain perspective in life is: How important is it?

- Emotionally drunk people stuck in absolutism decreases communication and understanding and creates polarization. . . a recipe for disaster

- What is the largest addiction in the world? Looking good and being right!

- Life is all about choices.

- "Would you rather be right . . . . or would you rather be happy?"

Chapter 9

Epilogue

The therapy sessions end as Jack and Eli go their separate ways. Or do they? Actually, it is now time to confess, to reveal the actual

Identities of these two men who by means of their dialogue guided us through this anger management method.

As I mentioned in the beginning, both these men are real people, and these are their original words. Although the original descriptions of Jack and Eli are true, they are somewhat deceptive. Whether I am to be condemned or understood for why I constructed this little deception, you be the judge.

In case you have not yet guessed it . . . both men are me. I gave them false identities and names. They are separated by over twenty years of experience and wisdom. Jack is me in my early forties when I was wrestling with the addictions of both of my children, a failed marriage, and the loss of my business.

Eli is me, in my mid-sixties with much more experience, but to my great surprise still remorseful about my reaction back when my daughter tried to sneak out. I know there were many other times where my anger hurt family members, but this one sticks out as the most memorable and most painful.

Writing about that night, I underwent a great deal of personal healing. Through this dialectic exercise, I was able to work through that experience. I did not expect healing's release, but I am grateful to have received the peace of self-forgiveness I so long sought.

Chapter 10

Anger Management Model Workbook

A key tool in managing emotions is found in the T.I.E Model for Anger Management. You experienced it with Jack and Eli now it is presented as a pure theory uncluttered with dialogue. This anger management model includes nine exhibits providing a systematic process for learning this simple but powerful model. Although at first it may look intimidating, but as Jack experienced, it is really quite simple and it absolutely works. It will change your life!

How to use this workbook model:

Go through each exhibit. First look at the model and notice how it has changed from the previous exhibit. Then read how it works and complete the small exercise that is associated with each exhibit.

T.I.E. – Anger Management Model

How it Works:

Because of important events, all humans have certain feelings. These next exercises will provide a framework to assist you in managing strong emotions; not to deny but to manage them.

Exercise:

Think of a time when you became angry, lost it, locked your jaws, and got very uptight! It does not have to be a recent event, just memorable. Write down a thumbnail sketch of the event. Briefly, what happened?

T.I.E. – Anger Management Model

How it Works:

The major words in the feeling language are Mad, Glad, Sad, Fear, and Hurt. The feeling list on page 96 has five columns with one of these words at the top of each column. This chart represents the rainbow of emotions available to be experienced in the human condition.

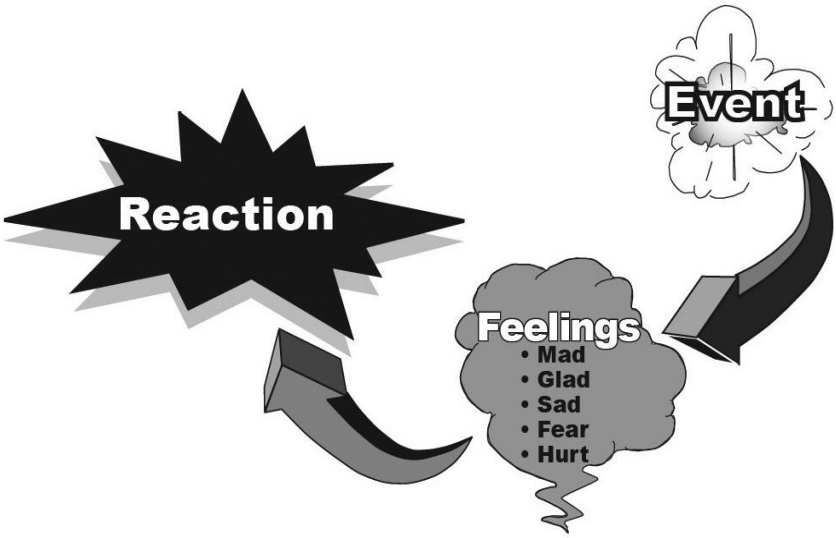
Exercise:

Have the event that made you angry have firmly in your mind, and then look at the mood chart to find which feelings you were experiencing (use only words on this list).

Write down all the feelings you were experiencing. First list the "Mad" feelings, then in a separate column write all the other feelings you experienced under the Sad, Fear, and Hurt columns on the feeling chart. Spend some time identifying what emotions you experienced.

Mad	Other Feeling

T.I.E. – Anger Management Model



How it Works:

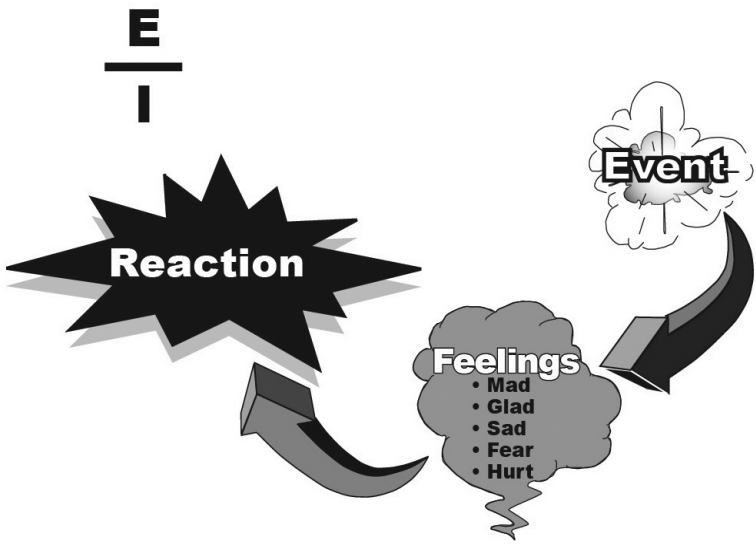
When a person experiences an event, various feelings are generated. With strong feelings, an equally strong reaction often occurs when something is said, or other action is taken, that would not have happened with a cooler mind. The reaction could be something said that is not really meant, a physical attack, or maybe the silent treatment.

Exercise:

What was your reaction to the identified event in the previous example? If you were observing YOU, what would you have witnessed? Did you yell, try to hurt someone else, run, get silent, plan revenge, or act out in some other equally dramatic way?

If you were observing you, what would you have seen?

T.I.E. – Anger Management Model



How it Works:

Unmanaged emotions create a reaction where there is a distinct possibility of hurting others emotionally, physically, and/or spiritually. This creates the condition where emotions are controlling intelligence, or as stated in the model above, "E over I".

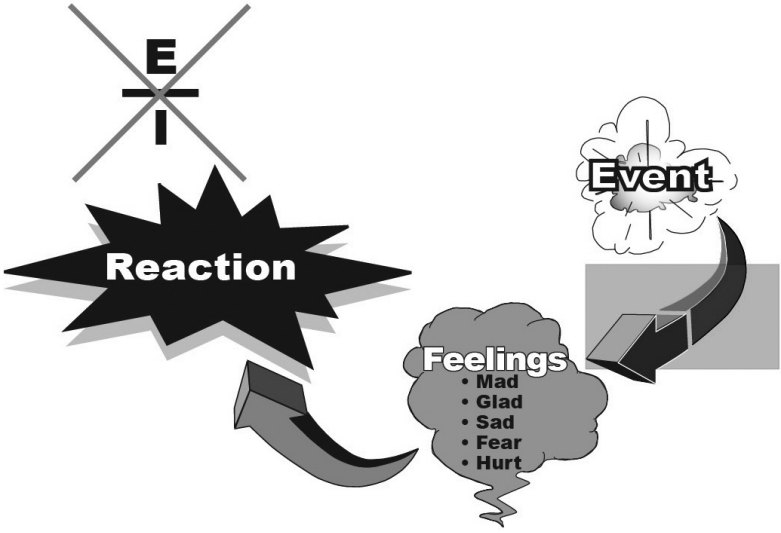
When a person's emotions are controlling them, it is very similar to a person drunk with alcohol. For the purposes of this lesson, people who are "E over I" are labeled "emotionally drunk".

Exercise:

Think of all the damage you have done to people you care about, and to yourself when you have been emotionally drunk.

Has being emotionally drunk ever worked toward building successful relationships? Maybe, but is there a better way?

T.I.E. – Anger Management Model



How it Works:

How often have you ever heard someone say, “He makes me so angry!” or “She irritates the fire out of me!” Would you like some freedom? The truth is no one (drum roll please) no one can make you angry; no one can irritate you!

By now you may want your money back on this book, but please do not reject this wonderful but simple truth. No one is in control of your emotions but you. Now that is freedom!

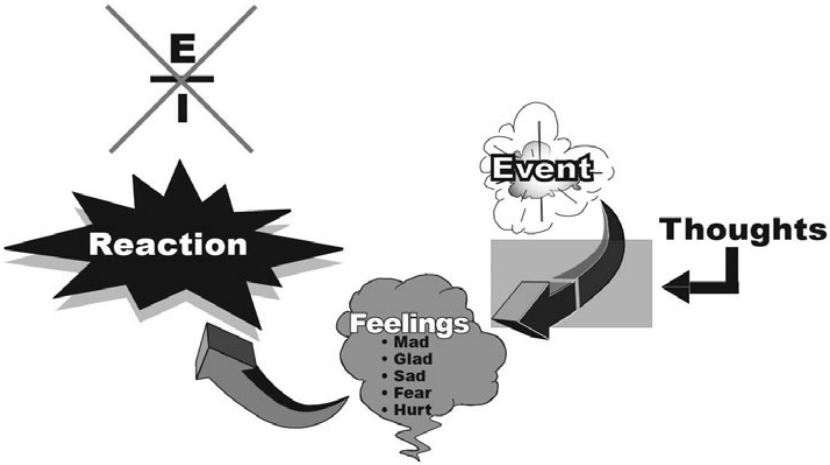
Exercise:

Do you want to continue reacting, or should a big red “X” be drawn through the E over I? Do you want to live emotionally drunk or emotionally sober? Your choice.

Now look at the line between the Event and Feelings on the diagram above. What happens between the event and a person's feelings? Saying it a different way, a person's emotions, or feelings are based upon something that happens in the brain. What are emotions or feelings based upon?

Take a guess.

T.I.E. – Anger Management Model



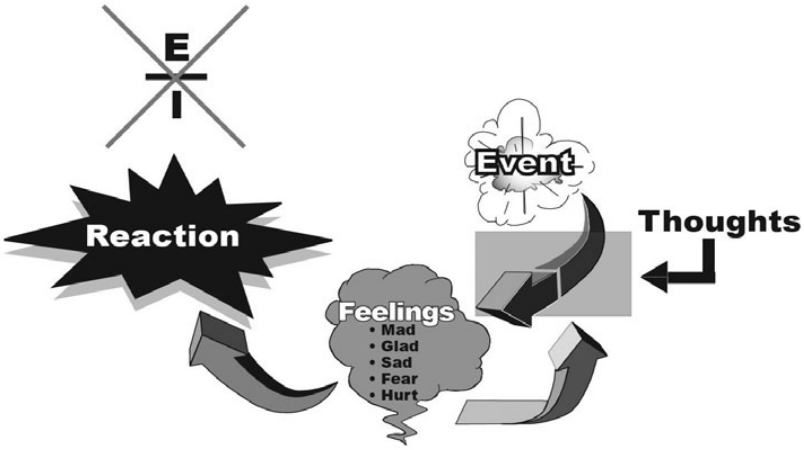
How it Works:

You guessed it — T H O U G H T S ! A person's thoughts cause emotions. When experiencing the identified event, certain thoughts are generated about that event, and those thoughts generated certain feelings. If we are not careful; BO OM, we have a reaction!

Exercise:

Holiday—No exercise required.

T.I.E. – Anger Management Model



How it Works:

Look at the angry feelings listed under the Mad section. These are what we call "surface feelings". They are like the tip of the iceberg, what you see and observe. Under the angry feelings, there are other emotions as found in the Sad, Hurt, and/or fear columns. These other feelings are what is driving the strong reaction called anger.

Exercise:

Look at the feelings you listed in Exhibit X. Remember, you put the angry ones in one column and all the rest in another. Look at all the feelings not listed in the angry column. Identify the main feeling(s) driving your reaction. What feeling(s) has the most energy or best describes your emotional state? Select one or two.

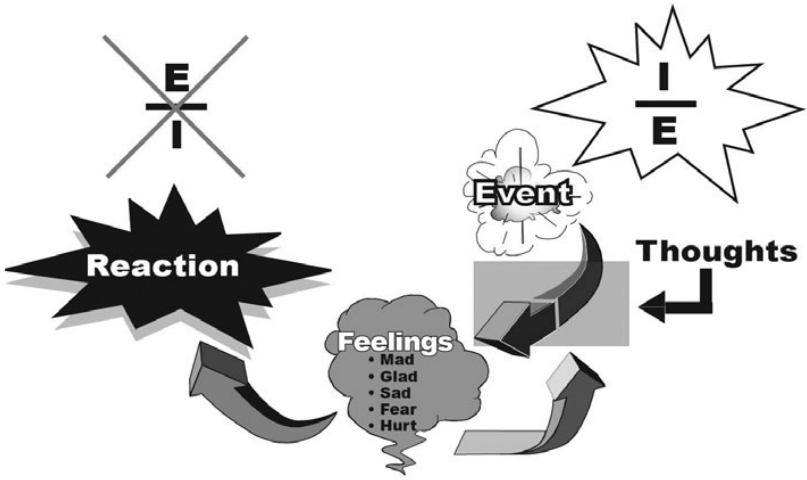
Now think . . . what were the thoughts that were causing you to feel that emotion? Write your thoughts down.

Exhibit XVI

There is a very good reason to separate the angry feelings as listed under the Mad column from the other columns of feelings. Anger is a surface feeling. Just like the iceberg, what you see is only the tip of the iceberg showing out of the water with most of it hidden beneath the water. In order to identify the strongest emotions driving our anger, we must dive beneath the waves and explore the Hurt, Fear, and Sad feelings.

Mad	Glad	Sad	Fear	Hurt
Agitated	Admiration	Abandoned	Alarm	Aloof
Angry	Affection	Agonized	Anxious	Ashamed
Annoyed	Ardor	Bored	Apprehensive	Belittled
Antagonized	Confident	Crushed	Bashful	Burdened
Arrogant	Cordiality	Deflated	Bewildered	Cheated
Bitter	Curiosity	Depressed	Cautious	Denied
Contemptuous	Delight	Disconnected	Confused	Deserted
Defiant	Desire	Disparaged	Distracted	Disappointed
Disapproving	Devotion	Distant	Dread	Dismay
Disdainful	Ecstasy	Distraught	Embarrassed	Embarrassed
Disgust	Elation	Distressed	Envious	Exhausted
Enraged	Enthusiasm	Downcast	Evasive	Guilty
Flustered	Excitement	Forlorn	Fearful	Humiliated
Frustrated	Fervor	Gloomy	Flustered	Insulted
Furious	Flushed	Grieving	Frightened	Lonely
Hostile	Generosity	Helpless	Horrified	Me
indignant	Happy	Hopeless	Hysterical	Pained
Irritated	Hopeful	Ignored	Inadequate	Regret
Rage	Love-Struck	Jealous	Menaced	Suffering
Resentful	Passion	Melancholy	Overwhelmed	
	Prid	Miserable	Panic	
	Sympathy	Mournful	Pathos	
	Thrilled	Remorseful	Shocked	
		Unwanted		

T.I.E. – Anger Management Model



How it Works:

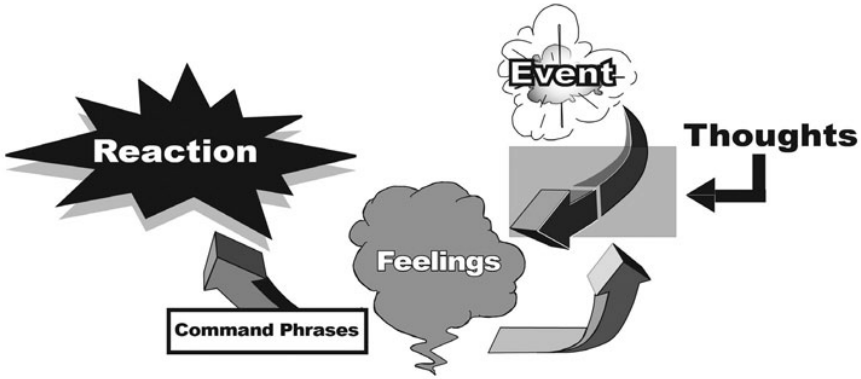
Once a person understands the thoughts that are driving their feelings, their intellect is now in control, and they are managing their emotions.

When managing emotions, that person is “I over E”; they are emotionally sober.

Exercise:

Take a deep breath. What often causes stress in people’s life is that they do not know they have options. When you learn this technique, you now have choices. You can choose to be emotionally drunk or emotionally sober.

T.I.E. – Anger Management Model



How it Works:

Go back to your anger incident previously identified.

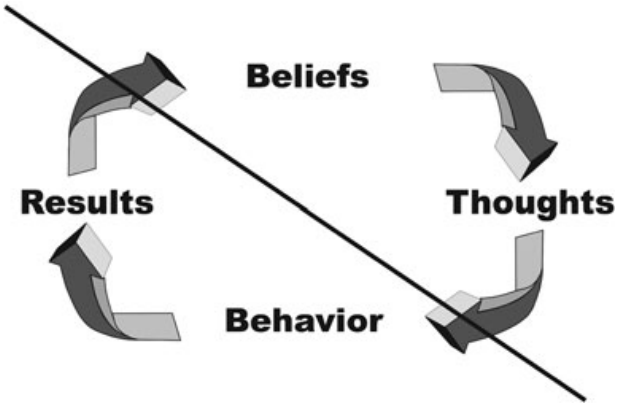
In that anger incident you described, you were loaded with strong emotions that you probably did not manage well. When we react in the "emotionally drunk" state, allowing these emotions to be in control, we get the tag of "RUI" (reacting under intoxication). Often when we are in RUI", there is some illogical thinking associated.

Exercise:

What were you saying to yourself when you were so full of emotions?

List some of those thoughts.

T.I.E. – Anger Management Model



Command Phrases

Because of emotional learning, what we state to ourselves or to others when we are emotionally drunk becomes learned truths, indelibly printed in our minds, a very powerful form of learning.

This learning becomes our reality; out beliefs are based upon our thoughts and behaviors, as shown in the BBC

Model to the right.

Faulty belief results in harmful behaviors that we are often not able to see.

Review your Command Phrases, what would your behavior be if any one of these were your beliefs? Knowing where certain beliefs come from allows us to challenge them, thus freeing us from their control. This allows us to have a happier and more satisfying life.

When we are highly charged with emotions, our learning becomes sharper. Remember where you were and what you felt during 9-11. What we state to ourselves or express to others when we are full of emotions, as in being “emotionally drunk”,

becomes permanently printed in our mind. This is a very powerful form of learning. This learning becomes the reality upon which our beliefs are based. Thoughts come from beliefs and it is our thoughts dictating behavior.

Review the thoughts you listed on the previous page when you were RU I. What behavior would likely come from those thoughts? Knowing where certain beliefs come from enables us to challenge them, thus freeing ourselves to live happier and ore satisfying lives. The entire purpose of this book is improving your life by the skill necessary to manage powerful emotions.

Sample Command Phrases:

- I can't do anything right"
- "Don't depend upon anyone."
- "I try and I always fail"
- "I have more problems that I can solve."
- "I'm so stressed out ."
- "I'm going crazy."
- "She's such a bitch."
- "He is driving me nuts."
- "They are out to get me."
- "I can't take it!"
- "I can't control my emotions."
- "I'm at the end of my rope."
- "I hate my job."

- “The people here are all losers.”
- “No one can push me around.”
- “Nobody respects me.”
- “No one listens to me.”
- “They always get their way.”
- “My boss is such a jerk.”

About the Author

David W. Earle has twenty-five years of executive management experience in the construction field. He now earns his living as a Business Coach, working with individuals and organizations to improve human relationship skills, communication abilities, and leadership principals. Here, he assists clients in creating the changes they want to make in their businesses and in their personal lives.

He earned a Master's of Science in Counseling from Texas A&M. He is a mental health counselor licensed by the State of Louisiana, actively practicing since 1992. His practice covers such issues as substance abuse, compulsive gambling, relationships, families, adolescence, anxiety, and depression. For ten years, he worked for the Baton Rouge City Court teaching an anger management to a court-ordered population.

For 11 years, he was on the faculty of the University of Phoenix, teaching graduate courses in Conflict Management Systems and undergraduate courses on communications, employee motivation, diversity, sociology, and workplace substance abuse.

When bank robberies, suicides, explosions, sudden death, or disasters occur, David performs Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (C I S D) to assist traumatized employees. In addition, David works with the local Red Cross mental health disaster team.

David has been on the panel as a mediator and/or arbitrator for various organizations such as U.S. Federal Court-Middle District, Louisiana Rehabilitation Service, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), Financial Industry Regulator Authority (FINRA), and National Association of Security Dealers (NASD), Natural Futures Association (NFA), Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), and the Louisiana Supreme Court.

He enjoys tennis and he lives in Baton Rouge with his wife, Penny, and their dog, Fletcher, and cat, Hobbes.

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Appendix A: WHAT TO DO WHILE YOU COUNT TO 10: A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO ANGER MANAGEMENT

Directions: To receive credits for this course, you are required to take a post test and receive a passing score. We have set a minimum standard of 80% as the passing score to assure the highest standard of knowledge retention and understanding. The test is comprised of multiple choice and/or true/false questions that will investigate your knowledge and understanding of the materials found in this CEU Matrix – The Institute for Addiction and Criminal Justice distance learning course.

After you complete your reading and review of this material, you will need to answer each of the test questions. Then, submit your test to us for processing. This can be done in the following manner:

Submit your test via the Internet. All of our tests are posted electronically, allowing immediate test results and quicker processing. First, you may want to answer your post test questions found at the end of this appendix. Then, return to your browser and go to the Student Center located at:

http://www.ceumatrix.com/studentcenter

Once there, log in as a Returning Customer using your Email Address and Password. Then click on 'View Lesson Quiz' and you will be presented with the electronic exam.

To take the exam, simply select from the choices of "a" through "e" for each multiple choice question. For true/false questions, select either "a" for true, or "b" for false. Once you are done, simply click on the submit button at the bottom of the page. Your exam will be graded and you will receive your results immediately. If your score is 80% or greater, you will receive a link to the course evaluation. You will also receive a link to the Certificate of Completion. This is the final step in the process, and you may save and / or print your Certificate of Completion.

If, however, you do not achieve a passing score of at least 80%, you will need to review the course material and return to the Student Center to resubmit your answers.

NOTE: THE EXAM QUESTIONS AND /OR ANSWERS MAY BE IN A DIFFERENT ORDER IN THE ONLINE EXAM

Answer the following questions by selecting the most appropriate response.

1. People often have experience anger as a source of harm and viewing it differently is a hard concept. When you use anger correctly:
   a) You get positive results
   b) It increases irritation
   c) It creates more tension
   d) No such thing as correct anger

2. The seven deadly sins are usually thought of as: wrath, greed, sloth, pride, lust, envy, and gluttony. Viewing anger (wrath) in a positive light is different and sometimes difficult. Anger provides two benefits:
   a) warning and escape
   b) love and understanding
   c) warning and energy
   d) love and energy

3. Everyone has feelings and knowing their origin is an important key in managing them. All feelings are based upon:
   a) others
   b) misconceptions
   c) thoughts
   d) past shame feelings

4. An excellent trigger method for beginning to manage emotions is saying “I over E.” When a person uses “I over E” as their trigger to manage emotions it means:
   a) intellect over emotion
   b) intuition over emotion
   c) intelligence over euphoria
   d) intellect over euphoria
   e) intellect over episodic

5. Anger is like dynamite; it can build or destroy. People can make other people angry.
   a) True
   b) False

6. Interpersonal relationships improve dramatically when people manage their emotions. When your collogue is angry with you, you have to be angry?
   a) True
   b) False

7. Acknowledging feelings allows for vital feedback. Your feelings do not lie, however they may be based upon:

a) false thought
b) true thought
c) incomplete information
d) all of the above

8. When a person changes their thinking it:

a) changes their point of view
b) decreases the love available
c) seldom affects their reactions
d) can make them easier to live with

9. Maintaining emotional stability is a key life skill. What is an excellent way to maintaining your cool:

a) choosing better friends
b) changing environment
c) talking your way out of it
d) repeating I over E

10. Honesty affects the success of a person's life. Complete this statement, "We are as sick as our …"

a) relationships
b) secrets
c) government
d) society

11. Understanding ourselves is the first step of the management of emotions. What is Locus of Control?

a) location of personal power
b) where life begins
c) ability for happiness
d) method of controlling others

12. Personal responsibility separates successful from unsuccessful lives. If a person is blaming others, their local of control is:

a) internal
b) external

13. Finger Work is much easier than Thumb Work. Listing someone else's faults is

a) providing proper feedback
b) a method of conflict resolution
c) usually solving conflict
d) taking someone else's inventory

14. Although many people profess to this knowledge, doing it is difficult. The responsibility for your happiness belongs to:
    a) society
    b) your parents
    c) you
    d) your boss

15. Thinking about what we store in our minds, such as resentments has a powerful effect on how we view life. In the book, expectations are…
    a) future promises
    b) understandings yet delivered
    c) unmet desires
    d) resentments under construction

16. Pointing your finger toward another is called Finger Work and it:
    a) fosters understanding
    b) creates resentment
    c) makes changes in ourselves
    d) increases appreciation

17. Pointing your thumbs toward yourself is called Thumb Work and it
    a) creates resentment
    b) fosters understanding in others
    c) makes changes in ourselves
    d) increases appreciation

18. The feeling language is often not spoken or valued. There are five basic words in the feeling language:
    a) Mad, sad, glad, hurt, fear
    b) Mad, hurt, lonely, glad, resentment
    c) Glad, worry, hurt, mad, fear
    d) Distance, hurt, lonely, angry, sad

19. When people shut down emotionally, they become numb. Emotionally numb people are heading in the wrong direction, not real, and unhappy.
    a) True
    b) False

20. People are born with the ability to express emotions. When ignoring emotions the resulting decisions are:
    a) increased quality
    b) lessens conflict
    c) manages emotion
    d) creates problems

21. Emotions acknowledged serves as
    a) accelerator effect on reaction
    b) internal radar set
    c) homing effect
    d) doppler effect

22. Mental health professionals often deal with de-tached clients. Emotionally distant creates feelings of disconnection.
    a) True
    b) False

23. Words are powerful. What we say to ourselves and to others often have a lasting effect. A Command Phrase is…
    a) A status representing a position of power
    b) An internal message of what we tell ourselves
    c) An order from a superior
    d) An expectation requiring compliance

24. Command phrases not challenged are:
    a) punished when not followed
    b) source of internal power for change
    c) becoming a person's truth
    d) a standard of excellence

25. People hanging on to resentments pay a price. Self-forgiveness is a choice.
    a) True
    b) False

26. People often have strong emotional reactions to many of life's events. Strong feelings associated with an event:
    a) can cause long lasting resentments
    b) bring back memories
    c) lock emotions to the event
    d) can keep memories alive forever
    e) all of the above

27. When people allow their emotions to control them, their decisions and reactions are often flawed. RUI means:—
    a) reducing under insistence
    b) remembering under induction
    c) rendering under inspection
    d) reacting under influence

28. The Beliefs-Behavior Continuum is a good depiction of how thoughts, results, beliefs, and behavior are connected. From our behavior, we obtain:
a) results
b) beliefs
c) opinions
d) command phrases

29. When a person's emotions are in control and not their intellect, they are emotionally drunk. Not forgiving yourself is a form of being emotionally drunk?
a) True
b) False

30. A person can affect their emotional energy by managing their breathing. Deep breathing creates a calming effect to help:
a) cleanse your lungs
b) provide external stimuli
c) manage strong emotions
d) let go of resentments

31. Emotionally drunk people substantially increase the potential for physical confrontation. Taking a step backwards is never a good idea during a potential physical conflict.
a) True
b) False

32. Recognizing and acknowledging choices is and important step in emotional health. What is the best answer to finish this sentence: It is only when you start to choose:
a) you can have closure
b) will you have financial success
c) do you have a choice
d) will people respect you

33. Understanding personal choices in relationships helps a person make effective decisions. In the book, Dance of Anger there is four recognizable patterns to a conflict:
a) True
b) False

34. Understanding is best conveyed by effective communication. Finish this sentence, "If you do not speak it out…
a) people will never know
b) others respect you more
c) that will increase your chances of promotion
d) you tend to act it out

35. In-between the actual event and the emotional response sometime happen in a person's head. What happens between the event and the feelings?

a) anger
b) results
c) thoughts
d) change

36. People often cause problems when their emotions are in control instead of their intellect. When emotions are in control, the result is more often negative than positive.

a) True
b) False

37. The Mood Chart is an excellent personal and therapeutic tool to manage all emotions. What column has the surface feelings?

a) feeling a person wears on his/her sleeve
b) hurt feelings
c) resentments
d) mad feelings
e) unexpressed emotions

38. Addictions affect everyone in some way. What is the largest addiction in the world?

a) alcohol
b) gambling
c) looking good and being right
d) illegal drugs
e) sexual addiction

39. Since reading, What To Do While You Count to 10 you have personally used I over E instead of being emotionally drunk.

a) True
b) False

40. Since reading, What To Do While You Count to 10 you have used the I over E model with a client to help them manage their emotions..

a) True
b) False