



Evidence Based Anger Management 12 Session Model:

Utilizing Christian Based Acceptance and Commitment Therapy

Presented by:

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Description of the Anger Management Group at Christian Counseling Associates

The Anger Management group (AMG) at CCA was created to be an ACT based, Christian response to help people become better able to manage ineffective and problematic anger behaviors.

The AMG consists of 12, weekly, 90-minute, on-line sessions. The primary task in the CCA Group is to explore fully with the other group members, how anger and situational triggers have impacted the client's life. The group has two components:

- (1) education on developing a deeper understanding of important anger management related issues and how to manage anger effectively,
- (2) an experiential component focused on ACT core processes including watchfulness (present moment awareness) and cognitive defusion.

AMG is a context within which a group member may acquire skills to develop and sustain meaningful and satisfying relationships within a faith-based community. The intent of the AMG is to create a safe environment where group members may begin to grow in their ability to see past triggering events, thoughts or feelings. A deeper life focus reveals God's will for our life and how that transforms relationship patterns with others.

Population

Group members in the AMG come from several different referral sources. A portion of referrals are from clients who are currently receiving services with a CCA counselor. The AMG is seen as an adjunct to ongoing therapeutic services. A portion of clients participate due to marital or relationship difficulties to avoid marital or relationship break-up. Finally, a sizable portion of group members who participate in the AMG are involved due to contact with the criminal justice system. Clients in this category participate in AMG upon recommendation of their attorney or they have been mandated by court, and probation due to criminal charges related to inappropriate anger behavior.

Enrollment procedure

Regardless of referral source, all prospective participants in the AMG will have an initial appointment to assess suitability for engaging in the group process. At this initial session, the client will be provided with Informed Consent regarding the expectations and requirements for

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the AMG. All questions and concerns are addressed with the client. An initial assessment is conducted with an evaluation of client ability to master the technological challenges of on-line group counseling. Generally speaking, because of the covid pandemic, most participants have some experience with using the on-line counseling platform used for AMG. Clients who express discomfort with using the on-line platform, receive instruction in navigating the on-line environment. Though very rare, any client who expresses an unwillingness to participate in the on-line AMG are referred to an in-person program.

In addition, during the initial appointment, the client was introduced to the CCA approved outcome evaluation program called Better Outcomes Now (BON) that utilizes the Partners for Change Outcomes Management System (PCOMS). When developing the AMG, an important consideration was to provide a method for evaluating the efficacy of the AMG as a treatment approach. In addition, an equally important consideration was to provide an ongoing means to monitor client progress both in terms of overall improvement and in client satisfaction with the group experience.

This approach promotes intervention with clients at risk for dropping out of the AMG. (Slone, Reese, Mathews-Duvall, & Kodet, 2015) In the AMG, the client is asked to fill out a brief 4-item scale called the Outcome Rating Scale (ORS) to monitor treatment progress at the beginning of each session and the Session Rating Scale (SRS) to monitor the working alliance at the conclusion of each session. (Slone et al., 2015)

Methodology for each group session

Each session of the AMG follows a set structure. Each session is opened with an experiential exercise designed to increase present moment awareness. Following the opening experiential exercise, one of the ACT six core processes is introduced using an appropriate metaphor. The remainder of the group session is devoted to psychoeducation related to identifying inappropriate anger management issues and suggested approaches for developing greater efficacy in choosing alternative behaviors that are more effective in managing anger.

Slone, N., Reese, R. J., Mathews-Duvall, S., & Kodet, J. (2015). Evaluating the Efficacy of Client Feedback in Group Psychotherapy. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 1-15. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/gdn0000026>

NOTES:





CCA Anger Management Group - 12 Session Model

Session 1 - Introduction

- o Expectations of Group Members
- o Costs of Anger Management Group
- o Confidentiality
- o Info for Court Referred clients
- o Better Outcomes Now
- o What is Anger Management
- o Overview of ACT
 - ACT focuses on accepting internal experiences rather than trying to control them.
 - **ACT core processes - Psychological Flexibility vs Rigidity**
 - Acceptance vs Experiential Avoidance
 - Defusion vs Cognitive Fusion
 - Self as Context vs Self as Concept
 - Contact with Present Moment vs Dominance of Conceptualized Past or Future
 - Values vs Lack of Clarity or Contact with Values
 - Committed Action vs Unworkable or Non-Valued Action
 - Present Moment Exercise : Breath Focus
- o Skill Development: Anger Behavior Chain Log

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Session 2 - What is Anger?

- o Present Moment Exercise: Body Scan
- o ACT Process - Willingness/Acceptance

Acceptance and Commitment

Hexaflex Model of Psychological Flexibility

High = Psychological Flexibility		Low = Psychological Rigidity
I willingly accept my thoughts and feelings even when I don't like them	Acceptance	I constantly struggle with my thoughts and feelings
I see each of my thoughts as just one of many ways to think about things-what I do next is up to me	Defusion	My thoughts tell me how things really are and what I need to do
The person I call “me” knows what I am thinking and feeling but is distinct from that process	Self as Context	The person I call “me” is my thoughts and feelings about myself
I flexibly pay attention to what is occurring in the present moment	Present Moment Awareness	I spend most my time on attentional autopilot
I am clear about my life focus and how I am being led by the Holy Spirit.	Virtues Clarity	I am uncertain my purpose in life, or how to determine this.
I identify the actions I need to take to put my heart focus into practice, and I have the courage to follow through	Commitment to Act	I don't manage to act on the things I care about

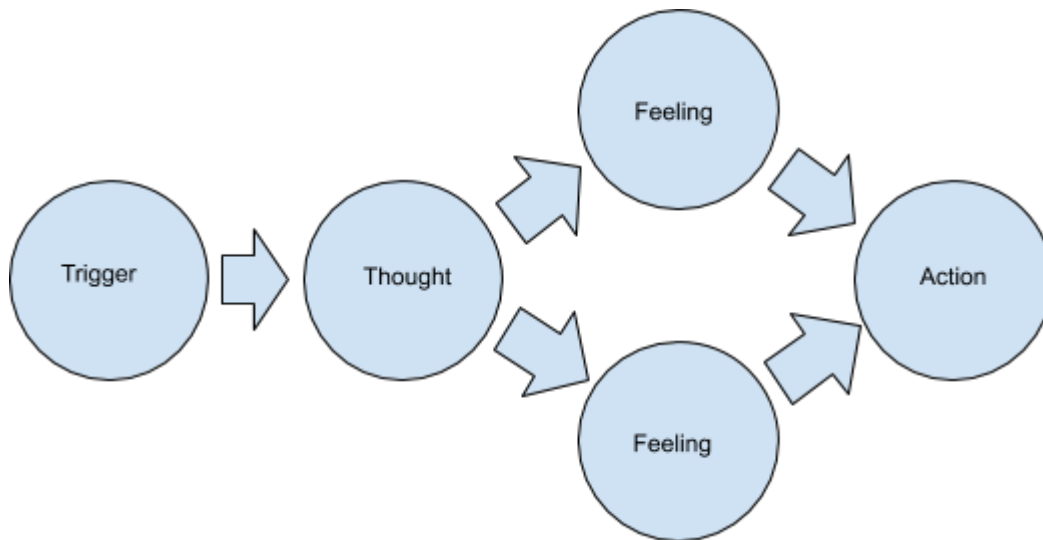
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Anger Behavior Chain

Instructions:

- (1) Identify Triggers: What happened, with whom, and where. Who observed the interaction.
- (2) Thoughts - What did you expect from the anger target (I think he/she should have), what thoughts made you mad?
- (3) Feelings - What did you feel and where in your body.
- (4) Action - Describe what you did or said. What did the anger target do in reaction? What was the outcome of the situation?



Journal Date:

Time:

Trigger:

Thoughts:

Feeling:

Action:

- o Myths about Anger
 - Myth 1: Anger and aggression are instinctual in humans
 - Myth 2: Frustration leads to Aggression
 - Myth 3: Venting your anger is healthy
 - Myth 4: Anger is always helpful
 - Myth 5: A person's anger is caused by others
- o Definition of anger
- o Five Parts of Anger
- o Healthy vs. Unhealthy Anger
- o Creative Hopelessness
- o Assessing the Costs of Anger
- o Control as the Problem: Controlling Thoughts, Feelings, and Bodily Sensations
- o Metaphors for Control
- o Controlling Others - 2 lies
 - 2 Things We Can Control

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Session 3 - Ways of Expressing Anger

- o Formal Practice: Five-Minute Watchful Breathing
- o ACT Process - Defusion
- o In What Important Ways Is Anger Affecting My Life?
 - Frequency
 - Duration
 - Intensity
 - Impact on Others
 - Impact on Life Tasks
 - Impact on Health

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Session 4 - The Role of Thoughts in Anger Arousal

- o Present Moment Exercise Watchful Observation of Thoughts
- o ACT Process - Defusion
- o How the Mind Creates Anger
 - Thoughts: A Bridge from Events to Feelings
 - Anger Trigger Thoughts
 - Ways our thoughts can create or intensify anger feelings
- o Defusion as an Alternative
- o Action as an Alternative

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Session 5 - Cognitive Distortions: How You Think Determines How You Feel

- o ACT Process - Contact the Present/Watchfulness
- o Why are some situations so aggravating?
- o Three Steps to Belief Change
 - Step 1: Identify unhelpful core beliefs
 - Step 2: Identify self-talk that keeps unhelpful beliefs in place
 - Step 3: Engage in New Behavior That Agrees with and Supports Your New Belief.
- o Cognitive Distortions (Beck)
- o Recognizing Constructive Thoughts: The Three Criteria

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Session 6 - Understanding the physical signs of anger arousal

- o Present Moment Exercise: Body Scan
- o ACT Process - Self as Context
- o Awareness
- o Biological Basis of Anger
 - The Brain/Central Nervous System/Endocrine System
 - Activation of Neuroendocrine processes
 - Adrenaline/Cortisol
 - Autonomic Nervous System
 - Sympathetic/Parasympathetic Nervous System
 - Fight or Flight Response
 - Biological Condition: Flooding
- o Conditions that cause us to use the Primitive Brain - HALT
 - HALT - Hungry, Anxious, Lonely, Tired
 - Sickness
 - Substances

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Session 7 - Introduction to the STOP method of Anger management

- o ACT Process - Self as Context
- o What have we learned so far?
- o Effective Anger Management Strategy
 - Be aware of your body, mind, and actions
 - Identify your level of anger arousal.
 - Use tools that will help
 - Identify and challenge
 - Problem-solve a plan
 - Equip yourself
- o The STOP Method
 - Stop - whatever you are doing, saying, etc.

- Think - Take a breath
- Observe whatever you are feeling.
- Pick a behavior to try instead of automatic anger behaviors.
- o To understand anger, we must look at our underlying expectations.
 - Anger is triggered when our expectations are not met.
 - Unrealistic Expectations: Yourself
 - Unrealistic Expectations: Others
 - Unrealistic Expectations: The World
 - Worksheet: Crafting Realistic Expectations
- o Revisit Anger Behavior Chain Analysis - Create Levels of Anger
 - 3 Steps for creating a Personal Anger Scale
 - Step 1: Focus Trigger Section of Log on inner sensations
 - Step 2: Differentiate Mild, Moderate, and Severe Indicators across Triggers, Thoughts, Feelings, Actions
 - Step 3: Place Indicators on a 1 - 10 - Personal Anger Scale
- o Derailing Anger
 - Early Awareness of Anger Patterns
 - The Danger Zone

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Session 8 - Skills for Dampening Anger Arousal

- o Watchfulness - Autogenic Phrases to Achieve Quick Relaxation
- o ACT Process - Virtues
- o Relaxation Techniques
 - Diaphragmatic Breathing
 - Progressive Muscle Relaxation
 - Autogenic Phrases
 - Imagery
 - Distraction
 - Watchfulness

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Session 9 - Virtues

- o ACT Process - Virtues
- o Values vs. Virtues
 - Defining Virtues in ACT
 - Virtues are an ever present guide in life
 - We can choose a Virtues Focus
- o Virtues are not Goals
 - Describe the difference between virtues and goals
- o Worksheet - Virtues Compass Worksheet

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Session 10 - Forgiveness as the Antidote to Uncontrolled Anger

- o ACT Process - Virtues
- o Facing Your Anger And Hurt
- o Important Considerations
- o Unforgiveness is ...
- o Hook Metaphor
- o Forgiveness
- o Barriers to Forgiveness
- o Trying To Forgive Versus Forgiving
- o Four Steps to Forgiveness

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Session 11 - Successful Communication

- o ACT Process - Committed Action
- o How Well Do You Communicate?
- o What Is Successful Communication?
- o Three Parts of Communication
 - Para-Language Communications
 - Nonverbal Communication
 - Content of Communication
- o Communication Roadblocks
- o The “I” Message of Personal Awareness
 - Structure of an “I” message
- o The Mixed Message
- o Become an active listener
 - Important guidelines for becoming an active listener

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Session 12 - Putting it all together

- o ACT Process - Committed Action
 - o Becoming Goal Oriented
 - o Next Steps

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