

ANGER MANAGEMENT Made Simple

A Proven Step-By-Step Guide To Controlling Your Anger In Any Situation



Alastair Duhs

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About The Author:

Alastair Duhs is a specialist anger management counsellor living in Auckland, New Zealand.

Outside of work he loves to kayak around the beautiful coast of New Zealand. Over the last few years he has kayaked with pods of Orca, dolphins, seals and a Southern Right Whale.

Alastair is also a keen triathlete, competing in 5 Ironman events and 20 half Ironman events. Right now he is probably training for his next Ironman event!

His other hobbies (in his spare time!) include playing chess and doing astronomy. On clear nights there's a good chance you'll catch him outside with his telescope exploring the night sky with as much fascination as he did when he was a young child.

Alastair can be contacted about any aspect of this ebook at his website:

AngerExpert.co.nz



New Zealand Ironman 2015

Introduction

Have you ever:

- lashed out at others in anger?
- said or done something to hurt someone you love during an argument?
- told your partner "this will never happen again"?
- heard your child say "Daddy-I'm scared. Please stop"?

If you have answered "**Yes**" to any of these questions, then you are in the right place. Although it is difficult to admit, up to 1 in 5 people have difficulty controlling their anger.

Luckily the tools to manage your anger are easy to learn. In fact, in this ebook I am going to teach you the **four main tools** that anyone who wants to control their anger needs to know!

Once you understand these tools you can use them to **control your anger in any situation**. You will never have to:

- worry about destroying a relationship with someone you love just because you can't keep control of your anger
- hear your partner or children say that they are scared of you
- feel bad about what you did or said last night when you got into a rage, or
- lose your temper with other drivers on the roads.

Sound good? Then let's move on...

Who Am I?

My name is Alastair Duhs. I am an anger management counsellor living in the beautiful city of Auckland, New Zealand.

In the last 25 years I have taught over 6,500 men and women to control their anger in **any** situation.

In fact, it was early in 1992 that I ran my first anger management program. I was 22 years old. In the room with me were 25 angry men and women, all wanting to know how to control their anger, heal their relationships and live the calm, respectful and happy lives that they *really wanted* to live.

No pressure, of course.

I don't remember what I said that day.

But I do remember that in the next 25 years I sat in the same room, as well as many other rooms, with thousands of men and women just like these first 25.

I also remember gradually *refining* the anger management tools and ideas that I was teaching.

And I remember getting *better* at teaching these men and women the tools to control their anger. Soon these men and women were making changes in **days** that would have previously taken them **weeks** or even **months** to learn.

Teaching people the tools to control their anger become **easy** for me.

Learning these tools became **easy** for the men and women I was working with.

This ebook (and my online anger management courses) are the culmination of these 25 years of work.

This ebook is also a testimony to the men and women I have worked with over these 25 years. I am appreciative to everyone I have worked with for opening their lives up to me.

My Promise To You

I promise that the anger management tools in this ebook are **powerful**. They will help you to:

- **control** your anger in any situation
- **learn** to have calmer, happier and more respectful relationships
- **help** you be a better partner and parent.

Put simply, these tools can change your life!

What Others Say

Don't want to take my word for it?

In the last 25 years I have worked with thousands of men and women. Many of these men and women have given me feedback about these tools:

Tom, an ex-client of mine several years ago told me:

“Learning to manage my anger has been life-changing for me. I was in denial about so many things that were happening to me-especially my anger. Alastair has helped me realise that I did have a problem and has given me the tools not just to deal with my anger, but also to create a busy and happy and relationship with my wife and children.”

Michael, a recent ex-client said:

“Thank you for teaching me to manage my anger. I can now communicate with my partner without being violent and am more open to others. I now think before I act and to listen to others more. Thank You.”

Finally, Susan a mother and two and recent ex-client wrote to me a few months after our sessions, saying:

“The whole family can see a difference in me. I have learned the tools I need to control myself.”

The good news is that these results are typical!

Don't Wait!

While it has been incredibly satisfying helping so many people to control their anger, there is one common obstacle to people putting these skills into action.

This obstacle is: **Procrastination!**

Too many people assume that anger will take care of itself, or if it doesn't, that *one day* they will get around to learning how to control their anger.

Unfortunately I have seen this thinking lead to so many arguments between people that could have been avoided. **It is time** to learn **how** to control your anger, and it is time to learn to do this **now!**

Now that you have the tools to control your anger in your possession, I want you to promise that you **will** practice these tools.

And if you **practice** these tools, **I promise** that these tools can change your life. Just like many thousands of men and women before you, you **can** learn how to control your anger (and stay calm) in any situation!

Let's get started!

"I created Anger Management Made Simple because people were telling me that anger management is hard. It's not. By reading this ebook you will be able to transform the way you respond to anger-creating a calmer, happier and more relaxed life."

Alastair Duhs, AngerExpert.co.nz

Confused? Stuck? Need help?



If you need **further help** to control your anger, please reach out to me. I can be contacted via my website:

www.angerexpert.co.nz

On this website you can access further ebooks and resources, **online anger management courses** or individual anger management coaching (via Skype) with myself.

I look forward to hearing from you.



Alastair Duhs

FAQ

Let's start with some frequently asked questions!

DOES ANGER MANAGEMENT WORK?

The short answer to this question is "Yes!".

I have developed the **anger management** tools described in this ebook after working with over 6,500 men and women in the last 25 years.

The results that these men and women have achieved show that these tools **work**. Let's look at the changes some of these men and women have made in their own words:

Tom, an ex-client of mine several years ago told me:

*"Learning to manage my anger has been **life-changing** for me. I was in denial about so many things that were happening to me-especially my **anger**. You have helped me realise that I did have a problem and given me the **tools** not just to deal with my anger, but also to **create a happy and healthy relationship** with my wife and children."*

Michael, a recent ex-client said:

"Thank you for teaching me to manage my anger. I can now communicate with my partner without being violent and am more open to others. I now think before I act and to listen to others more. Thank You."

Finally Susan, a mother of two and recent ex-client wrote to me a few months after our sessions saying:

*"The **whole family** can see a difference in me. I have learned the tools I need to **control** myself."*

It is important to note that the tools and techniques in this ebook **do not** work by themselves. To get results you need to **take action**. Like mastering any sport or

musical instrument, you need to **practice** these tools and techniques to learn how to control your anger.

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HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO CHANGE MY ANGER?

The best answer to this question is “It depends”.

I have worked with people who have used the **tools** and **techniques** contained in this ebook and put them into practice **immediately** to get **almost instant** results.

I have also worked with people who have learned the tools and techniques contained in this ebook but have **struggled** to get results.

What is the **difference** between these two groups?

The answer to this question is very simple:

The main difference between the people that **get quick results** and those that **struggle** is the level of **responsibility** people take for their anger.

The people that get **quick** results take **responsibility** for their anger. They look at their **own actions** and how to change them rather than looking at the actions of others. They **do not blame** others for their anger.

The people that change slowly are the opposite. They do not take responsibility for their anger. Instead they **focus other people**-often **blaming** them for how *they* respond.

They say things like “I wouldn’t have lost my temper if she didn’t nag me so much” or “The kids were being so naughty. Anyone would lose their temper.”

They **blame** other people for their actions and do not focus on **themselves**.

If you focus on how **other** people are acting, *or* if your change is **conditional** on another person changing-these tools will **not** work well for you.

However if you take **responsibility** for **your** anger, *and* if you *know* that **you need to change for yourself** regardless of how other people are acting, then you can learn to change your anger **very quickly!**

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WHAT IF MY PARTNER HAS AN ANGER ISSUE TOO?

If you are in a relationship where you and your partner both have issues of anger, I strongly advise you **both** read this ebook.

This way you will both learn the **tools** that you need to control your anger. You will also be able to help each other put these tools in practice.

However, if your partner is not ready to admit that they have an issue of anger, then it is important to understand that you **cannot control** this.

It is up to your partner, and your partner only, to seek help for anger when he or she is ready.

Even though you **cannot control** if your partner is ready to seek help, you **can** get the help **you** need to control your anger. Reading this ebook is a good first step to doing this.

Once you start learning the tools to control your anger, often your partner will notice this. He to she will then think about *their* actions. Often they will then realise that they also have an issue with anger.

At this stage they will **freely choose** to deal with their anger issues, and your relationship will then start to thrive.

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WHAT IF MY PARTNER IS VIOLENT TO ME?

In all cases **safety** is paramount.

If you are feeling **unsafe** at any time due to the actions of your partner, you should seek help from a local domestic violence agency.

If you are in a relationship situation where you are unsafe, it does not help anyone for **you** to **stay** in this situation. So reach out as soon as possible to get help. This will help your partner, you children and yourself in the long run.

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WHAT CAN I DO IF I NEED MORE SUPPORT?

It is common for questions to come up as you read through this ebook. There may be parts of this ebook that you do not fully understand or have difficulty putting into practice.

Fortunately, you do not need to learn to control your anger alone. In fact, when there are many people out also struggling to control their anger, why would you?

To help support you in this course, I strongly recommend that you join my FREE Anger Change Facebook Group. In this group you can ask any questions you have about controlling your anger. You can also share your successes and read about the successes of others.

In my Anger Change Facebook Group you will often get an answer to your question in minutes or hours.

You can access my Anger Change Facebook group using the following link:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/angerchange/>

If you need more support than this, you are welcome to enrol in any on my online anger management courses. Each course come with a fully supported version that entitles you to unlimited FREE 90 day email support directly from me.

If you are enrolled in a fully supported program I will personally answer any question you have about learning to control your anger. Often in these answers I will also include videos and other useful links to answer your question as fully as possible.

You can access my online anger management courses using the link below:

<https://angerexpert.co.nz/store>

Finally, if you would like face-to-face anger management coaching I provide individual online anger management coaching to anyone who requests it.

You can book an individual face-to-face anger management coaching with me using the link below:

<http://angerexpert.co.nz/book-now/>

What Is Anger, Abuse and Violence?

When I teach men and women how to **control** their anger in *any* situation, one of the first questions I ask is this:

What is anger?

Usually I get many responses to this question, such as anger is:

- frustration
- rage
- an emotion
- a feeling
- shouting at someone
- hitting someone
- acting out of control

Take a look at these answers.

Do you think that any of these answers are correct? If so, which ones do you agree with? Which ones do you disagree with?

Once you have thought about these questions for a minute or two, it's time to read on.

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WHAT IS ANGER?

A good definition of **anger** can be found on Wikipedia. According to Wikipedia (June 2018):

“Anger is an intense emotional response...It is an emotion that involves a strong uncomfortable and emotional response to a perceived provocation, hurt or threat.”

Let's look at each part of this definition.

Part 1: Anger is an intense emotional response.

There are two things to notice about this sentence.

Firstly, anger is *intense*.

Most of us know this.

We have all experienced times when anger seems like it takes control of us. It can feel almost impossible to manage this anger. Sometimes anger is so intense we do not even notice when we are angry-we just **react** to the event that is causing the anger.

The second part of this sentence states that anger is an **emotional response**.

This is worth re-iterating.

Whatever anger is, anger is an **feeling** (or an **emotion**). While this can seem obvious in hindsight many people miss this important aspect of anger.

To understand this more let's look at the definitions of anger given above.

Three of these definitions (namely shouting at someone, hitting someone or acting out of control) are **actions**. They are **not feelings**.

We may choose to shout at someone, hit someone or act out of control, for instance when we are angry-but shouting at someone, hitting someone or acting out of control are **actions** we take when we are angry. They are **not** anger itself.

To re-state this point:

Anger is a feeling (or an emotion).

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The second part of Wikipedia's definition states that anger is:

“Anger is an emotion that involves a strong uncomfortable and emotional response to a perceived provocation, hurt or threat”.

In other words, **anger is a response to a perceived provocation, hurt or threat.**

The key word in this definition is the word **perceived**. Anger is **not** a response to an **actual provocation, hurt or threat**, but instead to something **we perceive** as a provocation, hurt or threat.

To help us understand this, suppose you are relaxing at home watching television. Your wife enters the room and criticises you, calling you “lazy” or “unhelpful”.

Many men would perceive these comments as a **personal attack** on themselves. They then respond to their wife’s perceived criticism with defensiveness, anger or criticism in return.

If you are in this situation however, it is important to keep in mind that there **many other ways** to perceive your wife’s comments.

For example, your wife may be disappointed, hurt or upset. She may be having a bad day looking after the children for example and be struggling to cope. Her criticism of you may be a cry for help.

In other scenarios your wife may be stating a fact. You may “lazy” or “unhelpful” at times-and this time may be one of them!

If you are able to perceive your wife’s comments in these ways, you would be **more likely** to respond with sympathy or empathy to her-rather than defending yourself or creating an argument.

The point of this example is that there are **many ways** to **perceive** any situation, and that it is **our perception** of the situation that creates our anger.

In other words, **it is not what happens to us that creates our anger-it is our thoughts or perceptions about the events that happen to us that create our anger.**

Let’s summarise what we have learned so far:

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SUMMARY:

- Anger is an emotion (or a feeling)
- Anger is a response to a **perceived** provocation, hurt or threat, and

- It is **not** the events that happen to us that cause our anger-but our thoughts or **perceptions** about the events that happen to us that cause our anger.

Let's move on...

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WHAT IS ABUSE?

As with the question “What is Anger?” this may seem to be a very simple question.

Let's look at some of the most common answers I get to this question when I ask the men and women that I work with.

These answers are:

Abuse is:

- shouting at someone
- causing someone harm
- hitting someone
- anger
- hurting someone
- justified in some circumstances
- breaking things
- alcohol and drugs

Take a few minutes to think about these answers for yourself.

Do you think any of these answers are correct? If so, why? If not, why do you disagree with these answers?

Think about these questions for a minute or two.

Once you have done this, it's time to read on.

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WHAT IS ABUSE?: WIKIPEDIA'S DEFINITION

Again Wikipedia gives a good starting definition of abuse. Wikipedia (June 2018) defines abuse as:

“Abuse is the improper usage or treatment of an entity, often to unfairly or improperly gain benefit. Abuse can come in many forms, such as: physical or verbal maltreatment, injury, assault, violation, rape, unjust practices, crimes, or other types of aggression.”

This definition of abuse clearly covers abuse to both people and to objects. If we focus on abuse to people, Wikipedia says that abuse is:

“the improper treatment of a person, often to unfairly or improperly gain benefit”.

While this is a good definition of abuse, I use a different definition when I work with people who experience anger management issues.

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WHAT IS ABUSE? - MY DEFINITION:

When working with people who experience anger management issues, the first thing about abuse I tell them is that whatever abuse is, **abuse is an action.**

This makes it different to anger-which is a **feeling.**

So the first distinction between **anger** and **abuse** is that **anger is a feeling, whereas abuse is an action.**

To understand this more let's look at the definitions of abuse given above.

The first thing to note about these answers is that that only some of these answers are **actions.** These answers include:

- shouting at someone
- hitting someone
- hurting someone, and
- breaking things

While the other answers are not wrong-it is **more useful** to think of **abuse as an action (while anger is a feeling).**

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TYPES OF ABUSE:

Once you understand that **abuse** is an **action**, the next natural question to ask is:

What types of actions are abusive?

While there are many examples of abusive actions, I find it most useful to group these actions into **5 categories**. These categories are:

- **Verbal abuse**
- **Emotional abuse**
- **Psychological abuse**
- **Physical abuse** and
- **Sexual abuse.**

Let's look at each of these categories of abuse in more detail.

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VERBAL ABUSE:

Of all the types of abuse, verbal abuse is one of the most common.

Examples of verbal abuse include:

- putting someone down (such as calling someone "lazy", "good for nothing" or worse)
- name-calling
- blaming others for things they have not done
- criticising someone (telling them they are "no good", "worthless" and so forth)
- ordering someone to do something
- undermining someone (such as telling them they are "stupid" or "worthless"-often done in front of other person)
- threatening someone

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EMOTIONAL ABUSE:

The second category of abuse is emotional abuse. Emotional abuse is perhaps the most common type of abuse in relationships.

A good definition of emotional abuse is:

“Emotional abuse is any kind of abuse that is emotional rather than physical in nature. It can include anything from verbal abuse and constant criticism to more subtle tactics, such as intimidation, manipulation, and refusal to ever be pleased.”

(from “The Emotionally Abused Woman”, by Beverly Engel)

Another way to define emotional abuse is that:

“Emotional abuse is any attempt to hurt someone or make them feel bad in a non-physical way”.

In this definition, verbal abuse is also an example of emotional abuse.

Examples of emotional abuse include:

- insulting someone’s family or friends
- ridiculing a person or their beliefs
- constantly criticising someone
- ignoring a person
- using put downs to make someone feel bad about themselves
- humiliating someone
- threatening to harm yourself
- denial of past events
- using “silent treatment”
- keeping someone prisoner in their home
- checking someone’s phone or Facebook messages without permissions and
- texting someone excessively.

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EFFECTS OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE:

Emotional abuse has significant effects on people that the abuse is targeted towards. These effects often include:

- feelings of anxiety and confusion
- depression
- loss of self-esteem
- withdrawal from social activities
- sleep issues
- anger and resentment

Victims of emotional abuse often:

- **question** their own memory, such as by asking “Did this event really happen?”
- **feel like** they are walking on eggshells
- **feel** powerless and defeated
- **think** that they can never do anything right or that there is no way to get out of a situation.
- **experience** mood instability and anger outbursts

Over time, the effects of emotional abuse build up. People who have been subject to emotional abuse over long periods of time often report:

- feeling depressed or suicidal
- low self-confidence
- emotional withdrawal from relationships, including looking for relationship with people who make them feel more valuable as a person
- substance abuse
- chronic anger
- feeling trapped or alone
- loss of sexual desire

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PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE:

The third category of abuse is psychological abuse. This is also sometimes called mental abuse.

Psychological abuse is any type of “mind-game” that affects another person.

In other words, psychological abuse is an attempt to **manipulate** the **thinking** of another person.

Some common examples of psychological abuse include:

- frequently lying to your partner
- deliberately deceiving your partner (such as saying one thing and doing another)
- emotionally blackmailing your partner
- telling your partner that he or she is crazy
- withholding information from your partner
- engaging in unpredictable mood swings

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PHYSICAL ABUSE:

Physical abuse is perhaps the most obvious type of abuse. All of us have seen examples of physical abuse. Many of us would have been subject to physical abuse.

Examples of physical abuse include:

- pushing your partner
- breaking objects or furniture
- pulling your partners hair
- throwing objects at or near your partner to scare them
- slapping your partner
- attempting to choke or strangle your partner

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SEXUAL ABUSE:

(Note:

- a) *In this ebook I focus on sexual abuse between adults who are in relationship with each other. Sexual abuse of children is very common-however that is not the subject of this ebook. If you have been sexually abused as a child it is important to seek help to process this. In most countries there are a variety of agencies and counsellors that can help you to do this.*
- b) *In the text below I assume the sexual abuser is a man and the victim of sexual abuse is a women. Although this is the most common scenario, it is very important to acknowledge that men also experience sexual abuse in relationships).*

The fifth type of abuse to look at is **sexual abuse**.

Although it is a difficult topic to talk about, sexual abuse is a very common in relationships.

Let's start by looking at my definition of sexual abuse:

“Sexual abuse is any attempt to pressure your partner to engage in or perform sexual actions against his or her will.”

You will note from this definition that sexual abuse is not just trying to have sex with your partner when she does not want to (although that also fits into the definition of sexual abuse). Other examples of sexual abuse include:

- pressuring your partner to wear provocative clothing
- making her watch pornography against her will
- having unsafe (unprotected) sex with her
- making her have sex in ways that she does not want to
- having an affair with another person
- humiliating or degrading her sexually
- sulking or getting angry if she does not have sex with you
- sexually touching your partner in ways that she is not comfortable with
- making your partner act out sexual fantasies that she is not comfortable with

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SUMMARY:

Let's summarise what we have learned about **abuse** so far. We have learned that:

- **Abuse is an action**
- There are **five main categories** of abuse, namely **verbal abuse**, **emotional abuse**, **psychological abuse**, **physical abuse** and **sexual abuse**
- There are many examples of each type of abuse

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WHAT IS VIOLENCE?

The usual definition for violence I give people is the following:

“Violence is the improper usage or treatment of an entity, often to unfairly or improperly gain benefit. Violence can come in many forms, such as: physical or verbal maltreatment, injury, assault, violation, rape, unjust practices, crimes, or other types of aggression.”

Have a look at this definition closely.

You may notice that you have seen it before.

This definition of violence is *exactly* the same as the definition that Wikipedia gives for abuse.

In my opinion, there is **no difference** between **abuse** and **violence**. In other words, **abuse and violence are the same thing**.

Using this definition means that if you have been **abusive** in any way to your partner (such as by yelling at her, swearing at her, making threats or putting her down), then you have engaged in an **act of violence**.

In essence, you are being violent towards your partner.

Many men I work with do not like this statement.

If they have lost their temper at their partner, they are ready to admit that they have been angry, but often they are reluctant to admit that they have also been **abusive** or **violent**.

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WHY ARE ABUSE AND VIOLENCE THE SAME THING?

As I talk with men and women about abuse and violence, we often discuss their childhood.

Unfortunately, these people have often experienced anger, abuse or violence in their childhood.

For example, some people remember arguments between their father and mother. They may recall their fathers shouting at their mothers, belittling them or telling them they are “good for nothing”, “worthless” or “hopeless”.

At times these men and women may have also experienced abuse or violence from their mothers. Sometimes this is a result of the abuse that their mother has experienced.

Other people remember experiencing physical abuse as a child. They may have been hit by one parent, for example, after they have done something naughty. Or one parent may have come home drunk and hit them for no reason.

At these times the abusive parent would usually say cruel things-often words designed to hurt them, embarrass them or humiliate them.

When I discuss these events with the clients I work with, I often ask them which had the most effect on them: the physical abuse or the emotional abuse?

Almost always, the answer is the **emotional abuse**.

Trevor, a man I worked with recently, said this very clearly.

“I didn’t mind so much the pain when my father used to beat me. But I could tell just by the look in his eyes that he hated me when he was doing this. His look was of contempt, as if he couldn’t believe that I had been so stupid. I felt like such a disappointment to him when we looked at me like that. I think I have never recovered from this. That is hard for anyone to cope with-knowing that your father hates you. It still makes me sad when I think about it.”

Trevor’s story is very common.

Verbal abuse, emotional abuse, psychological abuse and sexual abuse can have the same, if not **worse** effects than **physical violence**.

For this reason I believe there is no difference between **abuse** and **violence**. They both hurt others, make them afraid or control other people. And if you have engaged in any form of **abuse** towards another person, then you have engaged in **violence** towards them.

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ARE YOU ABUSIVE OR VIOLENT?

By now, you should have a very clear idea what **anger, abuse and violence** are. It is time however to answer a more personal question:

Are you abusive or violent?

To help you answer this question, I have written a short quiz called:

“Is Anger, Abuse Or Violence An Issue For You?”

This quiz consists of 25 behaviours that many victims of abuse in relationships report experiencing. You can access this quiz using the link below:

<https://angerchange.com/are-you-abusive-or-violent/>

At the end of the quiz I will assess your level of **abuse** or **violence**. I will also give you suggestions for how to address your level of abuse or violence.

Please note that few people are entirely **free** of abuse and violence in a relationship.

Again, you can access this quiz here:

<https://angerchange.com/are-you-abusive-or-violent/>

Early Warning Signs

THE KEY TO ANGER MANAGEMENT:

In the last 25 years I have run anger management programs with literally thousands of men and women.

Take Peter, for instance. A successful 50 year old boat builder, Peter's marriage to Jane broke down because of Peter's issues with anger.

Peter is distraught about this. He enters my office quietly. Within a few minutes of telling me his situation, he breaks down in tears. He would do anything to control his temper, he says, if only he knew *how* to do it.

Peter understands that anger is a problem for him and is **highly motivated** to learn to control his anger.

As Peter looks at me ready for help, I tell him that there is **one simple key** to anger management.

This key is ***awareness***.

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WHAT IS AWARENESS?:

Awareness is the ability to tell **when you getting tense, frustrated or angry in a situation.**

The key to learning to control your anger is **awareness.**

Often I explain this concept in this way:

If you are not *aware* of how you are feeling in a situation, you *cannot change* how you are acting in that situation.

If you are *aware* of how you are feeling, you *can* change how you are acting in that situation.

These statements are so important let's repeat them one more time:

The key to learning to control your anger is **awareness**.

If you are not *aware* of how you are feeling in a situation, you *cannot change* how you are acting in that situation.

If you are *aware* of how you are feeling, you *can* change how you are acting in that situation.

The main question people usually ask me at this point is:

*"If the key to anger management is awareness, how can I **become aware** when I am getting angry?"*

The answer to this question lies in a concept called **Early Warning Signs**.

So, what are Early Warning Signs?

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EARLY WARNING SIGNS:

Early Warning Signs are **signs** that a person is becoming tense, frustrated or angry.

Let's return to Peter, for example.

"When I argue with Jane" he said me, "it always starts with Jane saying something critical to me. She might tell me that I'm too lazy around the house, for instance, or she may be pissed off that I have forgotten to get milk from the supermarket."

"At these times, I get defensive. I feel annoyed, because I think that she doesn't care about me and my day. I'm really busy at work and sometimes I'm so tired when I get home that I just want to collapse on the couch. So when she starts criticising me, I feel judged. My heart starts to beat faster. I get really fidgety. And I say mean things back to her. Sometimes I think bad things about her in my head. I then I might call her bad names. I know I shouldn't, but I do, And when I start doing that, then it's all on after that."

What Peter is describing are his **Early Warning Signs** that he is **starting** to get tense, frustrated or angry in this situation.

For Peter, and for all of us, **recognising** our Early Warning Signs is a key step in learning to control our anger in *any* situation (and to creating happy, healthy and loving relationships).

Let's look at this further:

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EARLY WARNING SIGNS: FOUR CATEGORIES

Although people experience different Early Warning Signs, there are four **categories** of Early Warning Signs that people can experience. These are:

- **Physical (Body) Sensations**
- **Actions**
- **Thoughts**, and
- **Feelings.**

Let's look at each of these categories:

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PHYSICAL (BODY) SENSATIONS:

Most people start to notice ***physical changes*** in their body when they begin to get tense, stressed or angry.

Peter for instance, says that his heart starts to beat faster when he starts to argue with Jane.

Other people may notice different **physical** Early Warning Signs. These may include:

- feeling hot
- feeling tension in their chest
- feeling tension in their shoulders
- their stomach starting to feel “queasy”
- feeling tension in jaw

There are many other examples of physical Early Warning Signs.

For anyone, becoming **aware** of these **physical Early Warning Signs** is vital to recognising that you becoming tense, frustrated or angry. And as have seen, this **awareness** is the first step in learning how to control our anger.

If you would like to learn how to control your anger (and after all isn't this why you are taking this email course?) take a few moments now to think about **your physical Early Warning Signs** of anger.

What happens in your body, for instance, as you start to get angry? What sensations do you notice? Is it heat? Is it tension? Does your heart starting to beat faster?

Whatever sensations you experience take a few moments now to write them down on a piece of paper. Some people print off this email and write their **physical** Early Warning Signs down in the space below.

Doing this simple exercise is the first step towards you gaining greater **awareness** of when you are starting to become tense, frustrated or angry-and hence the first step in learning *how* to control your anger!

My Physical Early Warning Signs of Anger Are:

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ACTIONS:

The next category of Early Warning Signs are **actions**.

Most people **act** differently as they are getting tense, frustrated or angry.

Peter for instance, said that when he starts to argue with Jane he:

- gets really fidgety
- says mean things back to her, and (sometimes)
- calls her bad names..

These are Peter's **action Early Warning Signs**.

Some other common **action Early Warning Signs** include:

- raising your voice
- swearing
- staring at someone
- banging objects
- driving faster (if in a car)
- going quiet
- sulking

There are many other examples of action Early Warning Signs.

As with your physical Early Warning Signs, becoming **aware** of these **action Early Warning Signs** is a crucial step in recognising when you becoming tense, frustrated or angry. And this awareness is the first step in learning *how* to control our anger.

Take a few minutes now to really think about how you **act** as you get tense, frustrated or angry.

Do you raise your voice, for example, as you get angry? Does your body language change? Do you bang, break or throw objects? Do you start to swear at the other person or call them names?

All of these signs are examples of **action Early Warning Signs**.

Whatever actions you take as you get tense, frustrated or angry, take a few moments now to write them down on a piece of paper. If you would like you can print off this email and write your **action** Early Warning Signs down in the space on the next page.

My Action Early Warning Signs of Anger Are:

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THOUGHTS:

The third category of Early Warning Signs are **thoughts**.

Most peoples **thinking** changes as they get tense, frustrated or angry

Peter for instance, said that when he starts to argue with Jane he:

- thinks that she doesn't care about me and my day, and
- thinks bad things about Jane in his head

These are Peter's **thought Early Warning Signs** that he is getting tense, frustrated or angry.

Some other common **thought Early Warning Signs** include thoughts such as:

- why is this happening to me?
- how can they be so stupid?
- I don't believe this!
- this isn't fair
- name-calling (such as "You %\$^^\$\$^")
- swearing
- negative judgements of others

There are many other examples of thinking Early Warning Signs.

As with your **physical** and **action** Early Warning Signs, becoming **aware** of your **thinking Early Warning Signs** is a crucial step in recognising when you becoming tense, frustrated or angry. And this awareness is the first step in learning *how* to control our anger.

Take a few minutes now to identify the types of **thoughts** you have as you get tense, frustrated or angry.

For example, do you criticise the other person in your head? Do you think “it is not fair”? Do you think that you are right and that the other person is wrong? Do you start to name-call or swear in your head?

All of these signs are examples of **thinking Early Warning Signs**.

Whatever thoughts you have as you get tense, frustrated or angry, take a few moments to write them down on a piece of paper. If you would like you can print off this email and write your **thinking** Early Warning Signs down in the space below.

My Thinking Early Warning Signs of Anger Are:

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FEELINGS:

The final category of **Early Warning Signs** are our **feelings**.

Just as our **bodies, actions** and **thoughts** change as we are becoming angry, so do our **feelings**.

Peter said that when arguments start with Jane he feels:

- defensive,
- annoyed, and
- judged

These are Peter's **feeling Early Warning Signs** that he is getting tense, frustrated or angry.

Some other common **feeling Early Warning Signs** include feelings such as:

- hurt
- disappointed
- let down
- powerless
- afraid
- humiliated
- jealous

There are many other examples of feeling Early Warning Signs.

As with your **physical, action** and **thinking** Early Warning Signs, becoming **aware** of your **feeling Early Warning Signs** is a crucial step in recognising when you are becoming angry. This awareness is the first step in learning *how* to control our anger.

Take a few minutes now to identify how you **feel** as you are becoming angry.

Do you feel hurt, for instance? Let-down? Judged? Or some other feeling?

All of these signs are examples of **feeling Early Warning Signs**.

Whatever feelings you experience as you get tense, frustrated or angry, take a few moments to write them down on a piece of paper. If you would like you can print off this email and write your **feeling** Early Warning Signs down in the space below.

My Feeling Early Warning Signs of Anger Are:

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SUMMARY:

We have covered a lot in this chapter!

Let's briefly recap what you have learned. You have learned:

- the **key** to anger management is **awareness**
- that if you are **not aware** of how you are feeling in a situation, you **cannot** change how you are acting in that situation
- if you **are aware** of how you are feeling, you **can** change many, many things in that situation.
- what **Early Warning Signs** are, and
- the four categories of **Early Warning Signs**

Hopefully you have also identified some of **your own** Early Warning Signs.

The Tension Scale

WHAT IS THE TENSION SCALE?

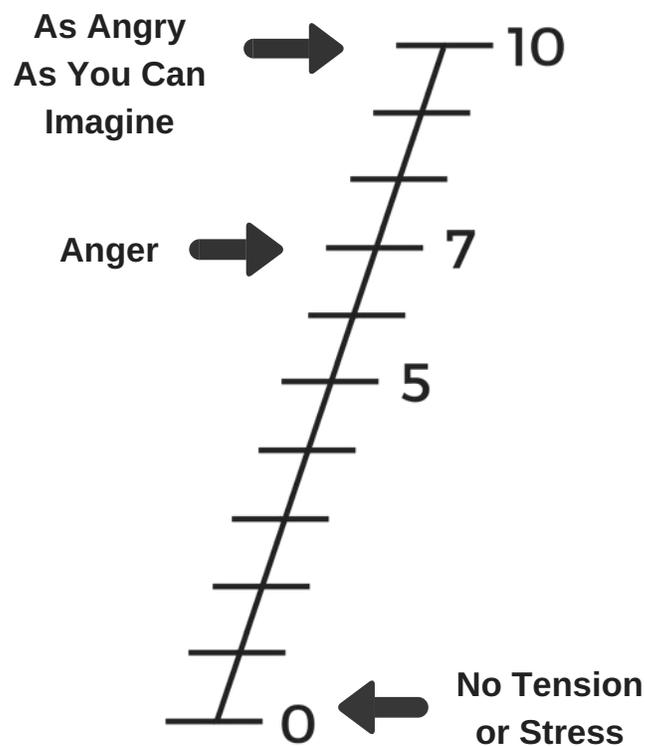
Most simply put, **The Tension Scale** is a scale from 0 - 10 that measures a person's level of tension or stress.

Sound simple?

It is, but as we will see the Tension Scale is perhaps the **most important anger management tool** of all!

As they say, a picture is worth a thousand words, so let's look at a diagram of a typical Tension Scale.

A Typical Tension Scale



On this Tension Scale, 0 represents having **no** tension or stress whatsoever. In today's busy world, having no tension or stress is very unusual!

On the top end of the Tension Scale, 10 indicates that a person is as angry as they can ever imagine.

This is also very unusual.

For most people our **tension levels** go up and down during the day.

If we are running late for a meeting, for instance, our tension levels **rise**. We then arrive at the meeting and realise that other people are also late, so our tension levels **fall**.

Later in the day we get home from work and realise that our children have decided to redecorate our house with paint that they have got from school. Unless they are skilled painters and redecorators, our tension levels will rise. But then our partner tells us that the paint is water-based and will wash off easily. So our tension levels fall again.

This process of rising and falling tension levels happens to us all.

While most people can handle this escalating and deescalating tension, in some situations people's tension continues to rise. We may be starting an argument with our partner and even though we are trying to control our anger, the situation may be making us very mad.

In these situations we may rise to about **7** on the Tension Scale. For most people this is the **anger point** of the scale. And if people get higher than 7 on the scale typically they may become **abusive** or **violent**.

While the Tension Scale is a very simple idea, **using it to recognise that our levels of tension and stress are rising *before* we lose control of our anger is perhaps the single most powerful anger management tool.**

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THE TENSION SCALE-BASIC CONCEPTS

Let's now discuss basic concepts to do with the Tension Scale. Although some of these concepts may seem obvious, they are worth thinking about in more detail.

Concept 1: The higher people get on the Tension Scale the less clearly they think.

Few of us think clearly when we are getting tense, stressed and angry.

In fact, the higher we get on the Tension Scale the less clearly we think.

This especially applies if you are getting to **6 or 7** on the Tension Scale. By this time you will be getting frustrated or angry. Your emotions will be starting to take you over. You will not be thinking clearly. You may start to say or do things that you do not mean.

You are simply too angry to think clearly.

Concept 2: Keeping your tension level down is important in making good choices about how to react to situations.

As we have said, people do not think clearly when they are getting to 6 or 7 on the Tension Scale. Therefore keeping your tension level down is important in making good choices about how to react to situations.

This especially applies when other people are angry at you. Keeping your tension low in these situations is always more useful than reacting from a high point on the Tension Scale.

In the next chapter you will learn your first tool for going **down** the Tension Scale.

Concept 3: The sooner you recognise where you are on the Tension Scale the easier it is to go down the Tension Scale.

Most people intuitively understand this. The higher you are on the Tension Scale, the harder it is to start going down the Tension Scale.

This is especially true if you are already angry.

People who are able to control their anger well **notice** when they are going up the Tension Scale **as early as possible** and use some **simple tools** to reduce their levels of tension, frustration or anger.

As mentioned, in the next chapter you will learn your first tool for going down the Tension Scale.

For the moment however, let us focus on **how to recognise** you are going up the Tension Scale.

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RECOGNISING YOUR LEVELS OF TENSION OR STRESS: USING THE EARLY WARNING SIGNS

The best way to recognise you are going **up** the Tension Scale is to use your **Early Warnings Signs**.

You will recall from the last chapter that your **Early Warning Signs** are the signs that you are becoming tense, frustrated or angry.

You also learned that there are **four categories** of Early Warning Signs, namely:

- **Physical (Body) Sensations**
- **Actions**
- **Thoughts**, and
- **Feelings**.

Some **examples** of Early Warning Signs include:

- **Physical (Body) Sensations:** feeling hot, feeling tense in your chest, tension in the shoulders, stomach starting to feel “queasy, feeling tension in your jaw
- **Actions:** raising your voice, swearing, staring at someone, banging objects, driving faster (if in a car), going quiet, sulking
- **Thoughts:** why is this happening to me, how can they be so stupid?, I don't believe this!, this isn't fair, name-calling (such as “You %\$^^\$\$^”), swearing, negative judgements of others, and
- **Feelings:** hurt, disappointed, let down, powerless, afraid, humiliated, jealous

It is now time to **plot** these Early Warning Signs onto the Tension Scale.

Let's do this by using Peter (who we met in the last lesson) as an example.

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PETER'S TENSION SCALE:

You may recall that Peter's Early Warning Signs included the following:

- **Physical Sensations:** heart beating faster
- **Actions:** getting fidgety, saying mean things to Jane and calling her bad names
- **Thoughts:** she doesn't care about me and thinking bad things about Jane, and
- **Feelings:** defensive, annoyed, and judged

After I explained the **Early Warning Signs** and **Tension Scale** I asked Peter to **plot** his Early Warning Signs onto the Tension Scale.

Peter's **Tension Scale** is shown below:

Peter's Tension Scale



Peter's Tension Scale is typical of the Tension Scale of most people-although everyone will experience different Early Warnings Signs at different points on the Scale.

As we have seen, becoming aware that you are going **up** the Tension Scale is vital in learning to **control your anger** in any situation. Remember from the last lesson:

If you are not *aware* of how you are feeling in a situation, you *cannot change* how you are acting in that situation.

If you are *aware* of how you are feeling, you *can change* how you are acting in that situation.

— — —

YOUR TENSION SCALE:

Now that you understand the idea of the Tension Scale take a few minutes to draw your own **Tension Scale** and plot your **Early Warning Signs** onto this scale.

I have included a blank Tension Scale on the next page that you can use for this exercise.

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SUMMARY:

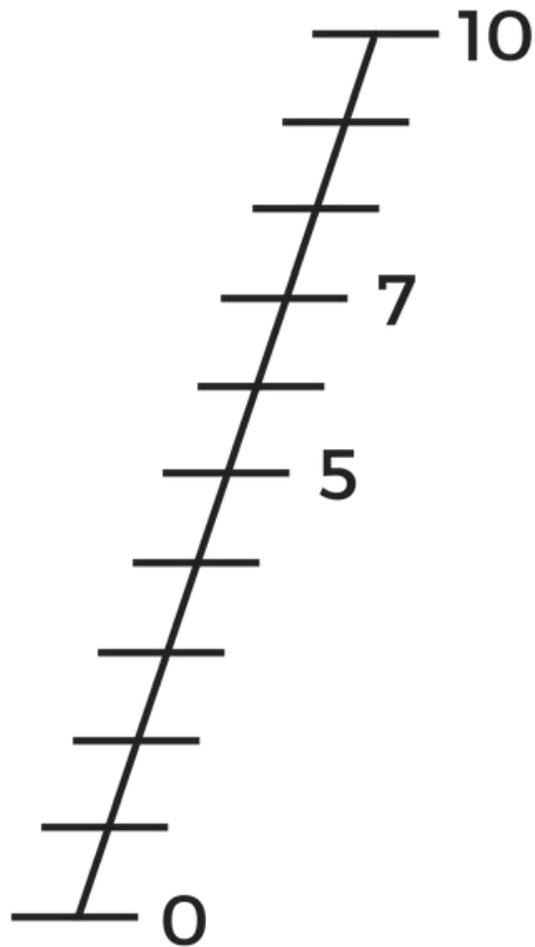
In this chapter you have learned:

- what the **Tension Scale** is, and
- how to use the **Early Warning Signs** to become **aware** of where you are on the Tension Scale.

In the next chapter it's time to learn how to go down the Tension Scale!

My Tension Scale

(include as many **Early Warning Signs** as possible)



Self-Talk

WHAT IS SELF-TALK?

You may not be aware of it, but we all experience **self-talk** all of the time.

Self-talk is the inner voice that we *all* have in our minds.

Right now, for instance, you may be having thoughts such as “This sounds interesting!” or “I don’t know what you are talking about!”.

These thoughts are examples of self-talk.

One way of thinking about self-talk is that self-talk is like a sports commentator that gives a play-by-play description of every event in our lives.

If our boss gives us a raise, for example, this inner commentator tells us that we should go out and celebrate. If we are late for work in the morning, the same inner commentator tells us our boss might tell us off.

For most of us the stream of self-talk that passes through our minds is very quick.

Think about a time, for instance, when you were driving your car and another driver cut you off.

In this situation most people automatically experience **self-talk** such as “That driver is an idiot!” or “That was dangerous!”.

These thoughts often pass through our mind without us being aware of them.

Although we may not always be aware of these thoughts, they **do** have an effect on us.

For most people, self-talk such as this takes us **up the Tension Scale**. We become angry. We may shout at the other driver, make rude gestures or try to pull him over.

The above example should start to show the **power** of self-talk. Self-talk goes through our heads every moment of every hour of every day. It is impossible to stop. And it affects us all.

To help you understand self-talk, it is useful to divide self-talk into two categories, namely:

- **negative self-talk** and
- **positive self-talk**.

— — —

NEGATIVE SELF-TALK:

Negative self-talk are any thoughts that take us up the Tension Scale.

Consider Peter for example, who we first met in chapter 3.

A 50 year old boat builder, Peter described his arguments with Jane as follows:

“When I argue with Jane” Peter said “it always starts with Jane saying something critical to me. She might tell me that I’m too lazy around the house, for instance, or she may be pissed off that I have forgotten to get milk from the supermarket.”

“At these times, I feel defensive” Peter said. “I get annoyed, because I think that she doesn't care about me and my day. I’m really busy at work and sometimes I’m so tired when I get home that I just want to collapse on the couch. So when she starts criticising me, I feel judged. My heart starts to beat faster. I get really fidgety. I think bad things about Jane in my head. Sometimes I say mean things back to her or put her down in some way. I know I shouldn't, but I do, And when I start doing that, then it’s all on after that.”

If we look at Peter’s words closely, we can see examples of Peter’s negative self-talk in action. If Jane says something critical to Peter, he thinks:

“She doesn't care about me and my car”.

Later on in the argument Peter starts to think “bad things” about Jane.

This **self-talk** is likely to take Peter **up** the Tension Scale. It is an example of **negative self-talk**.

Peter’s situation is typical of many people. When we get into situations that we do not like, we *often* experience **negative self-talk**.

Common examples of this **negative self-talk** include thoughts such as:

- You are being stupid!
- I can't stand this!
- If you say that one more time I'll leave!
- Here we go again
- This isn't right!
- You are wrong!
- I don't like this
- I don't need this!
- I want to hit him (or her)

There are many, many other examples of negative self-talk!

What all these thoughts have in common is that they are very likely to take the person thinking them **up** the Tension Scale.

— — —

UNDERSTANDING OUR OWN SELF-TALK:

When you become angry, it is **your self-talk** that is creating your anger. To help you understand this, take a few minutes now to carry out the following exercise:

Negative Self-Talk Exercise:

Think of a recent situation where you became tense, frustrated or angry. Try to recall the negative self-talk that you were experiencing in this situation. For example, were you:

- thinking negative thoughts about the other person?
- thinking negative thoughts about the situation?
- thinking thoughts such as "I don't need this!" or "This isn't right!"
- sweating or name-calling in your head?

Whatever negative self-talk you were experiencing, use the space below to write this self-talk down. This will help you create greater awareness of your negative self-talk in general.

My Negative Self-Talk:

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-
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Now that you have understood your negative self-talk more, it's time to look at **positive self-talk**.

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WHAT IS POSITIVE SELF-TALK?

Positive self-talk are any thoughts that take us **down** the Tension Scale.

To understand **positive self-talk** more, let's look Peter's situation again.

We have seen how Peter's **negative self-talk** helped take him up the Tension Scale.

However, there were also many points in this argument where he could have **changed** the self-talk that was going through his mind.

For example, when Jane would tell Peter that "he is lazy around the house" or that "he has forgotten to get milk from the supermarket" Peter would **think** that she doesn't care about him or his day.

As we have seen above, this is an example of **negative self-talk**. This negative self-talk takes Peter up the Tension Scale.

However, instead of thinking about this situation **negatively**, Peter could **change** his thinking.

In this situation for example, instead of thinking that Jane doesn't care about him or his day, Peter could think that Jane is stressed from looking after the children all day. She may be taking her stress out on Peter. And although this is not good, he could

realise that Jane just needs some reassurance or support from him-and not an angry or critical reaction.

In addition to this, Peter could also realise that Jane may be correct about some of what she is saying. If Peter looked deeply at the situation he may realise that yes, Jane is right and he could help out more around the house.

These new thoughts are examples of **positive self-talk**. They are likely to stop Peter going up the Tension Scale.

Peter's example is typical of many people. Most of us can benefit from changing our **negative self-talk** in situations such as this to **positive self-talk**.

Common examples of **positive self-talk** include:

- I need to think about the consequences before I act
- I need to take a few deep breaths
- I need to listen to the other person
- I may be wrong
- I don't need to react to this
- I can handle this
- If this person wants to throw a wobbly, thats their problem
- They need to vent their anger
- I don't have to buy into this
- It is more important to stay calm than it is to try and win the argument

There are many many other examples of positive self-talk.

To practice changing your **negative self-talk** to **positive self-talk** take a few minutes to do the following exercise.

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Positive Self-Talk Exercise:

Think of a recent situation where you became tense, frustrated or angry. Try to remember the **negative self-talk** that you were experiencing in this situation. If it is helpful, write this negative self-talk down.

Now think about how you could **change** this **negative self-talk** to **positive self-talk**.

For example, could you have de-escalated the situation in some way? If so, how? Could you have thought more about the other person's perspective? Could you have thought that maybe the other person has a good point of view? Could you have told yourself to take a few deep breaths in the situation or not to react to it?

Use the space below to write this positive self-talk down. This will help you in the future to stay low on the Tension Scale.

Positive Self-Talk I could have used in this situation to help me stay low on the Tension Scale includes:

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CHANGING SELF-TALK:

In this chapter we have seen:

- how **negative self-talk** takes you **up** the **Tension Scale**, making it far more likely you will become tense, frustrated, or angry and
- how **positive self-talk** can take you **down** the **Tension Scale**, helping you respond to any situation calmly.

At this point, many people know that they want to use positive self-talk more, but they don't know **how** to change their negative self-talk to positive self-talk.

Luckily, there is a very simple **key** to **changing** negative self-talk to positive self talk. This key is:

Awareness.

The key to changing negative self-talk to positive self-talk is Awareness.

Let's look at this further:

A fundamental principle of anger management is that you **cannot change** anything that you are not **aware** of. You **cannot change** your negative self-talk if you are not **aware** that you are engaging in negative self-talk.

The best way to become **aware** of negative self-talk is to notice your Tension Scale. If you are going **up** the Tension Scale, for instance, then you are engaging in negative self-talk.

For example, think about a recent time that you were arguing with someone.

During this argument you would have been experiencing some of the Early Warning Signs of anger. Your heart may have been beating faster. Your body may have been feeling hot. You may have been raising your voice or using aggressive body language. And almost certainly, you would have been engaging in **negative self-talk**.

As you go up the Tension Scale it is **vital** that you notice this negative self-talk.

Once you are aware of this **negative self-talk** then you should be able to make a **choice** about your thinking.

You could think, for example, "Do I want to keep using **negative self-talk** or do I want to use **positive self-talk** to calm the situation down?"

If you want to calm the situation down then (with practice) you can **choose** any appropriate positive self-talk statement to help you do this, such as thinking:

- "I don't need to react to this"
- "I need to stay calm" or
- "If I get angry there will be consequences."

— — —

THE POWER OF PRACTICE:

While the process of changing negative self-talk to positive self-talk is simple in theory, like any skill it takes **practice**.

Luckily, life gives us many opportunities to practice this skill!

We may be driving on the roads, for example, and another driver cuts us off.

This is an opportunity to practice changing our **negative self-talk** (such as “You idiot!”) to **positive self-talk** (such as “No big deal. I’ll slow down a bit to let him in!”).

Or, we may come home after a long day at work and our partner criticises us for being late.

This is another opportunity to practice changing our **negative self-talk** (such as “She is being so unfair!”) to **positive self-talk** (such as “She probably has been worried about me. I need to stay calm and apologise for not texting her.”)

Like any skill, the more you **practice** changing negative self-talk to positive self-talk the better you will get at being able to control your anger in **any** situation.

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SUMMARY:

In this chapter you have learned:

- What is **Self-Talk**
- **Negative Self-Talk** and **Positive Self-Talk**
- How To **Change** Negative Self-Talk To Positive Self-Talk, and
- The Power of **Awareness** And **Practice!**

Using **positive self-talk** is a **key skill** in helping you go down the Tension Scale.

However, there will be times when you may be too angry to change your thinking. In the next chapter I’ll introduce you to the main skill to use in these situations to stop you acting in angry, abusive or violent ways.

Time-Out

In the last three chapters you have learned how to use your **Early Warning Signs**, **Tension Scale** and **Positive Self-Talk** to stay calm in any situation.

However, even if you become very good at using these tools there may be some situations in which you still go up the Tension Scale. In these situations it may be difficult or impossible for you to stay in the situation without losing your temper or behaving in abusive or violent ways.

In these situations it is best that you leave the situation before you act in abusive or violent ways. The best way to do this is by taking a “Time-Out”.

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WHAT IS A TIME-OUT?

A **Time-Out** is where you leave a situation for an agreed period of time because your anger is getting out of control.

It is important to realise however that although Time-Outs do **not** solve arguments, they do **prevent arguments** from getting out of control or becoming abusive or violent.

Before a **Time-Out** can be used effectively however, it is important that you talk with your partner about Time-Out. During this discussion, you and your partner will need to decide:

- at what point on the Tension Scale you will take your Time-Out
- how long you will take Time-Out for, and
- where you will go during your Time-Out

You will also need to commit to coming back from your Time-Out in a calm state. At this time you and your partner should decide whether to:

- continue talking about the issue that led to the argument
- come back to this issue later, or

- drop the issue entirely.

— — —

TIME-OUT: AN EXAMPLE

Ross and Stacey came to see me several weeks ago for couples counselling.

In our first session Ross told me that he had experienced issues with anger for several years. Several months ago, he said, he and Stacey had their worst argument ever.

In this argument Ross verbally and emotionally abused Stacey and threatened to kill her.

Ross was extremely remorseful about his actions. He never wanted to act this way again. Ever since then, Ross said, if he feels his anger rising when he and Stacey argue, he leaves.

Ross calls this strategy “taking a Time-Out”.

While Ross leaving in this arguments is better than him becoming abusive or violent, Stacey has no idea where Ross is goes or when he will be back.

Stacey said this leaves her feeling very anxious. She mostly wonders if Ross has gone out drinking. This makes it worse for her, because she knows that Ross was drinking the night of the extremely bad argument.

Stacey also has no idea what mood Ross will be in when he comes back., Sometimes after these “Time-Outs” Ross returns just as angry as when he left. At these times Stacey backs down and agrees to anything Ross says, as she knows that at these times there is no pleasing him.

For these reasons Stacey tells me that she doesn’t like it with Ross uses Time-Out. She is left confused, frustrated and afraid, and says that that it would be better if Ross had simply stayed so that they can get the argument over with.

Ross’s intention to use Time-Out is good. However he is not using Time-Out well yet.

One reason for this is that Ross and Stacey have never sat down and discussed Time-Out together. They have also not worked out some basic aspects of Time-Out, such as if Ross leaves, where is he going to go and for how long?

After talking to Ross and Stacey together I suggested that they have this discussion.

The following week they came back to me and said that they had.

“Initially I wanted to use Time-Out to walk to the park. I was thinking I could stay there for about an hour and then come home” Ross said. “But Stacey pointed out that it often takes me longer than an hour to calm down. And she knows that my favourite pub was on the way to the park-so she didn’t trust me not to start drinking there. So I agreed to go to the park a different way. And instead of staying there for an hour I agreed to wait for two hours before coming home”.

Ross use of Time-Out is now much better. If he needs to take a Time-Out Stacey knows:

- where he will be, and
- when he will come home

Ross also promised to use **positive self-talk** to calm himself down before he comes home from a Time-Out. He understood how difficult it would be for Stacey to not know what mood he was in after Time-Out and understood the importance of making Stacey feel as safe as possible in these situations.

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HOW TO USE TIME-OUT EFFECTIVELY:

Ross and Stacey’s story demonstrates several points about taking an effective Time-Out.

In general, it is important to understand that there are **six steps** to take a Time-Out effectively. These steps are:

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STEP 1: DISCUSS TIME-OUT

If you may need to take Time-Out in a argument, you should always discuss Time-Out with your partner **before** you need to use it. This discussion should take place when you are your partner are both calm. Make sure you **agree** on the following points:

- when either person should take a Time-Out
- how long this Time-out will be for, and

- where you will go during a Timeout.

Having these agreements in place **before** you take a Time-Out is **vital** to your partner understanding that Time-Out is a tool to help you go **down** the Tension Scale. You are **not** trying to avoid the argument or **walking out**.

You will also need to:

- be committed to coming back from the Time-out in a calm manner. You should not use the Time-Out to justify your opinion or “win the argument in your own head”.
- be ready to discuss the issue that led to the argument when you return from TimeOut. However, often it is better if this discussion takes place on another day or after another short break. You do not want to risk having the same argument again. However, Time-Outs are **not** tools for avoiding difficult conversations.

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STEP 2: WHEN TO TAKE TIME-OUT

Take a Time-Out when you are getting high on the Tension Scale. For many people this means when they are reaching **7** on the **Tension Scale**.

Monitoring your physical and emotional Early Warning Signs will help tell you how high you are getting on the Tension Scale.

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STEP 3: WHAT TO SAY

When you need to take a **Time-Out** it is important that you say this clearly to your partner. Keep your language simple and clear.

For example, say “**I’m getting high on the Tension Scale, I need to take a Time-Out**”.

Do not blame your partner for *you* needing to take a Time-Out. Also make sure that when you need to take a Time-Out that you don't use harsh or inappropriate language to say this to your partner.

Taking Time-Out is a **tool** for avoiding arguments escalating into abuse or violence, so don't swear, shout or abuse your partner while you are saying you need to take a Time-Out!

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STEP 4: LEAVE THE SITUATION

Once you say that you need to take a Time-Out **leave** the situation. Do not stay and continue to argue with your partner!

You have already agreed how to take a Time-Out and what to do. Your partner will know where you are and when you are coming back. If you stick to this agreement your partner will gain confidence that you are truly trying to manage your anger!

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STEP 5: WAIT FOR THE AGREED TIME

Come back to your partner at the agreed time. Even if you have calmed down before this time, stick to your agreement to come back at the agreed time as your partner may be angry herself!

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STEP 6: WHEN YOU RETURN

When you return from Time-Out you and your partner need to talk about whether the issue you had were discussing is important or not.

If it is, you will need to decide together whether to keep talking about it or not. In my experience, couples usually need a day or two to get over the argument before they talk about the issue again.

You will also need to discuss **how** you can talk about the issue *without* getting into the same argument again.

At this point, think about the following questions:

- Do you need someone else present when you are talking about this issue to keep you both calm?
- Do you need to get someone else's opinion on this topic?
- Should you both do more research before you talk about the issue again?
- Does someone need to compromise?

THINGS *NOT* TO DO WHEN TAKING A TIME-OUT:

When you are taking a Time-Out you should not:

- drive a vehicle
- use alcohol or drugs
- use the time-out to fuel your anger
- text or call your partner-your focus needs to be on calming down!
- rehearse in your head why you are right and your partner is wrong
- stay away from your partner for longer than the agreed time

The reasons for these restrictions should be obvious in most cases. However, if you are not sure why you should not do any of these things feel free to contact me via my Facebook group using the link below:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/angerchange>

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YOUR PERSONAL TIME-OUT STRATEGY:

Planning a Time-Out carefully is one of the keys to using it successfully in practice.

Before you finish this chapter then spend a few minutes thinking about your **personal Time-Out strategy**.

You may also need to discuss this strategy with your partner.

Use the questions below to help you plan your personal Time-Out strategy:

1. At what point on the Tension Scale will I take a Time-Out?

2. What will I say when I need to take a Time-Out?

3. Where will I go during a Time-Out?

4. How long will I take Time-Out for?

5. What positive self-talk will I use to calm myself down during a Time-Out?

6. How will my partner and I decide whether to talk about the issue (or not) when I come back?

7. How can I be sure that I am a genuine Time-Out (and not just walking out of an argument)?

8. What else do I need to remember to take Time-Out effectively?

9. Have I talked to my partner about Time-Out?

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SUMMARY:

In this lesson you have learned:

- what **Time-Out** is
- how to take a **Time-Out**, and
- developed your own **personal Time-Out strategy**

Next Steps

Congratulations!

You have now learned the **four main tools** for **controlling your anger** in any situation.

These tools are:

- recognising your **Early Warning Signs** (Chapter 3)
- using the **Tension Scale** (Chapter 4)
- using **positive Self-Talk** (Chapter 5) and
- if necessary, taking **Time-Out** (Chapter 6)

Of course there is more to anger management than this, but if you grasp these **simple four tools** you are *well on your way* to learning to control your anger in any situation.

If you are interested in further learning, my comprehensive online **anger management** courses teach you **everything** you need to know to **control your anger in any situation**, as well as teaching you the key relationship tools to create calmer, happier and more respectful relationships.

To access these courses goto: angerexpert.co.nz/store.

It has been a privilege helping so many men and women control their anger over the last 25 years. I hope that this ebook has also been useful for you!

Questions, Comments, Feedback?

Contact me at angerexpert.co.nz.



Alastair Duhs