The Development of Anger Management Skills in Adults with Moderate Intellectual Disability.

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Overview

• Background to Anger Management
• The “How Anger Works and Keeping Cool” Programme
• Results of three groups
• Future directions
What is Anger?

• Anger is an emotional state influenced by physiological and cognitive factors.
• The emotion of anger is usually a response to a specific trigger which is mediated by the person’s beliefs and expectations about the situation.
• Novaco (1975) views anger as an emotion with three components; physiological, behavioural and cognitive.
  – These are addressed in therapy by using relaxation, behavioural coping skills and cognitive restructuring.
• Anger management programs in which participants are taught techniques for coping with anger-provoking situations are effective and useful in decreasing the expression of anger by clients with intellectual disability.
There is preliminary evidence that people with disability present with higher rates of anger control problems compared to people without disabilities (Hagiliassis, et al., 2005; Rose & Gerson, 2009; Smith, Branford, Collacott, Cooper, & McGrother, 1996).

People with intellectual disability often have unmet physical and interpersonal needs. These life experiences can lead to personal distress, manifested as anger.

Anger expressed as aggression can result in obvious negative outcomes for the individual with a disability including:

- Restricted opportunities
- Limited access to the community
- Limited accommodation placements
- Lack of available carers
- Impaired family and social relationships
- Poor physical and emotional well-being
Target Group

• Individuals with
  – Intellectual disability.
  – Aged 18-65 years of age

• The person may also have challenging behaviour.
The “How Anger Works and Keeping Cool” Programme

- 8 week programme
- 2 hour sessions
- Provided with handouts, worksheets, carer information sheets and homework tasks.
- Pre-group and post-group interviews and assessments.
Interviews & Assessments

• Knowledge Questionnaire
  – Developed for the programme to ascertain current understanding of physiological, cognitive and behavioural components of anger for each participant.
  – A similar questionnaire was administered to the participant’s carer or family.
  – Example Questions:
    • What do you do when you get angry?
    • If you had to rate your anger out of 5 (1 being that it is not bad at all and 5 being that it is really bad) what would it be?
    • How much does the Anger worry you? (1 being that it doesn’t worry you at all and 5 being that it is really worries you) what would it be?
    • Draw (or write) on the body what happens to you when you get angry
The Aggression Questionnaire

- Developed by Buss and Perry (1992)
- 29 statements where people are asked to indicate how uncharacteristic or characteristic each statement is, using a five-point scale.
- Normative sample was 1,253 individuals without intellectual disability.
- Scale adapted for participants, enabling more concrete representation of the abstract concept.
Session One – Introduction to the Programme

• Understanding the difference between anger and aggression (i.e., emotion of anger vs. physicality of aggression).
• Begin developing group trust and safety amongst members
• Establishing group rules, goals and commitment to change
Aggression

Angry

- Angry
- Jealous
- Disgusted
- Irritated
- Obstinate

- Frustrated
- Arrogant

- Breaking things
- Hitting
- Punching
- Yelling
- Slamming doors
- Kicking
- Crying
**Session Two – How Anger Works**

- Recognising the physical and cognitive symptoms of anger (generic body signals of anger)
- Introducing the volcano model of anger
- Gaining awareness of the participant’s own physical signs of anger
When I am Really Angry...

- Sweating, Feeling Hot
- Red Face
- Fast Breathing
- Even Breathing
- Clenched Fists
- Tense Muscles
- Fire in Belly
- Reaching Out
- Crying
- Heart Beats Easy
- Clenched Jaw
- Heart Beat Racing
- Calm

The Volcano

When a volcano gets too hot, lava builds up, and if it gets hotter, the lava explodes out the top of the volcano.

When you get angry, it is like the volcano. If something makes you angry (the anger trigger), you get hot. When the triggers build up, you get hotter (and angrier), and if you don't cool down, you will explode like a volcano, and you might be aggressive.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Where was I Angry?</td>
<td>work</td>
<td>on the bus</td>
<td>kitchen</td>
<td>lounge room</td>
<td>watching tv</td>
<td>cooking</td>
<td>somewhere else</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who was I Angry With?</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>father</td>
<td>sister</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>brother</td>
<td>friend</td>
<td>helper</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>someone else</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What was I Doing?</th>
<th>chatting</th>
<th>eating</th>
<th>cooking</th>
<th>something else</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What made me Angry?</th>
<th>I was fighting</th>
<th>someone hit me</th>
<th>I broke something</th>
<th>someone took my things</th>
<th>someone shouting at me</th>
<th>someone annoyed me</th>
<th>something else</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How did I feel?</th>
<th>how did my body feel?</th>
<th>What could I do next time?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>face went red</td>
<td>relax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>started sweating</td>
<td>say no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fire in tummy</td>
<td>deep breath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>clenched jaw</td>
<td>ask for help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>breathing was fast</td>
<td>walk away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tense body</td>
<td>count to ten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>heart beating fast</td>
<td>something else</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>made a fist</td>
<td>something else</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What did I do?</th>
<th>What did I do?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hit someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>shouted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>slammed doors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>kicked someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cried</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>broke something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>did I keep cool?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How well did I do?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Session Three: Triggers and Keeping Cool

• Recognising anger triggers (using How I feel book and generic triggers to identify what makes the participant angry)
• Identifying and using ways to reduce tension and keep cool (progressive muscle relaxation, deep breathing)
• Learning new ways to keep cool
Anger Triggers...

... What Makes Me Angry

How to Keep Cool

- deep breathing
- count to ten
- walk away
- listen to music
- go for a walk
- watch TV
- ask for help
- go to your room
- ignore it
- stop and take time out
- draw or write how you feel
- use I messages
Session Four: Identifying Feelings and Looking at Consequences

• Identifying and labelling feelings other than anger
• Distinguishing between different types of feelings (how it feels in the body, why we feel different feelings)
• Recognising the costs of becoming aggressive
• Understanding that we are in control of our behavioural choices
Sad

Dull, Droopy Eyes
Crying
Frown
Heart Beats
Slow
Sick Stomach

The Good Things About Keeping Cool

- More friends
- Nice to others
- Others will listen
- Think clearly
- Calm
- Happy
- Sleep better
- Communicate better
- Good health
- Getting more what you want
- Saving more
When you get angry, you have a choice

You can choose to be aggressive...

hit  kick

yell

And then...

police  hurt

This is a bad choice

You can choose to be assertive...

I message  help

say no

And then...

keep cool  get what you want

This is a good choice

When you start to feel Angry, you should...

STOP

Think about what you could do

Choose the best thing to do
Session Five and Six: Effective Communication

• Introducing the concept of anger rights and responsibilities (Bill of Rights)
• Introducing the concept of ‘keeping cool’ through the use of assertiveness
• Practising being assertive
BILL OF RIGHTS

- make a mistake
- privacy
- ask questions
- feel scared
- feel confused
- make decisions
- feel respected
- feel listened
- say no
- personal time
- playful
- feel safe
- express feelings
- change my mind
- be yourself
- responsible for myself
- feel happy
- personal space
- honesty
- feel angry
- not responsible for others
- to change
- not to be hurt
- have friends
Bill of Responsibilities

- Own my feelings
- Explain yourself
- Ask for what you want
- Respect others
Being Assertive Means...

Communicating appropriately and non-threatening.
Expressing your feelings and being confident.
Being aware of other’s reactions.
Standing up for your rights.
Having your view said and heard.
Being aware of your behaviour.
Picking the right time and not sending mixed messages.
Staying calm.
Not backing down.
Standing up for what you believe in.
Having positive strategies.

1. Eye contact. Look people in the eyes when talking to them.
2. Relaxed body posture.
5. Know what you are saying.
6. Be honest.
7. Assert your feelings as soon as possible.
The 3 Ways of Communicating When You Feel Angry

- Passive
  - Explode
- Aggressive
  - Explode
- Assertive
  - Cool down
Session Seven: Understanding how Thinking Affects Feeling

- Identifying self-talk
- Creating a personalised emotional toolbox
- Relating the tools to the volcano model
- Preparing group for final session.
Self Talk

We all have thoughts all the time.

What we think will be what we feel.

If we have lots of angry thoughts, we will feel angry.

If we have lots of sad thoughts, we will feel sad.

If we have lot of happy thoughts we will feel happy.

If we have lots of scary thoughts we will feel scared.

Angry thoughts will make your volcano explode, but cool thoughts will keep you cool.
Session Eight: Putting it all together

• Reviewing content covered
• Discussing what each participant found helpful and unhelpful (using feedback form)
• Discussing each participant’s favourite tool to use when they feel angry
• Preparing for possible relapse (making a symbol to help them remember the group)
• Group closure (awarding certificates)
## Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>Living Arrangement</th>
<th>Reported Aggression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Moderate ID</td>
<td>Independently</td>
<td>Physical altercations, self-injurious and use of weapons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Moderate ID</td>
<td>Supported</td>
<td>Yell, scream, slam doors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Moderate ID, Down Syndrome</td>
<td>Supported by family</td>
<td>Yell, scream, slam doors, self-injurious, kick and push objects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Fragile X, Epilepsy</td>
<td>Independently with minimal supervision</td>
<td>Verbal aggression and threatening behaviour</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Moderate ID</td>
<td>Supported by family</td>
<td>Yell, scream, slam doors, physical aggression towards mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>ID</td>
<td>Independently</td>
<td>Yell, property destruction and threatening behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>ID</td>
<td>Supported by family</td>
<td>Yell, throw objects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>Living Arrangement</td>
<td>Reported Aggression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
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<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Moderate ID and Schizophrenia</td>
<td>Supported</td>
<td>Yell, Slam doors, throw objects, threatening behaviour, absconding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Moderate ID, Cerebral Palsy, Deaf</td>
<td>Supported by family</td>
<td>Yell, slam doors, physically aggressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>ID</td>
<td>Supported by family</td>
<td>Yell, throw objects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>Living Arrangement</td>
<td>Reported Aggression</td>
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<tr>
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<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Moderate ID</td>
<td>Supported</td>
<td>Yell, ignores, refuse to participate, smearing behaviours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Moderate ID, Cerebral Palsy, Deaf</td>
<td>Supported by family</td>
<td>Physical aggression, yell, cry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Moderate ID</td>
<td>Supported</td>
<td>Bite, hit, swear</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Moderate ID</td>
<td>Supported by family</td>
<td>Yell, cry, internalises anger</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Moderate ID, Down Syndrome</td>
<td>Supported by family</td>
<td>Yell, doesn’t listen, refuse to participate</td>
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<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Moderate ID, Down Syndrome</td>
<td>Supported by family</td>
<td>Yell, swear, throws objects, pushes and uses intimidating behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Moderate ID, Mental illness</td>
<td>Supported by family</td>
<td>Yell, scream, swear, antisocial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Mild ID</td>
<td>Supported by family</td>
<td>Internalises emotions, refuses to participate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Moderate ID</td>
<td>Supported by family</td>
<td>Cry, withdraw, antagonising behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Moderate ID, Mental Illness</td>
<td>Supported</td>
<td>Yell, scream, swear, threatening behaviour, slam doors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results

• Knowledge about anger:
  – Body Signals of Anger
Results

• Knowledge about anger:
  – Triggers of individual participant anger
Results

- Knowledge about anger:
  - Strategies that can help keep cool
Results

• How the participants rated their anger
Results

- The participants worry about their anger
Results

- The carers worry about the participants’ anger
Results

- The carers rating of the severity of the participants anger
Results

- Aggression Questionnaire

![Bar chart showing Aggression Questionnaire results for Group One, Group Two, and Group Three, with Pre- and Post-Group data represented.](chart.png)
Results

- Aggression Questionnaire – Physical aggression
Results

- Aggression Questionnaire – Verbal Aggression
Results

- Aggression Questionnaire - Hostility
Results

- Aggression Questionnaire - Anger
Results

• Carer Reports
  – “he hasn’t been violent for weeks”
  – “she has been using deep breaths and squeezing lemons when she is getting angry at the shops”
  – “his family have told us (day program) that he has been less angry these last few weeks”
  – “the hassle log is really helping her. Can we have more pages so she can keep doing it once the group stops?”
  – “this has been really helpful for him. Can some of our other clients come to your next group?”
Future Directions

• Encouraging other agencies to implement supportive strategies to enable the participants to continue to manage their anger effectively.

• Negotiation to be added as a component of the effective communication sessions

• More objective behavioural data to be collected throughout the duration of the program

• Carer workshops at important points in the program – particularly after the body signals of anger, and effective communication sessions.

• Increased 1:1 support with each group member to allow them to discuss more sensitive issues, and consolidate group content.
From a participant:

“Coming to your group kicked butt!”