

## LIFE LESSON 12: VIDEO: BLOW-UPS AND RAGES — LEARNING TO MANAGE YOUR ANGER

### THE SEQUENCE OF ANGER

Anger usually progresses in a specific sequence. Learning how to recognize this sequence of events can help you manage your anger.

#### Trigger:

A trigger can be a single event, like getting cut off in traffic, stubbing your toe or someone saying something mean to you. But often, it's the tip of the iceberg, the result of multiple events or the final straw from ongoing issues. The expression "mad at the boss, kick the dog" refers to how people might be angry about one thing and take it out somewhere else with someone else who is totally unrelated to the trigger.



#### Emotional Takeover:

Immediately after the trigger, your brain floods with hormones and other chemicals, often causing a powerful surge of emotions that overrides logic. You may think something like, "What did I do to deserve that?" or "Why did this happen to me?" or "I'm going to get back at him." This usually leads to you feeling ready to act on your anger by either expressing or suppressing it.



#### Suppression:

Suppressing your anger is a very common reaction to angry feelings. But while burying this emotion may lead you to believe you have it under control, it doesn't necessarily solve the problem. Suppressed anger doesn't go away; it builds up and can lead to mental and physical health problems such as depression, headaches and high blood pressure. Attempts to blot out or numb your anger with alcohol, drugs or self-harming behaviors are dangerous and counterproductive. Depression is also possible for those who turn their anger inward toward themselves instead of confronting the problem.

#### Expression:

Surprisingly, this is the correct way to act — anger needs to be released. But don't confuse expression with aggression. Aggressive displays of anger may cause harm to yourself or others. Instead, find healthy ways to express your anger, cool down and peacefully resolve the problems that cause it.

### BFF LEADER NOTES

Ask the students to read the techniques below, and ask them to share what strategies work for them and why.

## LIFE LESSON 12: LEARNING TO COOL DOWN

Sometimes it can be tough to sort through your emotions in the heat of anger. Moments like these can get in the way of effective communication and even cause you to lose control. When you feel that happening, you know it's time to manage your anger by cooling down. Here are a few strategies you can try to help lower your emotional temperature and clear the air.

- **Find your safe spot.** Go to a place where you feel comfortable and alone. This could be your bedroom, a nearby place in nature like a park, or a basement. Once there, vent your frustration with a physical activity that helps you release tension. What matters most is that you safely release your anger and that your anger doesn't harm anyone or anything.
- **Take a deep breath.** Deep breathing naturally slows heart rate, oxygenates the blood and forces you to take some time out to calm down, get control of your emotions and gain perspective on the situation. It's amazing how rarely we take time to notice our breathing; when you do, you'll notice the world slowing down, if only long enough for you to get your bearings and figure out the root of your problems. Consider meditating: A bit of peaceful, thoughtful reflection can go a long way toward clearing your head. Feeling calm physically can settle down the thoughts that are fueling your anger.
- **Count to 10.** This simple strategy is one of the easiest to pull off — and it can quickly switch your mind and body to a different track. Think of it as a mental "time out." It gives you time to step back from angry impulses and brings you back to rational thinking, where you can start to brainstorm solutions to the problem instead of reacting in anger. If after counting to 10 you still feel upset, count to 100; count as long as it takes to cool yourself down.
- **Listen to music.** Either alone in your safe spot or on headphones, listen to your favorite music. Research has shown that music tends to alter a person's mood.
- **Get some exercise.** Getting your body active and exercising — even if it's just a short walk — has been scientifically proven to boost chemicals called endorphins in your brain. These chemicals actually make you feel good, decrease negative feelings and improve your mood.
- **Describe your emotions.** Writing your emotions down in a diary keeps

your angry feelings from building up. There are plenty of ways to do this: journal entries, poetry, songs or letters. If you'd rather not write, try doodling, sketching or sculpting. Making art is one way to channel your anger.

Source: Kidshealth.org; Matthew K. Knock, Ph.D.

## WHAT STRATEGIES WORK FOR YOU? WHY?

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### BFF LEADER NOTES

Ask student to identify a personal problem that makes them feel angry (i.e., my best friend is choosing to be with other people). Then take time to go through each step below.

## LIFE LESSON 12: CONFLICT RESOLUTION STEPS

If you usually lash out or shut down as soon as you're faced with a situation that makes you angry, consider trying this approach next time. (It can be hard to remember these steps, but keep trying; write them down and carry them in your pocket if you need a helpful reminder.) These steps incorporate many of the suggestions listed in Learning to Cool Down. In addition, they provide a specific action plan for an angry encounter, which you can use as a cheat-sheet.

- 1. Identify your problem. Ask yourself:** Why am I angry? Where are these feelings coming from and why? Be as clear and specific as possible. Express your feelings and thoughts out loud.

**(LEADER RESPONSE)** Your answers might include, "Ask a friend with whom you are angry to talk about it and gain understanding, or do nothing because you may have misinterpreted them."

**2. Brainstorm potential solutions. Ask yourself:** What can I do? Think of at least three things. Even if you are tempted to respond in anger, make sure that you come up with at least one calm response to your problem.

**(LEADER RESPONSE)** Your answers might include, "Ask a friend with whom you are angry to talk about it and gain understanding, or do nothing because you may have misinterpreted them"

**3. Think through the consequences of each solution. Ask yourself:** What will happen if I choose one of these options? Different responses will have different consequences. Keep in mind that your goal is to resolve your conflict, not make it worse.

**4. Make a decision and take action. Ask yourself:** What's my best choice? If you've taken this much time to think it through, you're probably past lashing out impulsively in anger. After considering your options, choose one that will bring you closer to a solution rather than a stalemate. *Once you choose your solution, act on it. But you're not done yet:*

**5. Check your progress. Ask yourself:** How did I do? Did things work out as I expected? If not, why not? Am I satisfied with the choice I made?

Taking time to reflect on how things worked out after the angry situation is long gone helps you learn about yourself and others. It allows you to further understand which problem-solving approaches work best for different situations.

If your choice didn't work out the way you planned, go back through the steps to see if there were any better options you didn't pick or new options you missed.

**(LEADER RESPONSE)** The answers might include: I feel better now, I now understand that people change friends as they decide who they are, or I still miss my friend.

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Source: Alvarez, Ted. *Blow-Ups and Rages: Learning To Manage Your Anger.* (DVD version). Mount Kisco, NY: Human Relations Media, 2011

## BFF LEADER NOTES

Ask students to read the following four types of communication and reflect upon which one they typically use. Stress the importance of assertive communication.

## LIFE LESSON 12: ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATIONS

We often express our anger verbally. We all have distinct communication styles that we use when expressing our anger. Psychologists have described four types of communication, each possessing its own characteristics:

- **aggressive communication:** “My feelings are important but yours aren’t.”
- **passive communication:** “My feelings don’t matter.”
- **passive-Aggressive communication:** “My feelings are important. Yours are, too, but I’m not going to tell you about it.”
- **assertive communication:** “My feelings are important and so are yours.”

As you might guess, angry people tend to use the **aggressive** and **passive-aggressive** postures. However, **aggressive** communicators are more likely to start an argument than they are to get the results they want. Being **passive** in your communications is also a mistake, as it communicates weakness and tends to invite further aggression.

The **assertive** communications style is the most useful and balanced of all the styles because it is the only posture that communicates respect for all parties. Communicating assertively is the most likely way to ensure that everyone involved gets their needs taken care of. Learning how to become assertive rather than aggressive or passive-aggressive is an important step in discovering how to communicate appropriately with others.

### What’s the difference between aggressive and assertive communication?

Aggressive communication tends to go on the offense—it attacks and berates the other person— while assertive communication is confident and clear but not offensive or hurtful. Assertive people stand up for themselves and their rights. Most importantly, they manage to do this without crossing the line into aggressiveness. They do not attack the person they are communicating with unnecessarily.

Source: Alvarez, Ted. *Blow-Ups and Rages: Learning To Manage Your Anger*. (DVD version). Mount Kisco, NY: Human Relations Media, 2011

## BFF LEADER NOTES

Ask students to use a blank sheet of paper to write down examples of personal “I” statement. Ask them to change a negative phrase into a positive one

## LIFE LESSON 12: THE POWER OF “I” STATEMENTS

### WHAT IS AN “I” STATEMENT?

An “I” statement helps others hear what you’re saying in a way that keeps them from becoming defensive. Try filling in this simple formula to get started:

**“I feel \_\_\_\_\_ when you \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_ .”**

Be sure that you only discuss how you feel about yourself when you fill in the “I feel” part of the formula. Talking about how you feel usually brings better results because you’re not attacking your listener with a criticism. For example,

*“I feel like you don’t care about me when you don’t let me know that you are going to be late because I end up worried and upset.”*

The formula will not work if you say, “I feel that you are a jerk!” because you are not addressing your own feelings. Instead, you have merely launched an aggressive verbal attack against the person you’re trying to communicate with.

Other negative phrase beginnings to avoid include:

- “You should...”
- “You’re wrong...”
- “I demand...”
- “We can’t...”
- “We won’t...”
- “We never...”
- “You don’t understand...”
- “That’s stupid...”
- “You must be confused...”
- “I’m too busy for this...”
- “You have to...”

Learning to respond to anger with an assertive “I” statement takes practice, but mastering this important communication skill will help you peacefully solve conflicts in a way that makes you and the other person both feel respected.

Source: Alvarez, Ted. *Blow-Ups and Rages: Learning To Manage Your Anger*. (DVD version). Mount Kisco, NY: Human Relations Media, 2011

### BFF LEADER NOTES

Ask students to read the following four types of communication and reflect upon which one they typically use. Stress the importance of assertive communication.

## LIFE LESSON 12: USING “I” STATEMENTS

When people are angry, they do not always express themselves accurately or effectively. According to psychologists, most angry communication belongs to one of these four distinct categories:

- **aggressive response:** hitting someone, damaging property, calling names
- **passive response:** not reacting, accepting blame all the time, not defending yourself
- **passive-aggressive response:** showing anger indirectly by being late, procrastinating, making excuses or being purposely vague
- **assertive response:** showing respect for others while expressing your needs clearly

Of the above, an assertive response is the best hope for resolving a conflict and defusing anger. Assertive people stand up for themselves and their rights in a controlled way. They manage to communicate their anger without crossing the line into hostility and aggression.

For each of the 10 statements below, first identify the type of angry communication that is being used. Then rewrite the statement as a clear and respectful request in the form of an “I” statement.

**Note:** *If you think that the statement is already an assertive request, don't change it.*

## NOTES

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### USING “I” STATEMENTS

The Answer Key for this activity appears on the next page

1. You borrowed my car without asking! Next time you do that, I'll punch you in the face!
2. You want to copy my math homework again? I guess it's okay.
3. I can't believe you wore the same dress to the prom as I did. But it doesn't really matter — you look fat in it, anyway.
4. Fine — I'll stay at home and watch my little sister so you guys can go have fun like you always do.
5. I feel jealous when you talk to other girls. I understand that's not fair to you, but I just need a little more reassurance when we're out together in public.
6. My brother always acts like a jerk when he's stressed out. But I probably shouldn't say anything— he'll probably just get more upset.
7. If you talk to him again, you'll be sorry.
8. Of course I want you to do well on the test, but I'm not going to help you cheat. Let's calm down and then we can study together.
9. We always have to hang out wherever Sarah chooses. Does she think she's royalty or something? I'm just going to stop talking to her until she figures out her problem.
10. I feel abandoned when you ditch me to hang out with your girlfriend. I know she's important to you, but let's make plans for a guys' night out, okay?

Source: Alvarez, Ted. *Blow-Ups and Rages: Learning To Manage Your Anger*. (DVD version). Mount Kisco, NY: Human Relations Media, 2011

## ANSWER KEY USING “I” STATEMENTS

## LEADER RESPONSE

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|---|----------------------|
| 1. You borrowed my car without asking! Next time you do that, I'll punch you in the face!   | (AGGRESSIVE)         |
| 2. You want to copy my math homework again? I guess it's okay.  | (PASSIVE)            |
| 3. I can't believe you wore the same dress to the prom as I did. But it doesn't really matter — you look fat in it, anyway.   | (PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE) |
| 4. Fine — I'll stay at home and watch my little sister so you guys can go have fun like you always do.  | (PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE) |
| 5. I feel jealous when you talk to other girls. I understand that's not fair to you, but I just need a little more reassurance when we're out together in public.         | (PASSIVE)            |
| 6. My brother always acts like a jerk when he's stressed out. But I probably shouldn't say anything— he'll probably just get more upset.                                  | (PASSIVE)            |
| 7. If you talk to him again, you'll be sorry.   | (AGGRESSIVE)         |
| 8. Of course I want you to do well on the test, but I'm not going to help you cheat. Let's calm down and then we can study together.                                      | (ASSERTIVE)          |
| 9. We always have to hang out wherever Sarah chooses. Does she think she's royalty or something? I'm just going to stop talking to her until she figures out her problem. | (AGGRESSIVE)         |
| 10. I feel abandoned when you ditch me to hang out with your girlfriend. I know she's important to you, but let's make plans for a guys' night out, okay?                 | (ASSERTIVE)          |

## LIFE LESSON 13: ME AND MY 500 FRIENDS — STAYING SAFE ON SOCIAL NETWORKS

## 1. Take attendance

## 2. Discuss words of wisdom.

I learned that it is the weak who are cruel, and that gentleness is to be expected only from the strong. *Leo Rosten*

## 3. Watch Video: “Me and MY 500 Friends: Staying Safe on Social Networks)

Available from: Human Relations Media Inc., 41 Kensico Drive, Mount Kisco, NY 10549, 1.800.431.2025

This video is appropriate for grades 7-12. It informs teenagers about staying safe on social networks as they navigate the internet. Although social networks can be an effective way to communicate and connect with peers, it also puts teenagers in jeopardy if they are not careful with who they interact with and what they choose to share online. Topics discussed are social network safety tips, the risks of sexting, rumors going viral, and cyberbullying. The program teaches students how to effectively keep themselves and their information safe on social networks.

## 4. Discussion Goals: By the end of the session, the students should know:

- Social networks, while often fun, can be very risky.
- Remember, a text and a photo are forever.
- Online bullying can get you suspended or expelled from school.
- Rumors or gossip can go viral and lead to self-destructive behavior

## NOTES

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