

Anger Management

Employee Assistance Program
Cooper University Hospital
April 2012

Objectives

- To develop an understanding of what anger is and how it affects you and those around you
- What to do with your anger, how to manage it, and how to do your best to work it out with other people

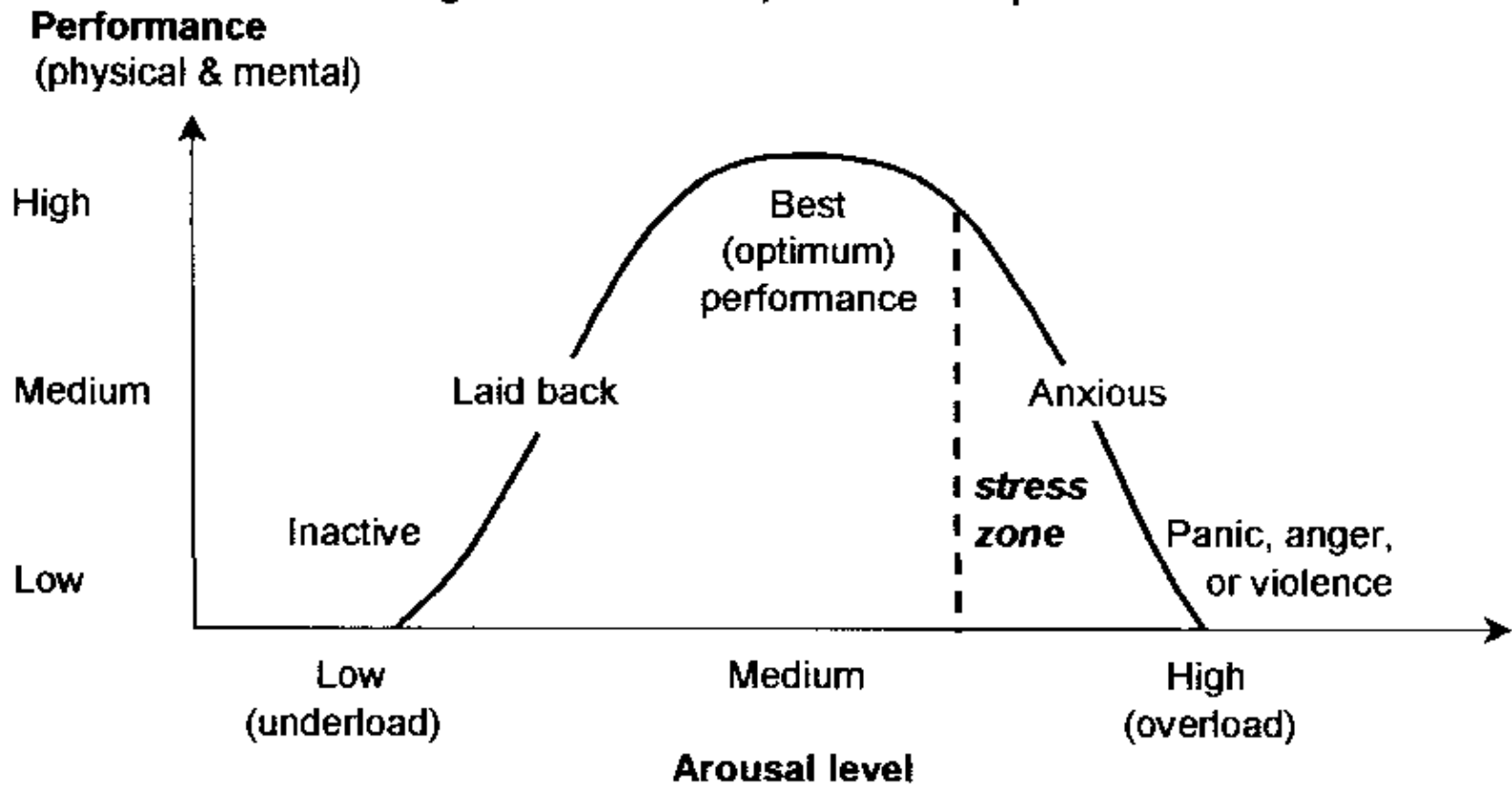
Anger

- Anger is a normal emotion, as are stress and anxiety
- We can choose how to deal with those feelings with ourselves and with others
- We can learn how we react
- We can assess how much is too much

Anger and Sadness

- Anger and sadness are very closely interrelated
- Often we do not want to experience sadness, which is associated with being weak, powerless, and unable to “do” anything, so we become angry
- Anger makes us feel active and powerful, instead of fearful or sad

Anger Arousal and Performance



What does anger look like?

- Dilated pupils
- Increased heart rate
- Clenching
- Immobilize
- Panic
- Fight
- Flight
- Freeze
- Faint
- Fret
- Fog

When is it “too much”?

- Repeated conflicts with others
- Unable to achieve resolution
- Unable to control impulses (yelling, shaking, speech)
- Anger in the workplace can significantly disrupt productivity and create long-lasting tension.

Impact of Anger, Short Term

- Conflict
- Stress
- Inability to focus
- Turning to substances to calm down
- Taking it out on other people
- Loss of productivity
- Confrontation in the moment only accelerates anger

Impact of Anger, Long Term

- Long-term anger can become anxiety, difficulty sleeping, substance abuse or addiction, losing relationships, and somatic problems (heart and blood pressure, in particular)
- In short, without any intervention, anger can curb relationships and also tax your body heavily.
- Developing a reputation of being the “hothead”
- “Revenge is like drinking poison and hoping your enemy dies.”

Nails in the Fence



How do I know when I'm getting angry?

- Learn your triggers to better understand what's happening in your body
- Learn how to separate yourself from a potentially anger-inducing situation or how to ask for help in resolving
- When we make decisions out of anger, we often do not consider the consequences.

How do we express our anger?

- Yelling
- Holding it in
- Physical violence
- Sarcastic comments
- The silent treatment
- Passive aggression
- Complaining to others
- Delays in fulfilling the other person's requests

What is your anger style?

- We tend to be fairly consistent in the ways in which we display our anger
- These patterns are seen not only at work, but in our home lives and are noticed by everyone with whom we interact
- Recognizing your style can also help determine which solutions would be the most helpful to you.

Pursuers

- ▶ React to anxiety by seeking greater sense of togetherness in a relationship
- ▶ Place a high value on talking things out and expressing feelings, others should do the same
- ▶ Feel rejected and take it personally when someone close to them wants more time and space alone or away from the relationship
- ▶ Tend to pursue harder and then coldly withdraw when an important person seeks distance
- ▶ May negatively label themselves as “too dependent” or “too demanding” in a relationship
- ▶ Tend to criticize others as someone who can’t handle feelings or tolerate closeness

Distancers

- ▶ Seek emotional distance or physical space when stress is high
- ▶ Consider themselves to be self-reliant and private people (more “do-it-yourself”)
- ▶ Have difficulty showing their needy, vulnerable, and dependent sides
- ▶ Receive labels as “emotionally unavailable,” “withholding” or “unable to deal with feelings” from significant others
- ▶ Manage anxiety in personal relationships by intensifying work-related projects
- ▶ May cut off a relationship entirely when things get intense, rather than hanging in and working it out
- ▶ Open up most freely when they are not pushed or pursued

Underfunctioners

- ▶ Tend to have several areas where they just can't get organized
- ▶ Become less competent under stress, thus inviting others to take over
- ▶ Tend to develop physical or emotional symptoms when stress is high in either family or work life
- ▶ Maybe become the focus of family gossip, worry, or concern
- ▶ Earn such labels as the “patient,” the “fragile one,” the “sick one,” the “problem,” or the “irresponsible one”
- ▶ Have difficulty showing their strong, competent side to intimate others

Overfunctioners

- ▶ Know what's best not only for themselves but for others as well
- ▶ Move in quickly to advise, rescue, and take over when stress hits
- ▶ Have difficulty staying out and allowing others to struggle with their own problems
- ▶ Avoid worrying about their personal goals and problems by focusing on others
- ▶ Have difficulty sharing their own vulnerable, under-functioning side, especially with those who are viewed as having problems
- ▶ Seen as the person who is “always reliable” or “always together”

Blamers

- ▶ Respond to anxiety with emotional intensity and fighting
- ▶ Have a short fuse
- ▶ Extend high levels of energy trying to change someone who does not want to change
- ▶ Engage in repetitive cycles of fighting that relieve tension but perpetuate the old pattern
- ▶ Hold other person responsible for one's own feelings and actions
- ▶ See others as the sole obstacle to making changes

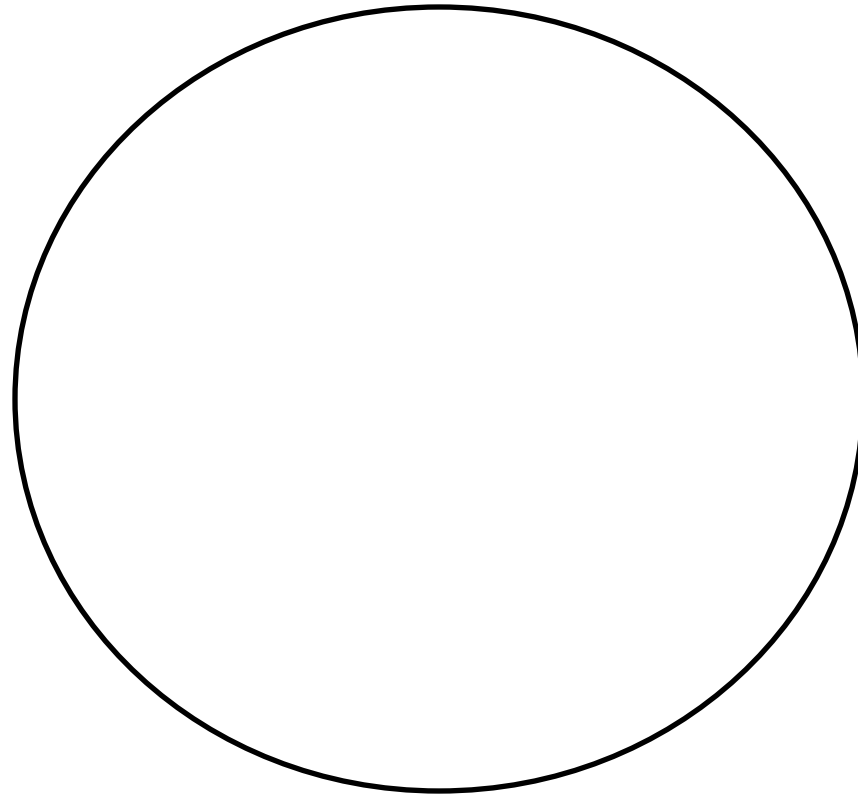
Anger Styles

- Pursuers
- Distancers
- Underachievers
- Overachievers
- Blamers

Our Expectations in Life

- What do we feel entitled to in life? At work? At home? From those around us?

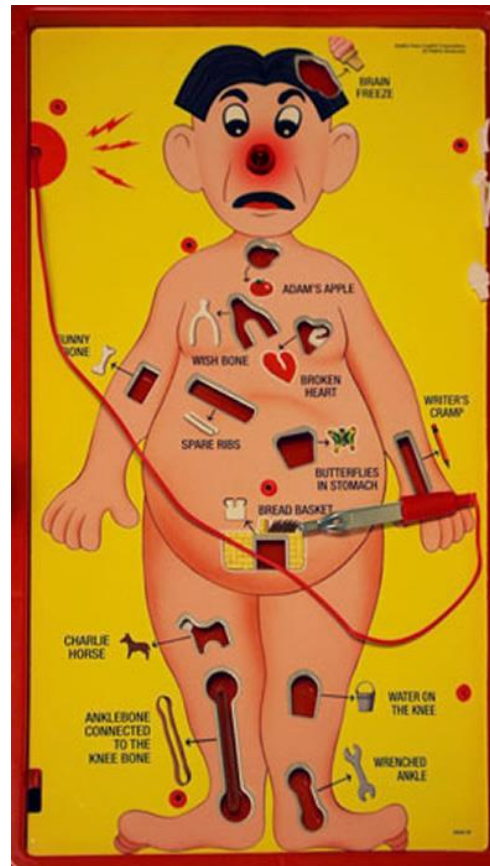
Circle of Influence



How can we adapt?

- Stress, anxiety, anger are always going to happen
- We can choose how to deal with these emotions
- At the end, we can say that some situation “made” us get angry, although *we* are in charge of our emotions.
- We are in charge of who we involve in our conflicts

Show me in an x-ray where there's a "button"
someone pushes



What can I do with other people's anger?

- Confrontation in the moment is often not helpful
- You are not responsible for another person's anger, you are responsible for your reaction
- Set aside a time to discuss that person's impact on you
- Present yourself calmly, rationally, and using "I statements" to avoid triggering a defensive reaction.
- If further conflict persists, ask for help.

The Iceberg

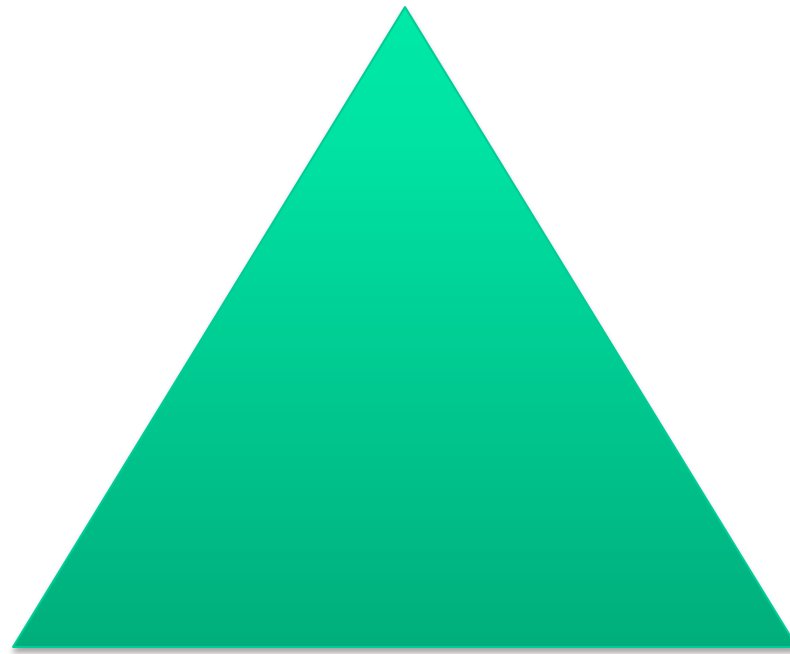


<http://static.ddmcdn.com/gif/iceberg-1.jpg>

Dynamics and Shifts

- Peer → Peer
- Parent → Child
- Supervisor → Employee
- Person → Authority
- Authority → Person
- Partner → Partner

Triangles and Triangulation



What can I do with my own anger?

- Simple approaches are ones that often work the best
- Taking a break, not making a decision for five, ten, or twenty minutes (depending on your anger level) may help you consider the options
- Go exercise or use movement to help you calm down, even a trip to the bathroom
- Learn to ask for help
- Learn your triggers and what calms you down

How to manage it

- Ultimately, you are responsible for your emotions and your actions.
- Tune into your own anger style to best decide how to manage your anger
- Pausing a situation opens the door to other options (an apology, forgiveness)
- “I know it might seem like I’m being (distant/too controlling/too demanding), it’s because I’m working through my anger.”
- Develop a code word

Being Wrong Sometimes (and we all are)

- What are our fears about being wrong?
- Often, being “wrong” is tied with other issues we have with ourselves, of needing to prove something
- In a disagreement, this back-and-forth can escalate the conflict beyond its natural form and create a super-conflict
- Learning how to step back and accept responsibility becomes important in this moment

Points to Ponder

- Send the mail to the right address, avoid triangles
- Ask for what you need, it ups the chances that you might get it
- Be true to your intuition
- Just because they throw it doesn't mean you have to catch it
- Focus on the circle of influence
- Being proactive energizes, reactivity is de-energizing

Points to Ponder

- Forgive whoever you need to today, not for their sake, but for yours
- Power of positive thinking, focus on the half-full
- Control is an illusion
- Entitlement is an illusion
- Don't push the river, it flows by itself
- Lay it down and move on
- Trust the process, no one died and left you in charge

Questions?