

ANGER MANAGEMENT for Residents and Others

The Nature of Anger and its Treatment

Anger and its management are not as simple as they may appear at first thought. Certainly, intense anger coupled with either poor or excessive control function may result in offenses, commonly against the person or of a destructive nature toward property. But where does anger come from, and what can be done about it?

At the O.C.I. there are several programmes to address different aspects or causative agents of anger. Briefly, we try to deal with different aspects of anger in several quite different ways. Each of these aspects and ways of approaching anger needs brief explanation:-

1. REACTIVE ANGER (INTOLERANCE):

(a) about incarceration: Most offenders, as well as the courts, tend to think of sentences as punitive actions. Punishment does very little of a constructive nature, and its main effect is to make the person (perceiving himself to have been) punished angry. This kind of anger simply gets in the way of the person's ability to get productively involved in any kind of programme, and it distracts him from being able to learn. Some of the two weeks of orientation programmes given to all admissions to the O.C.I. is concerned with altering the offender's attitude toward his incarceration in order to minimize this source of anger. In addition, we try to operate a human system in which staff and residents are treated with respect and consideration, partly in order to ensure that any idea or implication of being punished is reduced to a minimum.

Treatments: (Re-)Orientation (utilization of time).
Unit Milieu including the Resident Democracy

(b) about guilt-trips: Related to the above is the reaction some people feel about feeling punished -- or, which is the same thing, feeling criticized or put on a guilt-trip. Although this kind of anger sounds like the same sort of thing as the above, its source is really quite different. It tends to spring from a history of feeling guilty (whether or not others punished or were critical). At first, children take criticism/punishment to heart and/or seek to be 'good' in order to avoid criticism/punishment (in the attempt to avoid, one imagines being punished/criticized, so that it may feel like the same thing to the person). This is called guilt proneness. Later, some people (not all) feel they cannot or will not tolerate feeling guilty, and they may start to convert the negative/fear feelings associated with guilt into feeling angry whenever they think they 'are supposed' to feel guilty. These people may even eventually act in ways which would ordinarily create guilt feelings (crime, etc.) to challenge their guilt feelings, as it were, to prove to themselves they do not feel guilty. They may even find themselves feeling angry when they do the actions, so that they may actually think that the actions are motivated by anger (e.g.,

at the society which puts them down or in other ways is imagined to hurt them). This rejection of guilt feelings and conversion of guilt feelings to anger is called guilt intolerance.

The problem the person has to deal with in the case of this kind of 'reactive anger' is not how he views the event to which he is 'reacting' so much as the problem of his history of feeling guilty. This source of anger is one of the prime 'causes' of crime, underlies most of the 'factors' accounting for criminality, and, therefore, is a major part of what has to be addressed in our treatment programme for criminality.

Treatments: Criminality Treatment Workshop series (which includes: Healing early memories)
Time-Line Treatment to do the same thing
Values Training/Squash to deal with guilt

2. DEFENSIVE ANGER (HOSTILITY/HATRED):

Most offenders find it difficult to tolerate strong loving emotions. They are afraid of expressing such feelings, feeling they have (like everybody else) been 'burned' too often. Fear of closeness needs and of expressing love feelings tends to result in 'distancing' defenses (to keep others at a 'safe' emotional distance), and one of these distancing defenses is hostility or anger -- which is quite effective in keeping others away. One basic form of such distancing defenses involves "not trusting" others. This intolerance of strong caring/loving feelings creates a rather generalized hostility toward others even if it is not always experienced as hostility or anger. However, the same intolerance for strong feelings may create a stronger negative reaction, experienced as hatred, which is apt to be directed at a person conceived as being a recent source of 'being burned' in a relationship, or even directed at the whole class of people which that person represents.

At the O.C.I., an attempt is made to counter mistrust in the relationship between the case manager (correctional officer) and his/her case load -- which is aimed at fostering trust and thus closeness. In addition, there is a programme designed to help people understand how their defensive anger develops and to get rid of the anxiety about close involvements from which it comes. And, if a person feels the stronger feeling of hatred, it is sometimes possible to obtain brief individual treatment to get rid of the hatred -- if the person wants to.

Treatments: Case Manager Relationship-founding Therapy.
Conflict Management Workshop series
Visual Squash -- individual treatment

3. FRUSTRATION ANGER (RAGE):

(a) Linguistic deficits: Most offenders have great difficulty in using and responding to verbal instructions and to language -- in the community at large this tends to result in a great deal of frustration, the easiest response to which is anger. In

addition, most offenders have not developed good regulation of their emotions, and many of them struggle for control. The effort at control, followed by failure of control, breeds further frustration, and thus further anger. A further complication is that failures with either language skills or control tend to breed a sense of failure and, perhaps, hopelessness. These feelings may also breed further frustration-based anger.

To deal with these sources of frustration, we try (a) to use mainly 'positive format' verbal instructions with which offenders have greater facility (than with 'thou shalt not'), (b) to offer gentle assistance from all staff to help the person when he fails in his control efforts, (c) to construct treatment plans in goal-oriented steps so that 'success' and progress can be seen, and (d) to provide recognition for people's accomplishments so that they can see that they can succeed.

Treatments: Positive-format Instruction
Support in managing feeling expression

Peer Review and regular Case Conference
Case Management staff attitudes

(b) Inhibition of action: An even more insidious form of frustration anger is experienced by many people, including offenders. It comes about because of frustration from feeling unable to express or release or use their feelings and energies due to internal inhibition or control. The problem arises from the inhibitions acting within them, and it is as though the pressure of unused or unexpressed energy or action builds up pressure within, creating increasing frustration and thus rage. Inhibition or control can occur in many different forms, but it comes about most commonly as a result of increased thinking. An increase in thinking can occur ...

(i) because the person is introverted (i.e., more attentive to his thoughts than to events going on around him), an intensified form of which is obsessional indecisiveness, or

(ii) because the person believes in 'reason' and that it is reasonable to be reasonable -- the crazy thing is that it is not, and that reason is one of life's most destructive forces), or

(iii) because the person thinks living is a serious business and that life should be taken seriously (really, it's fun), or

(iv) because the person always tried to be a 'good' person and became fearful of making mistakes (which are probably the best thing we can do -- we learn and grow best by making mistakes) or of hurting others (it is the fear of hurting others which increases the possibility of hurting others), or

(v) because the person has a belief or a philosophy of life which insists that anger and its many consequences are the worst evil in life and so inhibits his anger, even to the point that he may never feel anger (in truth, anger is the best quality there is in a person even although that is true mainly of anger in its original and unconflicted form), and so on.

Thinking distracts the person from doing/acting/energy-use to a degree, and it prevents the person from using the energy produced by the body (the body is just an energy-producing machine). The

resulting inactivity accumulates energy and feels frustrating. But the problem doesn't stop there. If the person is using thought as a defensive inhibitor to prevent anger/energy-use, all the other 'more positive' feelings, such as loving and joyfulness, tend also to be inhibited, and the person may become confused, purposeless and unable to commit himself with others.

Treatment of this set of causes of anger depends upon an understanding of the kinds and causes of inhibitive thinking (or other kinds of defenses) in the person. For example, reliance on reason sometimes develops in association with a felt need to be grown up (associated with fears of vulnerability as a child), and it thus may become associated with the need to control or to dominate others. If this is what has happened, the needed treatment is quite different from that required if the person is introverted (which also results in too much reliance on reason). In general, though, there are some things that need to be done to treat anger based upon frustration from too much inhibition. These include methods to reduce the pressure of thinking (TM), to reduce verbally-mediated inhibitions (Conflict Management), to increase directed energy-activity use (Goal-Finding, including D-Goals), to increase attention to external events and to the present (as opposed to the past and the future which are the subject-matter of thinking)(Now-Events Focus), to reduce the seriousness with which the person approaches living (Divergent Thinking), to increase the use of energy and anger (Exercise, Assertive Training, Playing the Game of Anger), and to correct some of the mistakes of thinking which we have all brought with us from childhood, and which tend to support inhibitions (Rational-Emotive Therapy).

Treatments: Transcendental Meditation (TM)
Conflict Management Treatment Workshop series
Goal-Finding Group programme (esp. D-Goals)
Now-Events Focus programme
Divergent Thinking group
Assertive Training of several kinds
Rational-Emotive Therapy Workshop

4. CONTROL INSUFFICIENCY (AGGRESSIVENESS): Most offenders demonstrate high levels of arousal and emotionality. Many feel the need to exercise control over their strong emotions, especially their anger. In these latter cases, it is helpful to provide training in the methods for activating controls over strong emotions such as anger, and a small-group therapy programme is available for this purpose. It addresses awareness of anger and aggression and cognitive structuring, the physiological, psychological and social correlates of anger and aggression, discriminating anger and aggression responses, habitual impulsive responses, unresolved past traumatic events, identifying triggering events, handling of provocative situations, using coping skills of appropriate thinking and social reactions, behaviour delay and evaluation techniques, communications skills, relaxation skills, modelled coping skills strategies, utilization of provocation management, and group evaluations of logged daily events.

Treatments: Anger Management Training Group.

5. EXCESSIVE AROUSAL-ANGER (IRRITABILITY):

As said above, most offenders demonstrate high levels of arousal and emotionality, which they are apt to experience as anger. Most of these offenders feel considerable discomfort about their anger, which only adds to their overall arousal. For these people, it seems most appropriate to use methods which diminish the amount of (anger -- actually stress/anxiety) arousal, and which convert some of it to effective social interactions and constructive use of energies. For these people a series of large-group treatment workshop programmes, called Anger/Stress Management, is available (a) to learn reduction of general bodily arousal, (b) to convert anger to constructive socialized energy, and (c) to correct error attitudes, breeding anger, to more appropriate prosocial attitudes in social living.

Treatments: Orientation to Stress/Anger Management Workshop
Systematic Desensitization by Relaxation
Assertive Training,
Rational-Emotive Therapy.

6. EPISODIC DYSCONTROL (VIOLENCE): Some offenders periodically undergo a transformation, with or without alcohol as a trigger, in which they go into 'blind' rages or other types of drive-centre-related acting out. If this can be shown on tests to be associated with neural irritability arising from an insufficiency of neural inhibition, a biofeedback conditioning treatment procedure, in which neural-inhibition-related activity (sensorimotor rhythm) on the EEG is reinforced, may be effective in supplanting the episodic dyscontrol events.

Treatments: SMR-EEG Biofeedback Conditioning Treatment.

Of course, there are other factors involved in anger and its management. One might choose to focus on the setting in which anger problems emerge.

Most rape, and most particularly aggravated sexual assault, are really more a matter of angry and aggressive assault than sexual offenses. They are usually most properly dealt with in treatment as angry and aggressive acts which may occur in any of the above problem contexts.

Domestic violence is another common setting for anger expression which may emerge in any of the above problem contexts. At the O.C.I., this setting for assault is treated as a separate phenomenon in a small-group treatment programme called: Relating Without Violence. This treatment approach is appropriate because this particular setting for anger and aggression is likely to be associated with weak verbal and communication skills on the part of the perpetrator and his consequent reliance on his physical prowess in handling conflict. For this reason, this programme focuses heavily on training in communication skills by an expert

in that area of specialty.

Aggression and violence may occur under the disinhibiting influence of alcohol and some street drugs. Since this involves the use of disinhibitor substances, its treatment is relegated here to the treatment of Substance Abuse/Addiction. However, it may be helpful to indicate briefly some of the causes of addictive behaviour to assist understanding of substance abuse as it relates to anger and its management. Alcoholism is used as the example for illustrative purposes.

Alcohol ingestion has one basic effect on the body. It has a 'decortivating' effect. That is, as a soporific, it 'puts the cerebral cortex to sleep' -- or, stated differently, it performs a 'temporary lobotomy'. The decortivating effect has several consequences, some of which are **irrelevant** to its addictive effect, and some of which create addiction to it. The addiction-**irrelevant** effects include impairment of the cortical functions of distance perception, judgement and motor coordination -- which, among other things, is why drinking and driving is dangerous.

But there are other addiction-**relevant** effects, which include:

- (i) its euphorizing (anti-depressant) effect by suppressing the cortical functions of guilt, worry and (self-)evaluation,
- (ii) its tranquillizing effect by suppressing the cortical thought-related functions of anger, irritability, worry, guilt, anticipation (of fear and the unknown) and dread,
- (iii) its soporific effect by suppressing cortical alertness,
- (iv) its disinhibiting effect by suppressing the cortical functions of control/inhibition of feelings, thought as an inhibitor or feelings and guilt/judgement as anger inhibitors,
- (v) its anoxic (displaces oxygen) effect on the brain which creates vagueness and dizziness to disorient and aggrandize, and
- (vi) its vaso-dilating effect which creates a sort of warm sensation in the skin.

The addictive effect of alcohol **ONLY** has such effects on those who feel the need for and/or enjoy one or more of these (or the other more minor) effects. Thus, the euphorizing effect of alcohol only has addictive properties for those who are depressed, unhappy, grieving, torporous or joyless; the tranquillizing effect of alcohol has addictive properties in those who are angry, anxious, uptight, worrying, guilt-prone, fearful or experiencing stress or pressures (internal or external); the soporific effect of alcohol has addictive properties for those who would like to sleep to forget their sources of un-tranquillity, and for those who cannot sleep well or equate sleep with relief of stress; the disinhibiting effect of alcohol has addictive properties in those who feel inhibited, as from excessive thought, habitual over-control, aggression-inhibition/fearfulness, strong dominance needs, rationality or too serious an approach to life; the anoxic effect of alcohol has addictive properties for those who feel in some way inferior (it helps them feel superior or even exceptional -- special), and/or for those who perceive the world of experience as dull or boring and/or who feel the need for 'different' experience, and

even experience which seems 'mystical'; and the vaso-dilating effects of alcohol have addictive properties for those who have inhibited both anger and closeness needs, who therefore feel 'empty' inside and who are seeking sensations which feel like emotions (i.e., feelings from their bodies).

In the absence of the pre-existing afflictions noted above, alcohol has no effect at all on the person other than its rather uncomfortable addiction-irrelevant effects, and these people do not become addicted to alcohol. Similar effects of street drugs and medications account for their addictive properties.

The relevances of anger to addiction are found partly in those who are uncomfortable about their anger and either inhibit it (so that its disinhibition feels 'freeing'), or fear expressing it (so that the tranquillizing and soporific effects 'cool' the person down, mellow him out and reduce the affliction he feels in feeling angry). The other part of the relevance of anger to addiction is less direct. The euphorizing and aggrandizing effects of alcohol have addictive properties for those who are depressed and/or who feel inferior or inadequate. Both of these conditions are predicated mainly upon aggression-inhibition, and, indeed, both conditions function as defenses against the expression of anger. Alcohol has an ego-syntonic value to these people because it permits them temporarily to counteract the negative feelings of depression and/or self-depreciation, while not requiring them to let go their defenses and give vent to their anger -- it corrects the negative feelings while still permitting the defensive functions to be maintained.

The basic principles of anger management require that a person understand the sources of anger so that he may be able to decide how he wants to modify his maladaptive response to it. There are several sources of anger, as there are of anxiety.

1. The biological bases of anger: There is a centre in the old brain (diencephalon), proximal to the limbic lobes and involving the hypothalamus, which has been called the 'drive centre' because, when it is stimulated electrically at various points, it is associated with the emission of strong, uncontrolled, drive responses including potentially dangerous rage or anger (the single most frequent cause of violent crimes), sexual arousal (often underlying serious sexual offences), hunger (a common cause of obesity), satiety (a common cause of anorexia), depression (often chronic and despairing), intense anxiety (autonomic storms) and/or sudden sleep (narcolepsy) or sleeplessness (insomnia). The drive centre also contains locations, which when stimulated electrically, interfere with the perception of visual angle (often associated with perceptual handicap or learning disability/dysphasia) and/or increase habit strength (the 'reinforcement' centre). Sometimes, for a number of possible reasons, the brain itself produces the electrical stimulation required to activate one or more of these drive centres. The basic way in which this is accomplished is that membranes of nerve cells in the area become relatively less permeable than is ideal, and deionization (electrical impulses in the nerve fibres) spread from one nerve bundle to the next

rather than passing only along nerve fibres. This can occur as a result of an inherited predisposition not to produce enough neural inhibition (the means by which the brain functionally insulates nerve fibres from one another), or by allergic inflammation of the nerve cell membrane (often responding allergically to grains in alcohols, where the alcohol itself is merely the blood transmitter substance which carries the allergen to its target site), or by chemicals which interfere with the acetylcholine-cholinesterase interactions (the chemicals which maintain smooth synaptic activities at the points of juncture of nerve fibres).

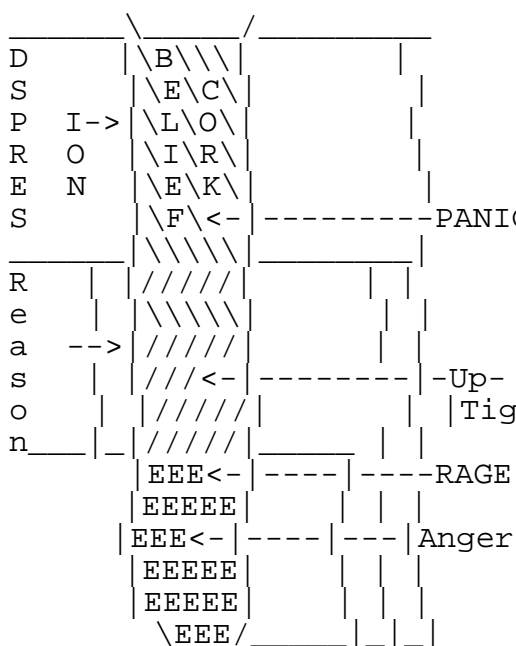
The outcome of the resulting 'short-circuiting' (spreading) electrical stimulation of brain centres may run all the way from grand mal epilepsy, through petit mal absences or sensory or motor events, to 'blind rages' or other 'blind' drive-related behaviours or even automatisms. People who suffer from this kind of rage or other drive reactions tend also to experience a kind of periodicity to their dyscontrol, tend to experience depression, often have been hyperactive or learning disabled as children, may become alcoholics (by activation of the reinforcement centre as part of the spreading activity, which rewards whatever occurred before, such as alcohol use), tend to have psychosomatic complaints or allergies, often exhibit sleep disorders and/or autonomic/anxiety storms. This group of offenders, if they can be shown to exhibit a disturbance in the perception of visual angle on a test, may be invited to participate in one of the biofeedback treatment programmes which is specifically designed to train increase in neural inhibition function to correct the faulty functioning of the brain.

2. The conditional bases of anger: The body is essentially an energy producing machine. All the cells in the body metabolize nutrients and oxygen to produce energy used in the body. The bone cells produce rigid reactive resistance energy (being solid, they push back against the force of movement or gravity to hold the person up or away); the nerve cells produce electrical energy; the viscera produce chemicals which act to transform other chemicals into energy releasing substances; the blood vessels provide confining energy to channel the blood and allow it to move about the body; and the muscles provide contractile energy, pulling against bones across joints to move the body and its parts. The grand sum of all the energy produced by the striate or skeletal muscle cells is what will be referred to here as the total amount of the body's energy -- used for visible movement or behaviour.

Energy is the best commodity we have. While sex holds people together in pairs, and while love holds people together in small groups, energy holds people together in societies. People live together in societies in order to share and to exchange their energies. Each person serves many others with his energies, and is in turn served by the energies of many others. By each person specializing his use of energy in particular ways, he maximizes the efficiency with which he performs his tasks, thus maximizing the useful service he can do for and with others. So, energy is the best thing we have. This idea and its relationship to anger

can be illustrated by the following account of 'the energy test tube'

Here is The 'Energy' Test Tube. Imagine a test tube into which is poured this grand total of the body's energy in order to



measure its amount up the side of the test tube. The prototype or original form of this energy ('E') can be seen when the infant is hungry. It tightens up its fists, twists up its face, shakes its arms and legs, and screams. If we werew to put the infant up on its hind legs while it is acting like that, we might say of it: 'what an angry little thing!' It's no angry; it is hungry. And the hunger has mobilized its body's energy reserves to let its needs be known. This energy level is represented by the 'E's in the test tube. Across the years of growing up, something strange happens. The child is energetic and talks loudly. The father shouts: 'Don;t you raise your voice to me young one'. The child shrinks in fear. Is there something

wrong about energy? The

fear becomes conditioned/learned to the energy use, and it serves as a kind of a cork to keep the energy down or under control in the test tube (the fear cork is represented by the slashes (/) in the test tube). The child is wrestling with his friend, and his mother, who is worried about how the friend's mother may react (the child, of course, doesn't know this), says: 'Don't you hurt your friend Johnny' -- is there something wrong with using energy? And another cork of fear is learned to inhibit energy use. The child is restless in class, and the teacher booms: 'Sit still and pay attention' -- something wrong with energy? And yet another fear cork is learned to be associated with energy use. The child is playing outside in his Sunday best on a muddy day, and comes in muddied up. His mother (who is the only one of the two who even thinks about laundry and cleaning bills) storms at him -- something wrong with using energy and having fun? And another cork of fear is conditioned to his energy in the test tube.

Please note two things about this. First, every time a response (in this case energy) is activated, habitually every other response (in this case anxiety) which has become conditioned or learned to be associated with it is also activated or aroused. Second, anxiety is the psychological response associated with activation or arousal of the autonomic nervous system - which is the bodily response conditioned to be aroused by increase in anxiety. But the effect of activating the autonomic nervous system is (automatically and for survival) to increase the amount of energy available to the body -- that is, in the case of what we are calling the 'Energy test tube', anxiety conditionally signals or activates more energy production, which is why the

anxiety (/s) is shown as increasing the amount of energy measured up the side of the test tube. That is, more energy is produced when anxiety (eg., about energy) is activated.

But this additional energy feels unpleasant or has a bitter taste (i.e., anxiety) associated with it. Now, if the energy in the bottom of the test tube is activated, a stronger level of energy is also activated, with a bitter taste to it. If the person experiences this increased amount of energy as the energy part (or the readiness to do something), the experience he has is what is called 'anger' -- i.e., energy with a bitter taste attaching to it. If, instead, however, the part the person experiences is the anxiety part, the high level of energy activated is experienced as 'up-tightness' (i.e., energy used in muscle tension -- whose function is to impede use of energy by flexor muscles competing with extensor muscles, producing uptightness). Again, if, instead of experiencing either of these two parts of the energy components, the person experiences the learned inhibition or 'corking' effect (anxiety is a motive to activate avoidance, inhibition or defence), the experience he has is one of control or of impediment to the use of energy, which is most commonly expressed as 'let's not lose our cool, let's be reasonable about this situation' or 'let me stop and think this through' (the internal dialogue involved in seeking to be reasonable and impede or control anger).

This test tube model can be carried a bit further. If the person then, by being reasonable, concludes that anger is a 'bad thing' which is to be avoided at all costs as the most terrible feeling there is, he adds his own 'cork' of anxiety about energy-anger to increase the impediment against its expression, and thus increases further the energy aroused by the belief he has created. If now, this amount of energy is experienced as the energy part of the test tube's content, the experience is no longer that of anger, it may be that of rage or even violence. If the total energy measured in the extended test tube is experienced as the anxiety component, the experience is likely to be less one of just uptightness, and more one of panic. And if the experience of this self-increased energy amount is that of the 'corking' or the inhibitive effect, the experience may shift from just that of seeking to be reasonable, and may instead be that of being depressed (energy/anger inhibition).

Thus, anger and its many associated forms may derive from the conditioning or learning which takes place in the context of the socialization process during development. The attempt to achieve a civilized way of behaving may, in fact, decrease the degree of socialization accomplished by creating anger or some of its consequences. The other side of this paradox may well be that, what ends up as being anger, may also be the aspect of a person which most tends to foster socialization -- that is, the thing that keeps people in society, living together in communities, is the energy each brings to what he/she does to contribute to the well-being and to service the needs of others, in exchange for the exercise of their energies (i.e., division of labour in society).

3. The reactive bases of anger: It has been shown that frustration breeds irritation and anger. That is, the very fact of a frustration, or something which impedes one's progress or achieving what he/she wishes, activates anger. What it actually activates is energy -- that is, the bodily reaction needed to overcome an obstacle or to achieve something. Any frustration activates autonomic arousal to provide the body with the extra energy required to overcome the frustration or obstacle. When energy is directed to 'approach' action (rather than to flight or tense freeze), the experience is likely to be interpreted as anger or aggression by the person.

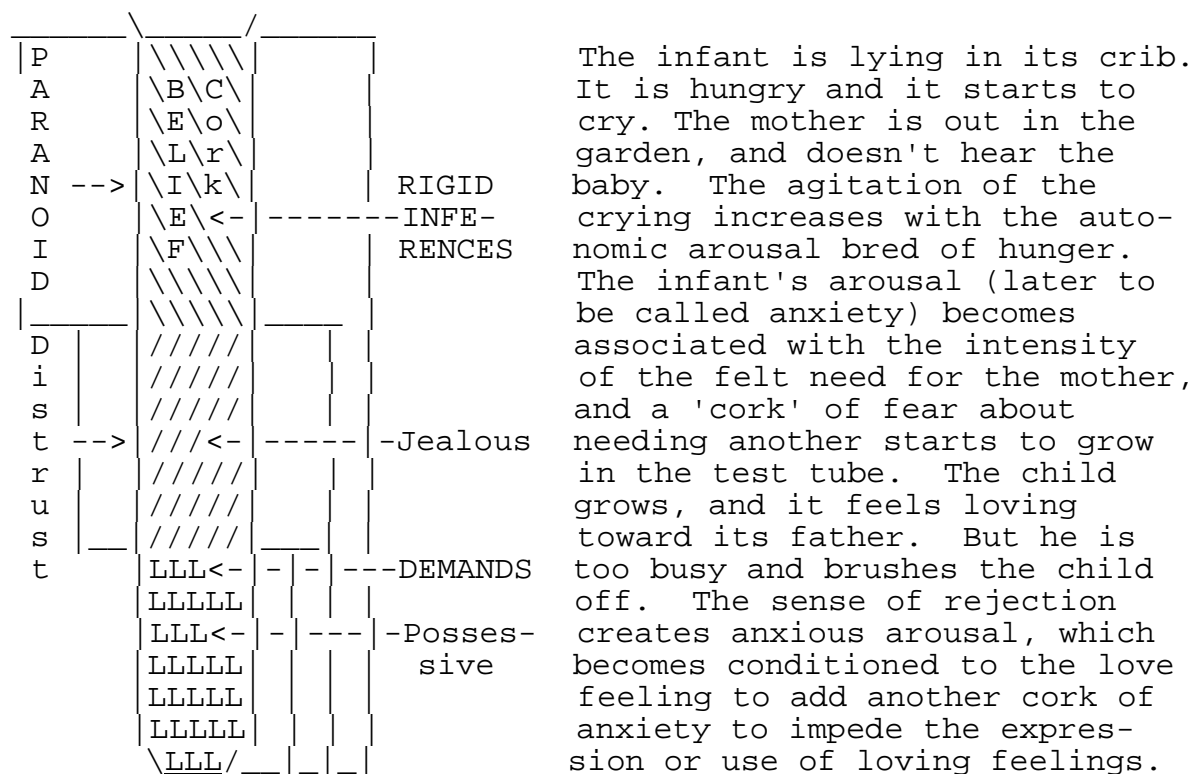
This model for the evocation of anger is thus merely an extension of the last model for anger. In this case, it is the fact of impediment (most often self-imposed by thought, anxiety, and sometimes experienced as a claustrophobic sense of being restricted or prevented) which, by activating anxiety in the context of the felt exercise of energy, comes to be interpreted as anger (when the focus of attention is on the utilization of energy in dealing with an obstacle). In these terms, while it is true that an external obstacle to progress (to use of energy) may evoke anger or aggression, it's method of doing so is merely a special case of how the conditioned bases of anger works.

Most people will consider this view of 'reactive' anger to be wrong. We all know that we get angry (react with anger) to what other people do. This view that we all have about how we get angry is just another example of the principle that: If a million people believe something, it is bound to be ... wrong. The crazy thing is that it is just not true that it is what other people do which makes us angry. The truth is that we make ourselves angry. One of the main parts of the anger management programme is a component called: Rational-Emotive Therapy. In that part of the programme we will spend some time examining some of the standard mistakes of thinking which most of us make, and which are some of the ways in which we make ourselves angry. For the time being, let's just consider a single example.

Most of us would think that if we were hit by someone else it would automatically make us angry. Let's just picture a simple situation. You are walking along a sidewalk, and quite suddenly you are hit on the shoulder from behind. Of course, the sudden surprise activates arousal in you -- the natural autonomic arousal to any sudden novel experience (called the orienting reflex). You turn around. The person who hit you is a young punk, half your size, who is trying to show off to his puny friends. How do you feel? Angry ... right? Oh, I beg your pardon, I was wrong. The person who hit you is a great muscular bruiser, twice your size, holding a baseball bat in his hand. How do you feel? You probably feel fear. Oh, I'm sorry, I was wrong. The person who (actually) bumped into you is a little old lady on crutches, who tripped and bumped into you by accident. How do you feel? You probably feel something like compassion, and you may even try to help her up. Oh, sorry, I was wrong again. The person who bumped into you is an old drunk who staggered blindly into you. How do you feel? Probably a touch of disgust. How is it possible that the same experience of being hit or bumped -- really the same experience -- leads to so many

different reactions on your part? The thing that is different in these situations is the meanings you attach in your own head to the situations. What we tell ourselves about the various situations we encounter in life decides how we will react.

4. The defensive bases of anger: Imagine a test tube, as above, except that this time replace its original 'energy' contents with the sum total of the person's 'love' or lovingness. Lovingness is expressed and experienced in a host of different ways by different people, and so it will not be defined exactly here. The first part of lovingness, of course, is 'need' for the parenting ones.



The infant is lying in its crib. It is hungry and it starts to cry. The mother is out in the garden, and doesn't hear the baby. The agitation of the crying increases with the autonomic arousal bred of hunger. The infant's arousal (later to be called anxiety) becomes associated with the intensity of the felt need for the mother, and a 'cork' of fear about needing another starts to grow in the test tube. The child grows, and it feels loving toward its father. But he is too busy and brushes the child off. The sense of rejection creates anxious arousal, which becomes conditioned to the love feeling to add another cork of anxiety to impede the expression or use of loving feelings.

The child tells a secret to a friend, who blabs it around. The felt embarrassment activates anxiety, which becomes conditioned to the caring feelings, to add another cork over the love feelings. The child feels love for another, who contracts affection for yet another, and still another cork of fear about loving is learned to be associated with loving feelings. The corks grow to serve as a motive to impede love feelings, or to avoid them (anxiety is a motivation to create avoidance or defence).

Now the love feelings are stimulated in the person, and if the person experiences the love part of the test tube's feelings, the feeling experienced is no longer love, but possessiveness -- the sense of needing to be loved more than one loves in order to be 'safe' in caring. If the part of the test tube experienced is the anxiety component, the experience the person has is one of jealousy -- or the anticipatory anxiety that the other will not love enough and will soon hurt the person. If the experience the person has is that of the 'corking' or inhibitory effect imposed by the motive of anxiety over loving feelings, the experience is one of feeling/thinking/believing that it is not safe to trust,

or that of mistrust. Now, if the person, under the impress of strong feelings of love and fear, creates a belief or philosophy of life which says that people are not to be trusted, the person may add his/her own cork of fear on top of the test tube, thus increasing the fear and the overall amount of feeling. The intensity of fear is likely to rigidify beliefs, increase inference-proneness and make the person emotionally cold and hostile toward others -- the person may become paranoid.

Another way to view this phenomenon would be, instead of looking at the test tube from the side to measure the amounts of feeling up its side, to look down into the mouth of the test tube. If we did that, off in the distance would be a small circle of love feelings. This would be surrounded by radiating lines of anxiety (the substance of the cork). Around the ends of these radiating lines would be another circle - the top rim of the inhibiting cork. In this way of looking at the issue, the love feelings are surrounded by the 'barbs' of anxiety, and the anxiety would require some protective defenses to be used to avoid experiencing or expressing the feared love feelings. The best way to avoid experiencing or expressing love feeling would be to ensure that psychological 'distance' was maintained from the other person, toward whom there might be risk of love feelings being experienced or expressed. There are several ways in which a person can maintain psychological 'distance' from another. These include such defenses (represented by the outer rim of the 'cork') as the emotional states of self-depreciation bred of guilt feelings (i.e., 'I am not worthy of being loved'), or sensitivity to what others might think or feel toward one, or suspiciousness (the cautiousness of jealousy), hostility or criticality/finding-faults to keep the other at a distance, or as the cognitive responses of mistrust, inference-making or generally acting in paranoid ways -- including being hostile. This basis for anger, then, is the hostility bred of fear lest the other may not love enough, or is a response to imagined slight or rejection. The extreme form of this is hate or hatred. This is a defensive kind of anger/hostility which tends to be less episodic than that bred of anxiety about energy, and more consistent or chronic (thus referred to as chronic hostility).

5. The cognitive bases of anger: Anger is merely one of the many experiences which occur when physiologic/autonomic/stress arousal occurs. The arousal response is more or less identical, whether the arousal is identified or labelled as fear/anxiety/panic or stress/autonomic arousal or anger/hostility/aggression/violent arousal or sexual/excitement/delight arousal. They are all basically the same physiologic response, and are merely named differently.

The basic equations to express how UNPLEASANT emotions are aroused are:

1. Stimulus -->+ Arousal -->+ Thought = Anger
2. Stimulus -->+ Thought -->+ Arousal = Anger

Let's use this idea.

The common features of both these equations are the presence of a stimulus and the result of anger. The difference between them is the order of thought and arousal. In the example used earlier of being bumped/hit on the shoulder while walking along the sidewalk, the arousal came first from the unexpected stimulus, and the thought determined the kind of emotion which followed (equation #1). The thought might come first, as in the situation where you are approaching an acquaintance, and he or she looks away from you. The thought might be that your acquaintance is angry with you, dislikes you or hates you. If you add thoughts such as that you were particularly nice to this person recently, or that real human beings behave politely and courteously to one another, you might talk yourself into an emotional arousal, and then become angry.

Both of these equations and examples describe the ways in which cognition or thinking creates anger. In the first case or example, the thought twists the pre-existing arousal, in some situations, into anger -- or other types of emotions. In the second case or example, the thought about the situation (or other person) gets filtered through another idea (such as: the idea that things are supposed to be fair, and the other should act as you acted in the past; or the idea that there are fixed rules of human, polite, contact which everybody is supposed to follow) and creates the justification for becoming exercised or aroused, and shaping the arousal to be that of anger. That is, thoughts also can create anger.

Let's move on to find out other things about anger.

ANGER-IRRITATION PATTERN

NAME: _____

DATE: _____ UNIT: _____ AGE: _____

Please circle the number which best applies to you. The numbers mean:

- 1 = "Never", "False", "No"
- 2 = "Seldom", "Rarely", "Mostly not"
- 3 = "Sometimes", "As often as not", "Maybe"
- 4 = "Usually", "Most often", "Quite often"
- 5 = "Always", "Yes", "True"

-
- 01. I get irritated if I am kept waiting. 1 2 3 4 5
 - 02. I get very irritated when other people slow me down at work or while driving. 1 2 3 4 5
 - 03. I get really angry when people cannot think things out for themselves and keep running to me with every little problem. 1 2 3 4 5
 - 04. I get angry when people continually interrupt me when I am busy. 1 2 3 4 5
 - 05. I get annoyed when others do not appreciate my true worth. 1 2 3 4 5
 - 06. I feel annoyed with myself when I make mistakes. 1 2 3 4 5
 - 07. I cannot stand being laughed at. I get mad. 1 2 3 4 5
 - 08. If things go wrong at home I usually get irritated. 1 2 3 4 5
 - 09. I get short tempered when the children do not behave themselves. 1 2 3 4 5
 - 10. I get cross when people make stupid mistakes. 1 2 3 4 5
 - 11. When people let me down I get really angry. 1 2 3 4 5
 - 12. I feel that most problems or difficulties at work are due to other people's silly mistakes, and that makes me angry. It's such a waste of time. 1 2 3 4 5

[Add up the circled numbers]= Total= _____
Maximum Score = 60

This test gives an estimate of the anger-stress you put yourself through in reacting with anger and irritation to various common life situations.

If you got a score of 12, try the test again. 12 is a hard score to believe.

A score of 12-24 is pretty good, but you aren't ambitious enough. A score of 25-36 is pretty angry (e.g., fuming in traffic jams).

A score of 37-48 is high - you run a risk of hypertension, etc.

A score of 49-60 is dangerously high - for your blood pressure, cholesterol, heart strain, addictions. Relax and exercise more.

One thing we can learn from this questionnaire is, not only the amount of anger or irritation you feel, but also that it is possible that either you are not being entirely honest with yourself about how angry you get in some settings, or you may be TOO apt to prevent yourself from expressing, or even experiencing, your angry feelings -- if you scored 'too' low.

That is, both ends of the scale -- too over-controlled or under-angry and too under-controlled or over-angry -- can produce real problems for the person, both in terms of health and social and personal adjustment. In fact, one of the things to be discovered is that aggressiveness and under-assertiveness come in most cases from the same source -- see the Energy Test Tube (#2: Conditional bases of anger, above).

BELIEFS INVENTORY

NAME: _____

DATE: _____ UNIT: _____ AGE: _____

Please put a mark in the box which most applies to you (not how you think you should think). Don't spend too long over any item - mark your answer quickly and go on to the next one

AGREE DISAGREE

01. __[.] [] It is important to me that others approve of me.
02. __[.] [] I hate to fail at anything.
03. __[.] [] People who do wrong deserve what they get.
04. __[] [.] I usually accept what happens philosophically.
05. __[] [.] If a person wants to he can be happy under almost any circumstances.
06. __[.] [] I have a fear of some things that often bothers me.
07. __[.] [] I usually put off important decisions.
08. __[.] [] Everyone needs someone he can depend on for help and advice.
09. __[.] [] "A zebra cannot change his stripes".
10. __[.] [] I prefer quiet leisure above all things.
11. __[] [.] I like the respect of others, but I don't have to have it.
12. __[.] [] I avoid things I cannot do well.
13. __[.] [] Too many evil persons escape the punishment they deserve.
14. __[] [.] Frustrations don't upset me.
15. __[] [.] People are disturbed not by situations but by the view they take of them.
16. __[] [.] I feel little anxiety over unexpected dangers or future events.
17. __[] [.] I try to go ahead and get irksome tasks behind me when they come up.
18. __[.] [] I try to consult an authority on important decisions.
19. __[.] [] It is almost impossible to overcome the influences of the past.
20. __[] [.] I like to have a lot of irons in the fire.
21. __[.] [] I want everyone to like me.
22. __[] [.] I don't mind competing in activities in which others are better than I am.
23. __[.] [] Those who do wrong deserve to be blamed.
24. __[.] [] Things should be different from the way they are.
25. __[] [.] I cause my own moods.
26. __[.] [] I often can't get my mind off some concern.
27. __[.] [] I avoid facing my problems.
28. __[.] [] People need a source of strength outside themselves.
29. __[] [.] Just because something once strongly affects your life doesn't mean it need do so in the future.
30. __[] [.] I'm most fulfilled when I have lots to do.
31. __[] [.] I can like myself even when many others don't.
32. __[] [.] I like to succeed at something, but I don't feel I have to.

33. __[.] [] Immorality (immoral acts) should be strongly punished.
34. __[.] [] I often get disturbed over situations I don't like.
35. __[] [.] People who are miserable have usually made themselves that way.
36. __[] [.] If I can't keep something from happening, I don't worry about it.
37. __[] [.] I usually make decisions as promptly as I can.
38. __[.] [] There are certain people I depend on greatly.
39. __[] [.] People overvalue the influences of the past.
40. __[] [.] I most enjoy throwing myself into a creative project.
41. __[] [.] If others dislike me, that's their problem, not mine.
42. __[.] [] It is highly important to me to be successful in everything I do.
43. __[] [.] I seldom blame people for their wrong doings.
44. __[] [.] I usually accept things the way they are, even if I don't like them.
45. __[] [.] A person won't stay angry or blue long unless he keeps himself that way.
46. __[.] [] I can't stand taking chances.
47. __[.] [] Life is too short to spend it doing unpleasant tasks.
48. __[] [.] I like to stand on my own two feet.
49. __[.] [] If I had had different experiences I could be more like I want to be.
50. __[.] [] I'd like to retire and quit working entirely.
51. __[.] [] I find it hard to go against what others think.
52. __[] [.] I enjoy activities for their own sake, no matter how good I am at them.
53. __[.] [] The fear of punishment helps people be good.
54. __[] [.] If things annoy me, I just ignore them.
55. __[.] [] The more problems a person has, the less happy he will be.
56. __[] [.] I am seldom anxious over the future.
57. __[] [.] I seldom put things off.
58. __[] [.] I am the only one who can really understand and face my problems.
59. __[] [.] I seldom think of past experiences as affecting me now.
60. __[] [.] Too much leisure time is boring.
61. __[] [.] Although I like approval, it's not a real need for me.
62. __[.] [] It bothers me when others are better than I am at something.
63. __[.] [] Everyone is basically good.
64. __[] [.] I do what I can to get what I want and then don't worry about it.
65. __[] [.] Nothing is upsetting in itself - only in the way you interpret it.
66. __[.] [] I worry a lot about certain things in the future.
67. __[.] [] It is difficult for me to do unpleasant chores.
68. __[] [.] I dislike for others to make my decisions for me.
69. __[.] [] We are slaves to our personal histories.

70. __[.] [] I sometimes wish I could go to a tropical island and just lie on the beach forever.
71. __[.] [] I often worry about how much people approve of and accept me.
72. __[.] [] It upsets me to make mistakes.
73. __[.] [] It's unfair that "the rain falls on both the just and the unjust".
74. __[] [.] I am fairly easygoing about life.
75. __[.] [] More people should face up to the unpleasantness of life.
76. __[.] [] Sometimes I can't get a fear off my mind.
77. __[] [.] A life of ease is seldom very rewarding.
78. __[.] [] I find it easy to seek advice.
79. __[.] [] Once something strongly affects your life, it always will.
80. __[.] [] I love to lie around.
81. __[.] [] I have considerable concern with what people are feeling about me.
82. __[.] [] I often become quite annoyed over little things.
83. __[] [.] I usually give someone who has wronged me a second chance.
84. __[.] [] People are happiest when they have challenges and problems to overcome.
85. __[] [.] There is never any reason to remain sorrowful for very long.
86. __[] [.] I hardly ever think of such things as death/war.
87. __[] [.] I dislike responsibility being thrust on me.
88. __[] [.] I dislike having to depend on others.
89. __[.] [] People never change basically.
90. __[.] [] Most people work too hard and don't get enough rest.
91. __[] [.] It's annoying but not upsetting to be criticized.
92. __[] [.] I'm not afraid of doing things which I cannot do well.
93. __[] [.] No one is evil, even though his deeds may be.
94. __[] [.] I seldom become upset over the mistakes of others.
95. __[] [.] Man makes his own hell within himself.
96. __[.] [] I often find myself planning what I would do in different dangerous situations.
97. __[] [.] If something is necessary, I do it even if it is unpleasant.
98. __[] [.] I've learned not to expect someone else to be very concerned about my welfare.
99. __[] [.] I don't look upon the past with any regrets.
100. __[.] [] I can't feel really content unless I'm relaxed and doing nothing.

 There are two steps to score this test.

First, go down through your answers and put a score of "1" on the line before each item if (and only if) the box in which you put your check mark was the box with a dot [.] in it.

Second, count up the number of "1s" you scored separately for the item numbers ending with a 1, then those ending with a 2, then

those ending with a 3, then those ending with a 4, then those ending with a 5, then those ending with a 6, then those ending with a 7, then those ending with an 8, then those ending with a 9, and then those ending with a 0. Enter the resulting ten scores on the lines for each given below, and you will then be able to read which of the ten categories of common errors or mistakes of thinking you are most likely to make -- that is, the higher your score, the more likely you are to make that kind of error. Even a score of 2 or 3 in any category suggests that you are (somewhat) likely to make that mistake of thinking and to upset and disturb yourself by making that kind of thinking error.

Add up your scores for each group of 10 items and enter them on the lines for thinking errors A-J:

A= credits on 01 + 11 + 21 + 31 + 41 + 51 + 61 + 71 + 81 + 91
=_____ **A** refers to the irrational idea that it is absolutely necessary for an adult to have love and approval from peers, family and friends.

B= credits on 02 + 12 + 22 + 32 + 42 + 52 + 62 + 72 + 82 + 92
=_____ **B** refers to the irrational idea that you must be unfailingly competent and almost perfect in all you undertake.

C= credits on 03 + 13 + 23 + 33 + 43 + 53 + 63 + 73 + 83 + 93
=_____ **C** refers to the irrational idea that certain people are evil, wicked and villainous, and should be punished.

D= credits on 04 + 14 + 24 + 34 + 44 + 54 + 64 + 74 + 84 + 94
=_____ **D** refers to the irrational idea that it is horrible and intolerable when things are not the way you would like them to be.

E= credits on 05 + 15 + 25 + 35 + 45 + 55 + 65 + 75 + 85 + 95
=_____ **E** refers to the irrational idea that external events cause most human misery, as if people simply react as events trigger their emotions.

F= credits on 06 + 16 + 26 + 36 + 46 + 56 + 66 + 76 + 86 + 96
=_____ **F** refers to the irrational idea that you should feel fear or anxiety about anything unknown, uncertain or potentially dangerous.

G= credits on 07 + 17 + 27 + 37 + 47 + 57 + 67 + 77 + 87 + 97
=_____ **G** refers to the irrational idea that it is easier to avoid than face life's difficulties and responsibilities.

H= credits on 08 + 18 + 28 + 38 + 48 + 58 + 68 + 78 + 88 + 98
=_____ **H** refers to the irrational idea that you need some-thing other or stronger or greater than yourself to rely on.

I= credits on 09 + 19 + 29 + 39 + 49 + 59 + 69 + 79 + 89 + 99
=_____ **I** refers to the irrational idea that the past has a lot to do with determining the present.

J= credits on 10 + 20 + 30 + 40 + 50 + 60 + 70 + 80 + 90 + 100
=_____ **J** refers to the irrational idea that happiness can be achieved by inaction, passivity and endless leisure.

To the extent to which you score high in each of these areas of errors of thinking, to that extent your thinking implies that you assume that kind of idea to be right or true, and by making that kind of false (irrational) assumption you upset yourself unnecessarily in various kinds of life situations. So, if you could correct this mistaken assumption (or thinking error), you would not upset yourself as much in the future. Wouldn't it be nice not to feel you have to upset yourself as much as you have in the past? If you would like to upset yourself less in the future, please circle your higher scores, and look at and think about the mistaken ideas several times every day in the future. Taking the time to do so ought to result in a much happier and less upsetting future for you.

Let's expand the number of Styles of Distorted Thinking to 15.

1. Catastrophizing: You expect disaster. You notice or hear about a problem and start 'what ifs'. What if tragedy strikes? What if it happens to you? Try changing the thought to 'so what if'.

2. Shoulds: You have a list of ironclad rules about how you and other people should act. People who break the rules anger you, and you feel guilty if you violate the rules. Who made the rules? Are they carved in stone?

3. Filtering: You take the negative details and magnify them while filtering out all the positive aspects of a situation.

4. Polarized Thinking: Things are black or white, good or bad. You have to be perfect or you are a failure. There is no middle ground for you.

5. Overgeneralization: You come to a general conclusion based on a single incident or piece of evidence. If something bad happens once, you expect it to happen over and over again.

6. Mind Reading: Without their saying so, you know what people are feeling and why they act the way they do. In particular, you are able to divine how people are feeling toward you.

7. Personalization: Thinking that everything people do or say is some kind of reaction to you. You also compare yourself to others, trying to decide who is smarter, better looking, etc.

8. Control Fallacies: If you feel externally controlled, you see yourself as helpless, a victim of fate. The fallacy of external control has you responsible for the pain and happiness of everyone around you. If you are not controlling everything, errors are apt to happen - even catastrophes.

9. Fallacy of Fairness: You feel resentful because you think you know what is fair, but other people won't agree with you. Indeed, if things were fair, none of us would get nearly as much in life as we do. None of us gives nearly as much as we receive.

10. Blaming: You hold other people responsible for your pain, or take the other tack and blame yourself for every problem or reversal.

11. Emotional Reasoning: You believe that what you feel must be true - automatically. If you feel stupid and boring, then you must be stupid and boring.

12. Fallacy of Change: You expect that other people will change to suit you if you just pressure or cajole or confront them enough. You feel the need to change people because your hopes of happiness seem to depend entirely on them.

13. Global Labelling: You generalize one or two qualities into a negative global judgement or into a universal principle.

14. Being Right: You are continually on trial to prove that your opinions and actions are correct. Being wrong is unthinkable and you will go to any lengths to demonstrate your rightness.

15. Heaven's Reward Fallacy: You expect all your sacrifice and self-denial to pay off, as if there were someone keeping score. You feel bitter when the reward doesn't come.

Each of these Styles of Distorted Thinking, Fallacies or Errors of Thinking, because they are unrealistic or not the way the world is, and because you therefore repeatedly find yourself frustrated or disappointed or in situations which contradict these assumptions, expectations and beliefs of yours, upset you unnecessarily, and often lead you to feel bitter, resentful and angry. Indeed, to the extent that you adopt these Styles of Distorted Thinking, you spend a lot of your time ruminating or worrying about things in your life, fuming about them, and seeking to get revenge on others who you think have offended 'the way things are supposed to be'. To fix these errors of thinking, the first thing to do is to become clearly aware of the nature of the errors so you can be sure that you understand them, so you can realistically decide which ones you are prone to make. Once you have determined which of the errors or fallacies you are prone to make, you need to think through each of those errors until you can see clearly that they are errors or faulty expectations. Once you have understood clearly that each of the errors is indeed an error, with just a little practice in consciously changing your thinking in situations in which you upset yourself, you may well find yourself on the way to becoming less prone to such errors, and less frequently or intensely upset and angry, and not as often thinking about revenging yourself on others.

Here are some exercises designed to help you to recognize, notice and identify distorted thinking. The following exercise is an exercise in matching. From the list of fallacies, pick the one or ones involved in each of the later statements, and put the names of the involved fallacies on the lines after the statements.

Fallacies

1. Filtering
2. Polarized Thinking
3. Overgeneralization
4. Mind Reading
5. Catastrophizing
6. Personalization
7. Control Fallacies
8. Fallacy of Fairness
9. Blaming
10. Shoulds
11. Emotional Reasoning
12. Fallacy of Change
13. Global Labelling
14. Being Right
15. Heaven's Reward Fallacy

1. Ever since Lisa I've never trusted a redhead. _____
2. Quite a few people here seem smarter than I am. _____
3. If you'd be more sexually open, we'd have a
much happier marriage. _____
4. I worked and raised these kids and look what
thanks I get. _____
5. You're either for me or against me. _____
6. I could have enjoyed the picnic except the
chicken was burnt. _____
7. I feel depressed; life must be pointless. _____
8. You can't fight the system. _____
9. It's your fault we're always in the hole each
month. _____
10. He was a loser from the first day he showed
up here. _____
11. It isn't fair that you go out and have fun
while I'm stuck doing homework. _____
12. He's always smiling, but I know he doesn't
like me. What a phoney he is. _____
13. I don't care what you think, I'd do it
exactly the same way again. _____
14. We haven't seen each other for two days and
I think the relationship is falling apart. _____
15. You should never ask other people personal
questions. _____

Answer Key

1. Overgeneralization
2. Personalization
3. Fallacy of Change
4. Heaven's Reward Fallacy
5. Polarized Thinking
6. Filtering
7. Emotional Reasoning
8. Control Fallacies
9. Blaming
10. Global Labelling
11. Fallacy of Fairness
12. Mind Reading
13. Being Right
14. Catastrophizing
15. Shoulds

There are at least two ways in which you can recognize your distorted ideas or thinking. The best tip off that you are using a distorted thinking style is the presence of painful emotions. You feel nervous, depressed or chronically angry. You feel disgusted with yourself. You play certain worries over and over like a broken record. You may notice that psychological pain fluctuates, feeling worse at certain times during the day than at other times. Use a Thoughts Diary to identify the situations which increase your distress and your habitual thoughts which accompany these situations. Ongoing conflict with friends and family can also be a cue that you are using one or more of the distorted styles. Notice what you say to yourself about the other person. Notice how you describe and justify your side of the conflict. The more you know about your own thoughts, the better is the position you are in to deal with life's situations. You can't control how others think or react, but you can control how you do.

Two common parts of irrational self-talk are statements that AWFULIZE and statements that ABSOLUTIZE. YOU awfulize things by giving them catastrophic, nightmarish interpretations. A momentary chest pain must be a heart attack; your grumpy boss must be about to fire you; your mate takes a night job and the idea of being alone is unthinkably terrifying. The emotions that follow awfulizing self-talk tend themselves to be awful emotions -- you are responding to your own description of the world. Irrational self-statements that absolutize often include words such as 'should', 'must', 'ought', 'always' and 'never'. The idea is that things or others are expected to abide by rules which are not rules at all -- just rules that you assume for others (though not usually for yourself). Where is it written that your boss is never to be grumpy, that you are unable to remain alone, that you cannot tolerate the perfectly natural human experience of fear, that somebody else must always be around so you don't feel alone, etc., etc.?

These 'rules' are not rules. They are irrational thoughts that you have taken into yourself as though they were the rules by which you (we all do it too) think the world is going to be controlled by you.

But where do these irrational or mistaken rules and beliefs come from? By far the vast majority of our attitudes and beliefs were formed while we were children -- when we did not yet understand much about the world, and when we were helpless and dependent on others. We have never challenged them, and so we remain emotionally vulnerable and at their mercy. One characteristic of children's thinking is a kind of absolute or black-and-white thinking, and this may carry over unchallenged into adulthood. In fact, things are what they are, and they are not controlled or adapted to what we happen to think they should be. To harbour the absolutistic idea is to hold an irrational idea. It may be worthwhile to think again about some of the irrational beliefs you scored relatively high on in the Beliefs Inventory you completed earlier.

1. It is absolutely necessary for an adult to have love and approval from peers, family and friends (all the time). This is an irrational idea. In fact, it is impossible to please all the people in your life, and certainly not all the time. Even those who you like and who like you will be turned off by some of your actions and qualities. This first irrational belief is perhaps the major source of feelings of rejection and injury by others.

2. You must be unfailingly competent and almost perfect in anything you undertake. The results of believing you must be perfect are inevitable failure and self-blame, lowered self-esteem, paralysis and fear in attempting anything, and perfectionistic standards applied to mate and friends. The last of these effects has the further effect of creating inappropriate expectations of others far beyond what they are likely to be willing to meet, and thus repeated disappointments. Moreover, this irrational idea directs your attention to short-falls from perfection, and thus steadily increases your dissatisfaction with the world and the people around you. In addition to its grandiosity in presuming to take on the characteristic of deity, this idea is the direct cause of joylessness and disappointment in life -- inflicted by the person who has the idea on him/herself.

3. Certain people are evil, wicked and villainous, and should be punished. A more realistic position is that some people sometimes behave in ways which are antisocial or inappropriate, or that these people sometimes make mistakes or do uncontrolled or silly things. Some of the time such people may be stupid, ignorant, neurotic and/or under-socialized, and it would be nice if these behaviours of their's changed. Their actions are rarely evil or wicked or villainous, and by far the majority of the time their actions are good and praiseworthy, and they nearly always do the best they can. As for punishment, it has no advantage at all, except that it may make the victim of some of these people's actions feel they have accomplished revenge.

4. It is horrible when people or things are not the way you would like them to be. This might be described as the spoiled child idea. As soon as the tire goes flat, the self-talk starts: 'Why does this happen to me? Damn, I can't take this. It's awful, I'll get all filthy'. Any inconvenience, problem or failure to get in your way is likely to be met with such awfulizing

statements. The result is intense irritation and stress. In fact, it happened to you because you ran over a nail or had the tires insufficiently inflated; of course you can take it, and you will take it, just like anybody else takes it; it's not at all awful, and in fact it happens to all sorts of people every day -- it's really quite a nothing-important to have happen; and, yes, you will probably get your hands dirty, and your clothing too if you're not careful. Basically, most of the things we awfulize are just ordinary occurrences which are merely temporary and normal inconveniences.

5. External events cause most human misery -- people simply react as events trigger their emotions. This is a very common attitude or assumption implied in many of our automatic thoughts -- you feel like a pawn controlled by others and by fate. Of course, a fairly reasonable extension of this belief might be worthy of note: if you don't want to have your emotions triggered by events, then it is up to you (as the person who wants this to happen) to control external events in order to create happiness and to avoid unpleasant feelings. Some people are inclined mostly to notice the limitations of such control and their sense of inability to manipulate the wills of others, and these people then may talk themselves into experiencing a sense of helplessness and chronic anxiety. Ascribing the cause of unhappiness to events is a way of avoiding reality. It was self-statements interpreting the event which caused the unhappiness. While you may only feel you have limited control over others, you do have enormous control over your own emotions and reactions, and, by the same token, events have very limited control over you.

6. You should feel fear or anxiety about anything that is unknown, uncertain or (perceived as) potentially dangerous. Many describe this as 'a little bell that goes off and I think I ought to start worrying'. They begin to rehearse their scenarios of catastrophe. Increasing the fear and anxiety in the face of uncertainty makes coping more difficult and adds to stress. It might even be possible to decide that you could enjoy the uncertain as a novel exciting experience. Alternatively, you might go the route of the rest of humankind. The unknown, the uncertain and the ambiguous is universally the commonest stimulus for anxiety. But people of the past have used the anxious arousal they create for themselves by contemplating the unknown (particularly the future, about which we are apt to make self-statements starting with 'what if ...') by becoming excited with the challenge of creating structure (called language), of creating understanding (philosophy), of creating predictions (science), of creating control (technology). It may take some effort to direct the arousal you may talk yourself into, but it also may help you to expand your knowledge, skills and ability to make a contribution to society. Again, alternatively, you could just decide to live in the here and now -- a place and a time in which there is little uncertainty and no cause for alarm.

7. It is easier to avoid than to face life difficulties and responsibilities. There are many ways of ducking responsibilities: 'I should tell him/her I'm no longer interested - but not tonight' (postponing), 'I'd like to get another job, but I'm too

tired on my days off to look' (blaming my body), 'a leaky faucet won't hurt anything' (denying consequences), 'We could shop today, but the car is making a funny sound' (exaggerating impediments). If you scored relatively high on this belief, please list your own standard excuses for avoiding responsibility, and think about each one afterwards.

Area of responsibility	Method of avoidance
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Some of the common ways people use to avoid responsibilities and difficulties are use of alcohol, street drugs or medications, procrastinating or putting things off, explaining or justifying or making excuses (Never explain. Your friends don't need it, and your enemies won't believe it anyway), deciding in advance of trying that you can't do anything about it anyway, getting upset or angry or depressed, telling yourself you are too sick or too weak, claiming you forgot (nobody forgets anything really). In fact, it is probably at least almost never easier to avoid a responsibility or a life difficulty than to face it -- it is probably nearly always easier to face it. To face a responsibility or difficulty squarely and with interest or as a challenge, usually results in solutions, accomplishing things and feeling good about yourself. It may take a bit of work, but nobody has real responsibilities (unless he/she decides to take them on for him/herself) which exceed his/her ability. But to avoid the responsibility or difficulty does not result in its going away -- in fact it remains with you, at least in the back of your mind, in order to keep (remembering to keep) avoiding it, it creates a sense of being a failure (even if that is denied in an 'I don't care' way), it impairs one's self-respect (and maybe the respect of others), and the responsibility or difficulty is usually still there to be coped with eventually anyway.

8. You need something other or stronger or greater than yourself to rely on. Lots of people believe this. However, this belief becomes a psychological trap in which your independent judgement and the awareness of your particular needs are undermined by a reliance on a higher authority. Whether or not there is a higher authority (at least in daily life), there is none that has authority over your daily moment-to-moment decisions and, even if there are those who may be willing to give advice or make decisions for you, you are the only person who has the consequences of decisions affecting your life and so you are the only person who will ever take care in making the decisions for you that are best in the long-run for you. Nobody else can possibly know what is best for you, or which consequences of decisions you are most willing to have -- and if you tell someone else which consequences you are willing to accept, you are, in fact, making the decision for yourself -- so why kid yourself about needing someone else to rely on? The strongest and best person in your life to make the best decisions for you, and on whom you can most fully rely, is YOURSELF.

9. The past has a lot to do with determining the present. A lot of people say: 'How can you argue with that?' In fact, it is true that events in the past, and most particularly the ways we

reacted and thought about things in the past, do have a lot to do with what happens and how we react and think in the present. In the sense that how we reacted and thought in the past did set up habits that we keep on blindly using, those kinds of events of the past often do cause how we do things in the present. But we are not just creatures of habit. We are also creative, we are also capable of making new decisions, and we are also capable of exercising our will. Just because you were once strongly affected by something, that does not mean that you must continue the habits you formed to cope with the earlier situation. Those old patterns and ways of responding were just decisions made by you so many times that they may have become nearly automatic. But you can now, if you want to, identify those old decisions (probably made when you were young, inexperienced and not all that wise) and start changing them right now. You can learn from past experiences, but you don't have to be overly attached to them.

10. Happiness can be achieved by inaction, passivity and endless leisure. Some might say that this Elysian Fields notion sounds just right. In fact, happiness is just not achieved by inaction, passivity and endless leisure -- all that creates is relaxation and calmness, and only then if the leisure period is quite short. If you prolonged it too much, and if it was complete enough, it would probably kill you -- literally. In fact, happiness is an active thing which comes from various definable types of activity, assuming some responsibility for your actions, and doing some quite specific things. If you really want happiness, you just will not get it by leisurefulness. You have to reach out, get active, reward yourself for the actions of happiness and participate in a lively way in living.

Incidentally, the above are not the only irrational ideas people have. Here are a few more you might want to think about and how you relate to them as beliefs.

11. You are helpless and have no control over what you experience or feel. This belief is at the heart of much depression, anxiety and feelings of helplessness. The truth is that we not only do exercise a considerable amount of control (whether we know it or not) over our interpersonal situations, and, as you have just been reading, over how we interpret and emotionally respond in each life event, but we each also exercise almost complete control over how we see, experience, understand and communicate about everything in our worlds -- yes, even over what we see and hear and how we see and hear things. The world each of us lives in is, in fact, structured and created by us every moment of life.

12. People are fragile and should never be hurt. This is perhaps a nice thought, but it serves mainly to hurt both us and those we are closest to. This irrational belief results in failure openly to communicate important feelings, and in self sacrifice that gives up what is nourishing and pleasurable (which, in turn, may later lead us to anger and resentment when we forget that it was we ourselves who had the original irrational belief). Relationships become filled with 'dead space' where conflicts developed and nothing was said.

13. Good relationships are based on mutual sacrifice and a focus on giving. This idea is not a bad idea; it is just a wrong idea. The belief may result in a reluctance to ask for things, and the anticipation or even belief that your hidden needs will be divined (Mind Reading) and provided for. Unfortunately, constant self-denial usually results in bitterness and withdrawal. In fact, good human relationships are based on mutual and reciprocal sharing, each exchanging energy and action with others -- this is the basis for community living in a society. At the same time, if a person focuses attention on what he/she receives, or even tries to get without giving, that person is doomed to unhappiness and unfulfilled and unjoyful living.

14. If you don't go to great lengths to please others, they will abandon or reject you. This belief is a by-product of low self-esteem. You usually run less risk of rejection if you offer to others your true unembellished self. They can take it or leave it, and they will sometimes leave it. But if they respond to the real you, you don't have to worry about being rejected later if you slack off or let down your guard.

15. When people disapprove of you, it invariably means you are wrong or bad. This crippling belief sparks anxiety in most social situations. The irrationality is contained in the generalization of one specific reaction of another or a fault or unattractive feature to a total indictment of the self, and it emotionalizes a concept in an all or none way. You may be wrong, or the other person may be wrong, or both may be partly right, but neither you nor the other is 'bad', and it probably doesn't matter all that much anyway whether you are wrong, or even whether you are disapproved.

16. Happiness, pleasure and fulfilment can only occur in the presence of others, and being alone is horrible. Quite apart from the fact that pleasure, self-worth and fulfilment can be experienced alone as well as with others, the statement, as a statement of belief, might just as easily be true stated in reverse -- that is, that these qualities can only occur when alone, and it is horrible being with others. But the real irrationality in this statement lies in the implicit underlying assumption that being alone or being with other people (in order to feel horrible or to be happy) is a condition determined by forces beyond one's control. With the exception of a person shipwrecked alone on a desert island, whether or not any individual is with or in the presence of others is entirely decided by him/her. If a person is alone it is because he/she has decided to be alone. Everybody who is willing to put out the effort to reach out, and is willing to pay the 'price' of being with others, can be as constantly as wished in the presence of others. The trouble is that some people are unwilling to pay the price -- usually just the price of giving up particular kinds of irrational beliefs, attitudes or self-talk. Some tell themselves their pride would be injured (i.e., that the thing they have made up for themselves and called pride is more important or precious to them than being with others -- and that's fine if that's what the person wants); some tell themselves that their (inflated) image of themselves (also made up by them for their own purposes), as a 'lady' or a 'macho man', 'the attractive one'.

etc., would be impaired by reaching out to others; some tell themselves they will only relate to people who care about them (probably exclusively and infinitely), which only says that they are not prepared to reciprocate affection, at least not at the start, that they are possessive, and that they don't understand that everybody else feels exactly the same way they do -- with the same fears and feelings that they cannot trust (everybody having been 'burned' in the past).

17. There is a perfect love, and a perfect relationship. Subscribers to this belief often feel resentful as they pass from one relationship to the next. Nothing is quite right, because they are waiting for the perfect fit. It never comes. The real irrationality in this belief is the expectation that the other will be and do all the perfections necessary. The person with the belief, however, is him/herself imperfect (as all humans are), and even if the person were somehow to find the perfect other, the contribution of imperfection by the person with this irrational belief would necessarily mar the perfection of love and relationship, resulting in an imperfect love and relationship. A lesser form of this same irrationality is to seek someone else to 'match' oneself. Since there are no two identical people in the universe, especially if one is seeking another of the other gender, the necessary imperfections in any 'match' result in the same frustration and resentment and the same failures of relationships. Besides, who says you are so great a catch that you require someone to match your greatness? It is just another way of stating the same irrational idea about finding the perfect other, love and relationship.

18. You shouldn't have to feel pain, you are entitled to a good life. Some people would say that the realistic position is that pain is an inevitable part of human life, and that it frequently accompanies tough, healthy decisions and the process of growth. While, in practical terms that may be true, there is more irrationality in this belief than just its unrealism. Who makes entitlements to a good life? Is it the government? It is not. The only person who has a good life, is the one who designs and creates one for him/herself, and who is flexible enough to accept and appreciate set-backs and instances of failure. Who says what 'should' be? The shoulds in any statement are irrational. That, however, does not mean that a person might not (if he/she wished strongly enough to do so and was prepared to pay the cost in learning and doing whatever needs to be done) achieve a life free from pain. To do so would certainly be a personal achievement.

19. Your worth as a person depends upon how much you achieve and produce. As an irrational statement, the authors of this irrational statement have allowed themselves some irrationality. This is not an irrational statement in and of itself. If a person wants to measure his/her worth in these terms, he/she is welcome to do so. The authors of this statement as an irrational statement merely have a different set of values in pointing out their idea (with which we happen to agree, incidently) that a more rational assessment of your real worth would depend on such things as your capacity to be fully alive, feeling everything it means to be human. Parenthetically, the more irrational statement is their's in setting the goal to feel everything it

is to be human (an impossible goal). But to have a different set of (more materialistic) values than the authors of this idea does not mark the one who has these values as being irrational or having this as an irrational belief. It only represents different values.

20. Anger is automatically bad and destructive. This not entirely an irrational belief, though it is in part. It would qualify as an irrational belief if the holder of the belief were to become fearful of his/her anger and to try to impede it completely as a result of holding this belief. Just to have the belief is not by itself irrational -- it is merely wrong (see the Energy Test Tube described earlier).

21. It is bad or wrong to be selfish. This is closer to an irrational belief than the last two. Its authors point out that the truth is that nobody knows your needs and wants better than you, and nobody else has as great an interest in seeing them fulfilled. They say that your happiness is your responsibility (true), but they also say that 'being selfish means you are accepting that responsibility' (this statement of their's is merely expressing a personal opinion or interpretation - really begging the question). What really marks this statement as an irrational belief is that it makes a negative judgement (which, made, is apt to help the person talk him/herself into being put down and unhappy) about something that, regardless of whether it is good or bad, right or wrong, is inevitable. Every breath we take, every morsel of food we eat, every time we go to the bathroom, as well as a host of daily actions, are, simply and by nature, selfish. We probably don't need to put ourselves down for being selfish, and if we become upset about somebody else thinking or saying that we are selfish, the upset is irrational because the speaker is equally selfish. Basically, to be told you are selfish by another can probably best be construed as a compliment -- it says that we are human. If, however, you would like to adopt the position that you aren't or don't want to be selfish, and you are looking around for a belief or self-statement to support that irrational desire to achieve the impossible, there is a similar idea in the word: Self-centred whose most appropriate definition is: A person of low taste and narrow interests, more interested in himself than in me.