

ANGER: TREATMENT PROTOCOL

Remember: anger is a symptom, and symptoms are solutions to an underlying conflict.

The conflicts underlying most anger:

- *There's something I want; I'm not succeeding in getting it.*
 - *I feel hurt; how can I get rid of the pain?*
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- Empathize with the distress, and with the personal toll such anger takes on someone.
 - Take a break to allow anger level to decrease if escalation is too intense for productive dialogue.
 - Gradually ease focus off the person who is the recipient of the anger and on to the angry individual so that s/he can identify what s/he wants. Identify the underlying pain and/or frustration, and what would soothe these negative feelings. This step marks the beginning of effective conflict resolution: i.e., of identifying the initial positions, exploring underlying concerns, and determining mutually agreeable solutions.
 - Ask if anger outbursts are succeeding in gaining this objective.
 - Add exploration of the underlying concerns of the other participant in order to begin to delineate ways to settle the conflict that would yield more effective outcomes for both sides.
 - As you conclude guiding the conflict resolution, ask "Are there any little pieces of this problem that still feel unfinished?" This way you can be sure you are ending with full and mutually satisfying closure.
 - Design disengagement strategies in order to limit anger escalations in the future.
 - Make shared agreements about anger ceilings (i.e., the point of anger intensity at which participants will disengage rather than participate in hurtful and unconstructive fighting).