



## Chapter 7

# *Stress management and anger control*

**Objectives:** This chapter aims to help trainees understand

1. Stress and relieving stress
2. Anger and anger prevention and control



# Stress and relieving stress

## Symptoms and impacts of stress

*Stress* is our reaction to certain events or situations, known as stressors, in our life that might be harmful to our mind or body. Many *requirements or challenges* can cause stress:

- *Unusual events*, including loss of close friends or family, divorce, injury, accident, risk, dismissal, retirement, pregnancy, financial difficulty, debt, change of living condition and environment, a conflict with your boss or a family reunion.
- *Daily events*, such as traffic, conflict with an acquaintance, noise, disorder, feeling uncomfortable due to the weather and pressures cause when caring for your child.
- *Work events*, including workload, overloading yourself, repetition, uncontrollable work, dangerous and hazardous work, excessive responsibility and looming deadlines.

The factors listed above are all external agents. Internal agents, however, such as a perceived conflict of choice (making a choice between two conflicting events, such as attending training or another important event), negative thinking or negative situation assessment can also cause stress. Finally, physiological issues can also be a cause of stress, including teenage development, menstrual periods, sickness, old age, lack of physical exercise and poor nutrition.

Stress is a reality, a part of our life. We usually consider stressors as negative but some stressful events may, in fact, be positive such as moving to a new house or a promotion with more responsibility. Acceptable levels of stress also provide a warning that you may be challenging your security or physical and mental health. Low levels of stress can galvanise you into overcoming difficulty. Feeling stressed usually means something needs to be changed.

What kinds of stress do parents and teachers usually face in child rearing and education? Sick children, school fees, problems at school, time management, relationships between children, and so much more can make parents feel stressed. Parental worries may continue throughout their lives. For teachers, increasing demands for quality of education is a constant pressure. Other stressors include the relationships between pupils and between teachers and pupils, time management advanced study and pupil's misbehaviour.

Parents and teachers should note that even if children are not the cause of their stress, children are usually most negatively affected by their stress. In many cases, children are physically and emotionally punished due to an adult's stress or anger. Understanding the causes of stress and how to relieve it safely is thus not only good for adults but for children too.

## Symptoms of Stress

Physical	Behavioural
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Headaches</li> <li>Fatigue</li> <li>Muscle tension in the neck, back and jaw</li> <li>A pounding heart</li> <li>Fast breathing</li> <li>Nausea</li> <li>Insomnia</li> <li>Shaking</li> <li>Anxiety</li> <li>Digestion problems</li> <li>Vomiting</li> <li>Repeated urination</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stuttering</li> <li>Making more mistakes</li> <li>Increased smoking</li> <li>Increased drinking</li> <li>Increased coffee intake</li> <li>Feeling impatient</li> <li>Unable to relax</li> <li>Teeth grinding</li> <li>Increased stubbornness</li> <li>Self-isolation</li> <li>Hurting others</li> <li>Procrastination</li> </ul>
Emotional	Cognitive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scared</li> <li>Worried</li> <li>Angry</li> <li>Resentful</li> <li>More aggressive</li> <li>Irritated</li> <li>Depressed</li> <li>Frustrated</li> <li>Feeling negated</li> <li>Bored</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One-way thinking</li> <li>Uncreative</li> <li>Incapable of planning</li> <li>Concerned with the past or future</li> <li>Lower levels of concentration</li> <li>Negative thinking</li> <li>Inflexible thinking</li> <li>Nightmares</li> <li>Daydreaming</li> </ul>

When the stress starts to negatively impact your health and/or relationships in your family, school or office, it is very important to determine how it is manifesting in terms of physiology, emotion, behaviour and cognition (outlined above), *as that will suggest the strategy you should adopt to try to reduce your stress.*

## Stress reduction

### Stress formula

$$\text{STRESS} = \frac{\text{LIFE PRESSURES FROM SOCIAL RELATIONS, WORK AND FAMILY}}{\text{INNER STRENGTHS}}$$

In order to reduce stress, we have to either reduce external pressures - something that is increasingly difficult to do in modern society - or enhance our inner strengths, improving our ability to cope with stress. In addition, there are some strategies we can follow to ease our stress levels.

#### 1. Reduce pressure and promote inner strengths

When stress is caused by work pressure, proper time management and planning will be effective. Organising your work or dividing your work into small parts on a daily or weekly basis will enable you to more easily achieve your objectives and reduce stress.

When stress is caused by negative thinking concentrating on positive points and those things that you can control will help to reduce stress.

If you find that the relationship between parents and children or teachers and pupils are continuously stressful, it is likely that you need to change your methods of communication, in terms of listening, style of parenting, teaching methods or how you react to relationship problems. Many of these points have been directly and indirectly discussed in the previous five sessions. Making the change to positive disciplines (logical consequences, rules and regulations establishment, time out, encouragement) is one of the most sustainable and effective ways of reducing stress.

#### 2. Some factors that can help to relieve stress

##### **Sport and physical exercises**

Walking, jumping, running, playing badminton, table tennis or even doing the housework may help to reduce stress and reduce the risk of heart problems. Start playing sports gradually, particularly if you haven't exercised in a while. Walk to the market or cycle short distances before building up to longer, more strenuous activities. Taking rest and finding the balance between work, family and entertainment, can also be very useful.

##### **Laughing, music**

Humour helps to reduce stress significantly. As the old saying goes, a good laugh is worth ten pills. Research has found that physically, laughing can help to reduce blood pressure. Music can also be very useful in reducing stress.

### ***Diet***

A healthy diet, including lots of fresh fruit and vegetables, is very good for stress management. Ensuring you drink enough water also helps to refresh your body and enables you to better handle stress.

### ***Reducing smoking***

Some people say that smoking helps to reduce stress but research has found the opposite to be true.

### ***Sleeping***

Lack of sleep can cause irritability, fatigue, lack of concentration and even depression..

### ***Support of family members or friends***

Research has found that people who have support from their friends or relatives often cope with stress better than those who have not.



## Activity: *Stress and stress relief*

**Objective**

To recognise stress, its impacts and how to overcome them

**Target audience**

Parents, teachers, caregivers and people who are working with children

**Time**

30 minutes

**Method**

Quick thinking and sharing

**Materials**

A0 flip chart, permanent markers or board, chalk, Handout "Stress and stress relief"

### Process

**Step 1  
(7 minutes)**

Distribute Handout "*Stress and stress relief*" to each participant. Ask them to read, quickly think and select two questions that they want to discuss most with trainee who they sit next to. Let them discuss those questions for about three minutes

**Step 2  
(15 minutes)**

After finishing discussion in pairs, ask them to share in plenary. The trainer can summarise points in a list for easier comment and add any pertinent points that he or she thinks have been missed. Spend more time for questions 5, 8, 9 and particularly question 10. If anybody wants to share their personal experiences (question 5), give them more time. If more time is available, replace question 10 with Activity 2 below for more detail and specific suggestions.

**Conclusion  
(8 minutes)**

Summarise signs (symptoms) of stress, their impact and how to overcome them (*Suggested Knowledge 1*). You can give them homework - practise some measures for stress reduction when facing a stressor.



## Activity : *Stress relief*

**Objective**

To exchange ideas on how to reduce stress (question 10, of Handout “Stress and stress relief”)

**Target audience**

Parents, teachers, caregivers and people who are working with children

**Time**

20 minutes

**Method**

Quick thinking and sharing

**Materials**

A0 flip chart, permanent markers or board, chalk

### Process

**Step 1**  
**(5 minutes)**

Draw the stress formula on the board (*Suggested Knowledge 1*, part II). Ask the trainees how to reduce stress by (1) reducing pressure positively and promoting our inner strengths and (2) finding some supportive factors for stress reduction. Divide participants into small groups to complete each part of the question. Trainees should write their results on half an A0-size flip chart.

**Step 2**  
**(10 minutes)**

After finishing, ask each group to present their work. Ask the other members of the session to give comment and add any pertinent points that he or she thinks have been missed. Note that the question is how to reduce stress, not list stressors.

**Conclusion**  
**(5 minutes)**

Summarise the two key points, based on Suggested Knowledge 1:

1. There are skills and strategies that can be utilised to help reduce pressure and enhance inner strengths (for example, time management, change management, planning skills, positive thinking, focusing on factors that can be controlled).
2. Some other external factors can play a role in stress reduction (such as gym, sports, entertainment, diet, making time to relax).



# Anger and anger control

## ***Anger is a secondary emotion***

Anger is a normal emotion experienced by both adults and children. Helping children - and adults - become aware of their anger is the first step toward teaching anger control.

Anger is a secondary emotion. Other emotions are often a foundation for the anger, such as worry, fear, pain, rejection or disrespect. Anger may be a defence to avoid painful feelings. It may be associated with failure, low self-esteem and feelings of isolation or it may be related to anxiety about situations over which the child has no control. Angry defiance may be associated with sadness and discouragement.

Have you ever seen a child beaten by his or her parents after coming home late from school? They beat the child because they have been waiting for him or her for a long time. They are angry but beneath their anger may be worry, compassion and/or a sense of protection for the child. A father might appear very angry that his daughter does not know how to do anything, not even how to cook a meal. Beneath his anger, however, may be his worry and fears for his daughter's future or a feeling of shame, embarrassment or humiliation of being thought of as a bad parent.



## Anger profile: Expressions of anger

Thoughts	Physical reactions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● I'm threatened or harmed</li><li>● Rules or regulations are broken</li><li>● I'm unfairly treated</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Muscle tension/feeling of paralysis</li><li>● High blood pressure</li><li>● Rapid heart-beat</li></ul>
Behaviour	Mood
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Protection, defence, oppose</li><li>● Attack, quarrel</li><li>● Retreat (punishment, hurt or protection)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Frenzied</li><li>● Out of control</li><li>● Explosive, Enraged</li></ul>

Keeping in mind that expressions of anger can range from mild, such as irritation, to extreme, such as when people seem to lose control of themselves entirely. Allowing anger to take over can hurt both you and those around you.

It is self-evident that anger causes many problems for people's health and social relations. It can affect children particularly badly as their ability to protect themselves is very limited. Children are easy targets to become the victims of adult anger, whether that anger has been caused by the child or by some other person or event.

It is important to differentiate between emotion and behaviour. The emotion of anger for human beings, both adults and children, is normal and natural. Hurting others in anger, however, is ethically and legally unacceptable. Adults and children should know how to prevent and control their anger so that they do not say or do things that they may later regret. Words spoken in anger and rash actions may leave emotional scars that may never truly heal. If an adult beats a child and says hurtful things such as "you are good for nothing, I wish you didn't exist", it may take years or even a lifetime for the child to rebuild his or her feelings of self-esteem, self-respect and self-love.



## Anger prevention and control

Not all people react angrily to the same situations. One person may get angry if someone cuts in front of him or her in a queue but will react calmly when criticised for poor work performance. Another person, in contrast, may be able to queue patiently under hot and disorderly circumstances but might lose his or her temper when their work is criticised.

Reacting angrily to certain situations depends much on underlying thoughts, attitudes and experience. The way in which underlying thoughts and attitudes affect our response to a particular situation is illustrated in the cognitive-behavioural model in table below.

### Cognitive-Behavioural Model

<b>Activating situation (A)</b>	<b>Automatic thought or belief (B)</b>	<b>Consequences (C)</b>
The child breaks a bowl or spills an ink pot	1. "She/he is always clumsy. She/he is good for nothing."  2. "Mistakes and accidents can happen to anyone, including me."	→ 1. Become angry  → 2. React more calmly

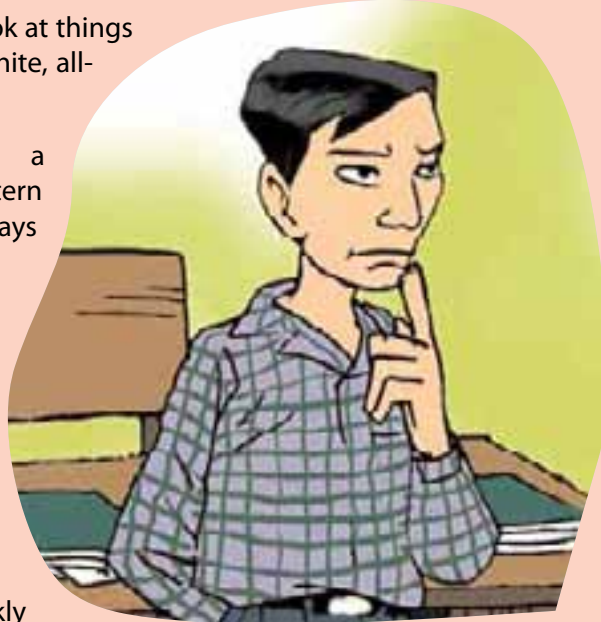
Thus, for the same situation, there may be two opposite reactions depending on different thoughts. In the table above, A is the activating situation or stimulation, B is what takes place in our mind and C is the consequences arising from our automatic thoughts or beliefs. As is shown, we can have two or more different reactions to the same event depending on our underlying, automatic thoughts and beliefs. In effect, we can make our own emotions. To a large extent, B, our positive or negative thoughts, attitudes and beliefs play a far greater role in determining C, the consequences, than does A, the activating situation. In other words, the importance lies not in what has happened but in the way we respond. Understanding this is key to anger prevention and control: if we can change B we can certainly change C.

When practising anger prevention (Activity 7.2c) consider the following four steps:

1. Identify the activating situation (A)
2. Define your own thinking and beliefs at that time (B)
3. Identify the actual emotions behind the anger (C)
4. Try to think how other people might think in that situation to avoid an angry response (their own B). Can you try to think differently and more positively? If you thought that way, what and how would you feel?

### ***Checklist of biased, distorted and unhelpful thoughts***

1. **Black and white categories:** You look at things in absolute: everything is black or white, all-or-nothing.
2. **Over-generalisation:** You view a negative event as a never-ending pattern of defeat. "Always unpunctual"; "Always clumsy"; "Always..."
3. **Filter of negatives:** You only dwell on the negatives and ignore the positives.
4. **Discounting the positives:** You insist that your accomplishments or positive qualities don't really count or are not so important.
5. **Jumping to a conclusion:** You quickly assume negative reactions from other people without clear proof or you predict, based on little evidence, that things will be worse.
6. **Magnification or minimisation:** you blow things way out of proportion or you shrink their importance inappropriately.
7. **Emotional reasoning:** You reason from how you feel: "I feel like an idiot so I really must be one".
8. **"Should" statements:** You criticise yourself or other people with "should" or "should not", "must" or "must not".
9. **Labelling:** You identify with your shortcomings. Instead of saying "I made a mistake", you tell yourself "I really am a fool, I am a jerk."
10. **Personalization and blame:** You blame yourself or other people for something for which you or they are not entirely responsible.



## Activity: *Understanding anger*

**Objective**

To understand anger as a secondary emotion and its impacts on health and relationships

**Target audience**

Parents, teachers, caregivers and people who are working with children

**Time**

30 minutes

**Method**

Quick thinking and sharing

**Materials**

A0 flip chart, permanent markers or board, chalk

### **Process**

**Step 1  
(15 minutes)**

Ask each participant to recall the last time they were angry. Each person shares his or her experience. If possible, let the trainees share first in groups of two or three people. At the time of sharing in plenary, the trainer should spend time to analyse some specific cases to highlight that anger is just a secondary emotion (see *Suggested Knowledge 2*, point I)

**Step 2  
(10 minutes)**

Ask participants to share their physical and emotional reactions when they are angry: what and how they feel, think and behave? Explore how anger impacts people's health and relationships (parents-children, teachers-pupils).

**Conclusion  
(5 minutes)**

Anger is a secondary emotion which causes physical reactions and negatively impacts people's emotions, thinking, health and behaviour (based on *Suggested Knowledge 2*)

## Activity: *Adults' reactions in anger*

**Objective**

To understand the impact of adult's anger toward children

**Target audience**

Parents, teachers, caregivers and people who are working with children

**Time**

25 minutes

**Method**

Individual work

**Materials**

A0 flip chart, permanent markers or board, chalk

### Process

**Step 1**  
**(10 minutes)**

Divide participants into small groups. Distribute Handout "*Adult's reaction in anger with children*" to each group. Ask them to discuss and fill in the blank section below the situation. When finished, ask group representatives to share their result with the whole class. Other people can ask questions and give comments.

**Step 2**  
**(10 minutes)**

Select one or two positive answers from those that have been shared to analyse what adults should do to control and handle their anger in each situation.

**Conclusion**  
**(5 minutes)**

When adults are angry, children are usually their "victims". As such, adults may need 'Time Out' for themselves. In the heat of anger, you may want to call your children and take immediate action. This, however, may not be a good time for your child to learn a lesson. You should take some time to handle your anger to prevent overreacting and doing or saying something you may later regret. After controlling your anger, you should think about what happened: did the child make the mistake intentionally or unintentionally? Was he or she just trying to get your attention?

## Activity: *Anger prevention*

**Objective**

To explore how to prevent anger by changing your thoughts, attitudes and beliefs

**Target audience**

Parents, teachers, caregivers and people who are working with children

**Time**

25 minutes

**Method**

Group discussion and sharing

**Materials**

A0 flip chart, permanent markers or board, chalk

### Process

**Step 1  
(10 minutes)**

Distribute Handout “*Adult’s reactions in anger with children – reference*” to each participant. Ask them to complete it. When finished, ask some people to share their results with the whole class.

**Step 2  
(10 minutes)**

Select some results from the completed handouts that collate with the cognitive-behavioural model to illustrate the Conclusion.

If time is available, continue the discussion by raising the question: “When you are angry, what will you do to find an emergent solution? Ask participants to share their experience in such situations and write them on the board (see Suggested Knowledge 2).

**Conclusion  
(5 minutes)**

According to the cognitive-behavioural model, B influences C far more than A influences C. We can practice anger prevention (based on *Suggested Knowledge 2*).



## Controlling anger

You are angry with your children. What should you do to help you control yourself? Try the following suggestions:

- Take a deep breath. And another. Then remember you are the adult. Try to think further before speaking and responding. Remember that you are an example for your children.
- Close your eyes and imagine that you're hearing what your child is about to hear.
- Splash your face with cold water or just go out and get some fresh air.
- Press your lips together and count to 20. Or better yet, to 50.
- Put your child in a separate place for Time Out
- Put yourself in Time Out. Remove yourself from the situation. Think about why you are angry. Is it really because of the child's misbehaviour or is that just an excuse for your anger?
- Talk to a friend.
- Don't use alcohol to try to clear the anger.

After controlling your anger, use the following format to help communicate your feelings:

- *When you* (yell whilst I am talking to my friend; talk non-stop when I'm giving a lecture...)
- *I feel* (angry/frustrated...)
- *Because* (I can't hear what the other person is saying; I cannot continue my lecture...)
- *What I would like is* (that you speak softly while I am having conversations with others; you keep silent when I'm giving a lecture...)



Remember that there's no miracle cure for anger but, if you genuinely want to, you can control it. The more frequently you practise controlling anger, the more effective you will become. The people who most benefit from that are you and those close to you, especially your children.

## Helping children to cope with anger

### 1. Learn to relax

Anger elicits a very physical response from most children. Various muscle tension, a rapid heartbeat and stomach-ache may develop. Children can be taught to recognise these physical reactions and can learn how to relax. One of the best ways to cope with a potentially harmful physical response to anger is by doing something else physical: squeezing clay, splashing in water, running around outside, dancing to music, painting a picture, tensing and relaxing muscles, taking slow deep breaths, or eating a healthy snack.

### 2. Learn to communicate

Children often explode in anger, and are unable to tell you what their anger is actually about. This may be because their ability to explain and think logically are not as yet fully developed. Teach children to identify their angry feelings by using the following statement: I feel..... when.....because.....For example, "I feel angry when Hung calls me names because it embarrasses me". The idea here is to help children realise that there are always hidden feelings and actions beneath angry emotions. In the example above, being embarrassed and humiliated prompted angry feelings. Learning to recognise the hidden emotions behind anger is an important first step in learning how to resolve anger. You can also see how to help children to change the way they think when certain situations occur, as illustrated in the cognitive-behavioural model above.



### 3. Learn to solve problems

Preschool and school age children can be taught about problem solving as a preventative, an alternative to getting angry. Adults can coach children through the following problem solving steps:

- 1) **Stop** the action, especially if someone is about to get hurt
- 2) **Listen** to each other positively
- 3) **Define the problem**
- 4) Think of **different ways** to solve the problem
- 5) Choose the **best alternative** that meets everyone's needs

- 6) *Carry out* the plan
- 7) *Evaluate* how well the plan worked

Most young children will need adult help in thinking through this process. It will take time to go through each step and time for children to learn to follow these steps on their own. The advantage, however, is that after following this process whenever they are confronted with a problem, young children will relatively quickly become good at identifying a problem and coming up with different options for solving the problem on their own. A child that has lots of practise in thinking about different ways to solve a problem is much more likely to find a positive solution.

#### **4. Learn time-out**

In an angry situation, it is sometimes best to walk away until everyone has cooled off. Encourage children to remove themselves from the situation if their strong feelings are getting out of control. Help them identify special 'cooling off' places where they can feel safe and regain control.

Adults, too, can help to structure the friendly environment so that it promotes good behaviours. Clean, orderly rooms and regular routines go a long way in creating a peaceful atmosphere. Chaotic schedules and cluttered environments often leave children feeling confused and frustrated.

#### **5. Look for humour**

Humour is a great antidote for anger. Whenever possible, help children to see the humour in a tense situation. Responding to an angry outburst in a calm way will often help diffuse the anger. Learning to laugh or joke about your own anger helps children put things in perspective.

#### **Parents get angry too!**

Deal with your anger in a positive way. Explain why you are angry. Remember that young children often think that they are somehow the cause of your anger. A statement like, "I am really angry because..." will help your children understand what is really behind your anger.

If adults practice controlling their anger, they will be a good example of anger control for their children!



# Handout

## *Stress and stress relief*

*Please read and select the two questions you like most, then share them with the person sitting next to you*

- 1. What colours make you feel stressed?*
- 2. Who do you know who is the least stressed?*
- 3. When we get stressed, what happens in our body?*
- 4. When we get stressed, what happens in our mind?*
- 5. Can you recall your last stressful experience? Why did you feel stressed?*
- 6. What image/symbol makes you feel stressed?*
- 7. Do you think people today suffer from more or less stress than in previous generations?*
- 8. What happens to your family relationships when you are stressed?*
- 9. What happens to your teacher-pupil and colleague relationships when you are stressed?*
- 10. Do you know any measures you can take for stress prevention and reduction?*

# Adult's reaction in anger with children

## Situations

1. ***Coming into a room you find red lipstick on your new favourite shirt. You become very angry and enraged and want to call your child in to take action.***
2. ***Your child in higher secondary school usually comes home from school by 5.30. But today she still isn't home by 6.30 or even by the time the 7pm news starts on TV. When she finally comes in, you've moved from feeling worried to feeling angry.***



***What will you do?***

.....

.....

.....

.....

## Adult's reaction in anger

### **Situation**

***Coming into a room you find red lipstick on your new favourite shirt. You become very angry and enraged and want to call your child in and take action.***

### **Stop!**

***This may not be the good time for you to teach your child a lesson. You need some time to handle your anger, otherwise you may over-react and do or say something you later regret. Once your anger is under control, think about what happened. Was it an accident or was it done intentionally, perhaps to get your attention?***

***What could you do to manage your anger?***

.....

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.....

.....

## Understanding your anger

To recognise what happens to you when you are angry, remember the last time you were angry. Briefly describe the situation in Column 1. Rate your anger in Column 2 on a scale of 0 to 100, with 10 being mild annoyance, 50 being angry and 100 completely losing control. When you were most angry, what came into your mind? Record what you said, any images you had and your attitude in Column 3.

<b>1. Situation</b> Who? What? When? Where?	<b>2. Automatic thoughts (Images)</b> a. What was going through your mind just before you started feeling this way? Any other thoughts or images? b. Circle the 'hottest' thought	<b>3. Mood</b> a. What did you feel? b. Rate each mood (0-100)



## Understanding your anger (reference)

<b>1. Situation</b> Who? What? When? Where?	<b>2. Automatic thoughts (Images)</b> a. What was going through your mind just before you started feeling this way? Any other thoughts or images? b. Circle the 'hottest' thought	<b>3. Mood</b> a. What did you feel? b. Rate each mood (0-100)
The child breaks a bowl in his or her home or spills the ink pot in the class	1. She/he is always clumsy. She/he is good-for-nothing. 2. These types of mistakes can happen to anyone (including myself)	→1. Angry →2. React very calmly
Your husband comes home late	1. He's never on time, never cares about his wife and children. He should be here by now. Maybe he is having an affair, which is why he is coming home so late... 2. He might have had a meeting today. Or maybe something bad has happened to him?	→1. Angry, enraged →2. A little irritated or worried.

# Four Steps For Handling Anger

**Step 1: Describe the situation that has made you angry** (as you did in Column 1 on Handout "Understanding your anger")

**Step 2: Identify negative emotions and rate** from 0 (lowest) to 100 (highest). Use words that describe moods such as irritated, angry, enraged

**Step 3: Three-column technique.** Fill in the following three columns:

<b>Automatic thoughts</b> Record your negative thoughts and attitudes and rate from 0-100	<b>Bias</b> Identify any biased thoughts among your automatic thoughts in Column 1	<b>More helpful and healthy thoughts</b> Replace thinking/attitude in Column 1 with more realistic and more helpful thoughts. Rate from 0-100

**Step 4: Re-rate your thoughts, attitudes, beliefs** in each automatic thought from 0 to 100 and put a check in the box that describes how you feel now:

- (1) No better at all
- (2) Somewhat better
- (3) Quite a bit better
- (4) A lot better