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Managing Anger in Relationships



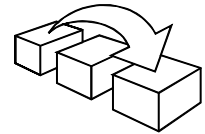
Participants will:

Identify problems caused by unhealthy expressions of anger

Understand differences between healthy and unhealthy anger expressions

Explore personal strengths in anger management

Objectives



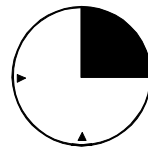
Procedure

Step	Segment Name	Time
1	Welcome and review of weekly recovery issues	30 minutes
2	Topic introduction: Anger and relationships	5 minutes
3	Open discussion: Anger Map	30 minutes
4	Break	10 minutes
5	Exercise and discussion: Anger Solutions Map	35 minutes
6	Closure and evaluation	10 minutes

Session Length

**2 hours
(120 minutes)**

Session Structure



Some of the exercise and discussion questions in this session draw on ideas suggested by Berg and Miller, 1992; de Shazer, 1985; Dolan, 1991; Lipchik, 1988; Lipchick and de Shazer, 1986; and O'Hanlon and Weiner-Davis, 1989.

Group Leader Materials and Preparation



◆ Materials:

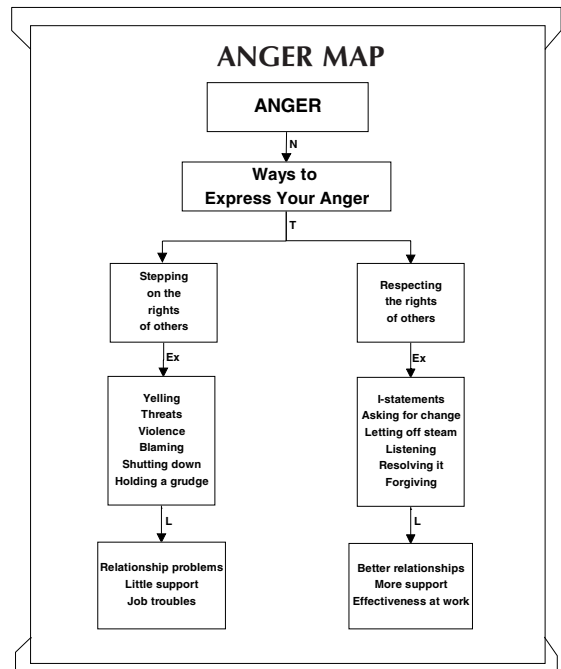
- Flip chart or chalkboard
- Markers or chalk
- Pencils and paper for participants

◆ Prepare before class:



ANGER MAP

Use a sheet of flip chart paper to draw out the map as shown: (See handout on p. 151 for details.)



ANGER SOLUTIONS MAP

Use a sheet of flip chart paper to draw out the map template as shown: (See handout on p. 152 for details.)



◆ **Prepare before class (continued):**

Prepare a directory of local support groups for anger issues (anger management, domestic violence, Parents Anonymous, etc.)



◆ **Make copies:**

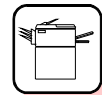
Anger Map handout (p. 151)

Anger Solutions Map worksheet (p. 152)

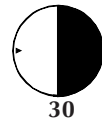
Local directory of support groups for anger issues

Session Eight Evaluation (pp. 153-154)

Weekly Recovery Journal (p. 18 — Session 1)



**Procedure
Steps**



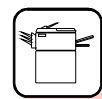
Step 1

Welcome and review of recovery issues

◆ **Welcome participants** as they arrive.

◆ **Introduce the session topic.** Explain that the session will focus on the impact of anger on relationships. Anger is a normal, healthy emotion and everyone gets mad from time to time. However, expressing anger in a healthy way is not always easy. Learning to do so can go a long way toward helping us get along better with people — both at home and on the job. In today's session we'll talk more about getting a handle on anger in our relationships.

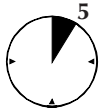
◆ **Open the discussion period for weekly recovery issues.** Encourage participants to use their *Weekly Recovery Journals* to keep notes for this discussion time and to help keep themselves focused on recovery during the week.



◆ **Begin by going around the room to ask each participant:** “What is one thing you did in the last week (no matter

how small) that really helped your recovery efforts?” Express support, encouragement, and appreciation for each speaker’s contribution. Set a tone for the group that encourages participants to do likewise.

◆ **Ask about the specific assignment from the previous week:** What kinds of stress management steps did you take this past week? **Encourage participants to share other issues from their journals as well.** Keep discussions focused on recovery, finding solutions to recovery-related problems, and sharing successes (“what works”).



Step 2

Topic introduction: Anger and relationships

◆ **Reintroduce the session topic and the purpose of the session using key points from the following script:**

SCRIPT:
*Session Topic
and Goals*

Anger is part of being human. The ability to feel anger is something we are all born with — even babies get mad. The right to feel anger is another example of a personal right. All of us are entitled to our angry feelings.

How we go about **expressing** our anger is another issue. We are not entitled to express our anger in ways that violate other people’s rights or safety. We may choose to do so — and we’re responsible for the consequences when we do.

Expressing anger in a way that destroys our relationships or our job performance is self-defeating. If our expressions of anger drive away the people we love, cut us off from support, make us feel guilty, or hurt us on the job, it’s time to consider some changes.

In today’s session we’ll take a look at some ideas for dealing with anger in a way that builds good relationships. You’ll also have a chance to think about setting personal goals for better anger management.

Step 3

Open discussion: *Anger Map*

- ◆ **Begin by asking participants the following questions.** Use a flip chart or chalkboard to list some of the responses.

What do you like best about the way you deal with anger?

What do you like least about the way you deal with anger?

What would you like to do differently when you're angry?

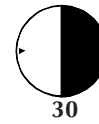
- ◆ **Provide closure** by noting most of us do at least a few things we'd like to do differently when we're angry. Likewise, we've all said or done things in anger we wish we could undo. Changing our approach to anger can be difficult to do at times, but it can be done.

- ◆ **Distribute the *Anger Map* handout,** and use the flip chart outline of the map as shown on page 138 to help you lead a discussion about healthy expressions of anger. **Use some of the following information to build your discussion of the points covered in each area of the handout:**

ANGER

There are different degrees of anger. For example, frustration, disappointment, jealousy, indignation, being annoyed, or feeling irritated are all related to anger. Whatever the type or degree, feelings of anger are a normal part of living.

We each respond to anger in our own unique way. Most of the ways we have of responding to anger we learned



Discussion Questions



DISCUSSION POINTS: *Anger Map*

**DISCUSSION
POINTS:
Anger Map
(continued)**

**Discussion
Questions**

over the years — especially during childhood and adolescence. Since how we respond to anger was learned, we are capable of learning new responses to anger if we choose.

Ask the following discussion questions:

How can you tell when you're getting angry?

What's the first thing you usually do when you feel angry?

WAYS TO EXPRESS YOUR ANGER

Once we're aware of feeling angry, the next thing to do is to express it in a healthy way, and then resolve it (let it go.) It's not healthy to "swallow" anger or let it go unresolved. When we swallow our anger we may begin to feel resentment or hostility. There's even some evidence that holding back anger causes health problems such as stress or high blood pressure.

**STEPPING ON THE RIGHTS OF OTHERS
RESPECTING THE RIGHTS OF OTHERS**

Quickly review some of the key points about "personal rights" discussed in Session Five (pp. 79-82).

When we decide to express our anger, we have choices about **how** we do it. We can respect the rights of others, or we can step on the rights of others. These two types of anger expression are very different.

Stepping on the rights of others

Some examples of stepping on the rights of others include **yelling**, using **threats**, or using **violence**. These are pretty self explanatory. Let's face it, very few people enjoy being yelled at, threatened, or hurt. When we respond this way, we run the risk of damaging relationships at home and at work.

In family and personal relationships, anger may begin to escalate when people get stuck on **blaming** each other for the problem or difficulty. People often go from arguing about a problem to arguing about whose fault it is. It's a very human tendency to do this, but it seldom solves the problem or calms the anger. We can show more respect for ourselves and others if we focus on resolving the problem rather than spinning our wheels by trying to pin the blame.

Sometimes we respond to anger by "**shutting down**," (the "silent but fuming" approach). In some cases, we may just need time to think and cool down. If our "shut down" is for thinking and cooling off, then it's probably helpful. We're able to open back up and resolve the anger when we're feeling better. However, shut downs can also lead to "**holding a grudge**." That is, we shut down, fail to resolve the anger, then keep the anger simmering inside us. This is not a healthy approach to anger.

If we usually ignore the rights of others when we express anger, it can lead to relationship problems, little support (we're not very pleasant to be around), and troubles on the job.

Respecting the rights of others

Another way of expressing anger takes the rights of others into consideration most of the time.

One example of how this is done is by remembering to use **I-statements** when we talk out our anger with others ("*I'm feeling mad as hell about this,*" rather than

**DISCUSSION
POINTS:
Anger Map
(continued)**

**DISCUSSION
POINTS:
Anger Map
(continued)**

“You’ve made me mad”). Another way to use *I-statements* is to **ask for change**. In other words, discuss the reasons for your anger, and use *I-statements* to negotiate a solution that will help keep whatever caused your anger from happening again (or help it happen less often). (“*I feel embarrassed when you tease me in front of others and then I get mad. I’d like you to stop teasing me.*”)

Letting off steam helps you calm down. When we’re calm, it’s much easier to resolve problems and keep open to new solutions. Some people find it helpful to take a walk, take a cold shower, exercise, talk with a third party about the problem behind the anger, or even punch a pillow to let off steam. Finding a way to “vent the steam” without intimidating or hurting others is a useful approach.

We show the most respect for ourselves and others when we find ways to **resolve anger** and let it go. **Listening** is an important part of working through anger. Trying to understand the other person’s point of view will usually help us reach resolutions both parties can live with. **Forgiving** involves being able to accept apologies when they are offered and working to bring relationships back to their “nonangry” state. It also involves letting things go instead of “saving them up” for the next disagreement.

When we resolve anger in a way that respects others yet still allows us to express our angry feelings we build stronger relationships. We are also likely to get more support from others and be more effective in our on-the-job relationships.

Ask some of the following questions to stimulate discussion:

When are you the most successful at handling your anger in a healthy way? What do you do that works?

How do you manage to keep from yelling or intimidating others when you're feeling mad? What works for you?

What have you tried that works for letting off steam?

How do you feel when you are able to resolve your anger successfully?

Discussion Questions

◆ Provide closure using key points from the following script:

We always have a choice about how to express our anger. When we express our anger in a way that respects other people's rights as well as our own, we have a better chance of maintaining good relationships.

As much as we might like to, we can't control how others deal with their own anger. We can only take responsibility for our own expressions of anger and make our own goals for change. However, in close relationships change often leads to change. In other words, as we change our own responses to anger we may start a ball rolling that encourages those around us to change as well.

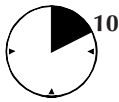
We all get mad from time to time. However, if anger is a "constant" in your life, consider getting some outside help. If you or your partner seem to stay mad all the time, talk with your counselor about the availability of counseling services. There are also support groups that focus on anger issues, such as Parents Anony-

SCRIPT:
Summarizing Anger Map

mous, domestic violence support groups, anger control groups, etc. These sources of support in the community are there if you need them.



- ◆ **Distribute the local directory of support group services for anger-related issues.** Invite participants to talk with you during the break if they have questions about available counseling and support group services.



Step 4

Break

- ◆ **Allow a 10 minute break.**



Step 5

Exercise and discussion: *Anger Solutions Map*

- ◆ **Begin by asking participants to think about changes.**

Ask: “What do you want to change about how you handle your anger?”



- ◆ **Distribute *Anger Solutions Map* worksheets and pencils,** and ask each participant to complete their maps by answering the questions in the boxes.

Encourage thoughtfulness and honesty. Let participants know the questions are not simple and do require some thought. Assure them that there are no “right” or “wrong” answers to the questions.



- ◆ **Use a flip chart or chalkboard outline of the map template** to review the questions and explain the type of answers being sought. Encourage them to use the back of the page if more room is needed.

◆ **Use the following notes to augment instructions:**

Goal box: Write in your answer to the question: “*What do I want change about how I handle my anger?*” (“*What would you like to begin doing differently when you’re angry?*”)

How are you different when you’re not angry? Focus on the “nonangry” you. How do you act, feel, behave when you’re not angry? What happens that’s different when you’re not angry?

When you change how you deal with anger, how will things be different? How will your life be different when you reach your goal? What will happen that is different?

What’s one thing you can try next week to work on your goal? Describe something you feel you can start doing to change how you deal with anger.

◆ **Be available** to further explain the questions as participants work.

◆ **Process the exercise.** Begin by asking the group for general feelings about the exercise:

How did it feel to answer these questions?

Was the exercise easy or difficult?

◆ **Lead a process discussion based on the questions asked in the mapping exercise.** Work with one person at a time. Begin by asking the volunteer to share his/her goal for better anger management. After the volunteer answers each mapping question, elicit more information using the process questions. Repeat this pattern with each participant.

NOTES AND INSTRUCTIONS:
Anger Solutions Map

General Questions

PROCESS DISCUSSION:
Anger Solutions Map

As you process the exercise, find opportunities to praise and encourage each participant. Emphasize participants' strengths, abilities, and healthy anger management approaches as they're uncovered. "Normalize" the troubles we all sometimes have in managing our anger in the way we'd prefer.

◆ **Here are the suggested process questions for each mapping question:**

Process Questions

❖ **What do you want to change about how you deal with anger?**

Are there times when you are already able to do this? (or almost able to do this?)

What's different about those times?

Process Questions

❖ **How are you different when you're not angry?**

Who else notices these differences?

What would ___(name)___ say he/she enjoys most about you when you're not angry?

Process Questions

❖ **When you change how you deal with your anger, how will your life be different?**

What else will you be doing that tells you things are different?

How will you feel about yourself when you make this change?

❖ **What's one thing you can try next week to work on your goal?**

What's the first step you need to take to start the ball rolling?

How will you know if this idea is working for you?

◆ **Thank participants for their input.** Encourage them to share the materials from today's session with their partners and family members.

◆ **Summarize the discussion by using key points from the following script:**

Anger is a normal emotion — one we're suppose to feel from time to time. Most of us have no trouble feeling angry, but expressing our anger is a different story. In order to enhance relationships with family, friends or coworkers, it's important to express anger in a healthy way. This involves paying attention to both your rights and the rights of others when you express your anger.

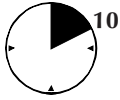
For most of us, changing how we sometimes respond when we're angry can make a lot of difference in our lives. Pay attention to the things that are different in the week to come as you work on your goal for change (from the mapping exercise). Pay close attention to differences that happen that you weren't expecting. Also pay attention to who else notices the changes you make when you make them.

Take advantage of resources in the community that can help you work on special anger-management issues. If you're living in a situation where your anger or someone else's anger frequently turns to violence, get advice from your counselor. You don't have to accept violence from others. You don't have to accept it in yourself, either. Get help to break the cycle.

**Process
Questions**

SCRIPT:
Summarizing
Anger
Solutions Map

- ◆ **Thank participants for their input.**



Step 6

Closure and evaluation



- ◆ **Distribute a new *Weekly Recovery Journal* sheet** and encourage participants to continue using the journal to record their successes and challenges in recovery in the week to come.

- ◆ **Provide the following specific assignment:**

In the coming week begin working on the anger management steps you identified today. Use your journal to keep notes.

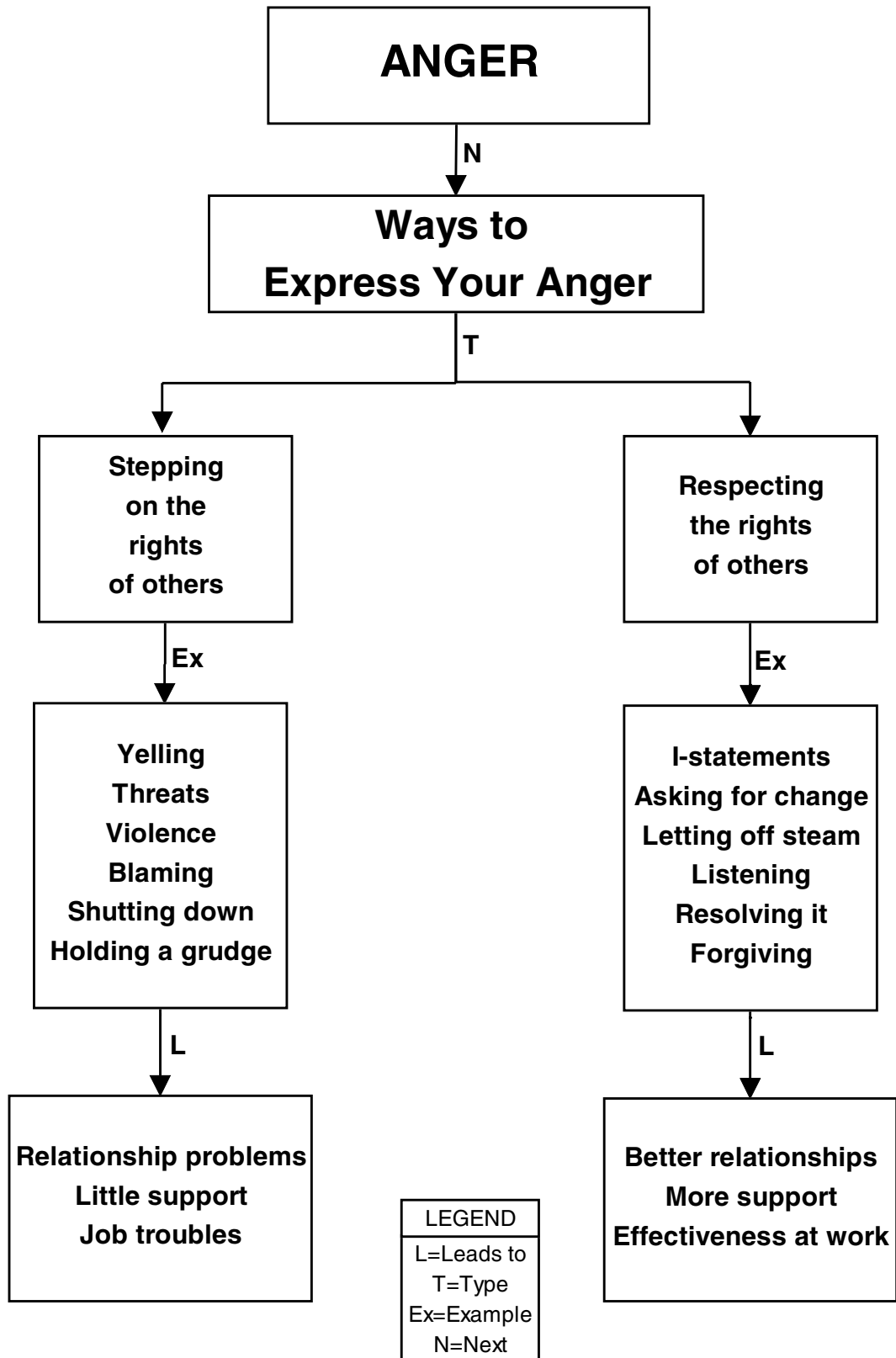
- ◆ **Go around the room quickly and ask participants to share the most important thing they learned from today's lesson.**

- ◆ **Briefly preview next week's session.**



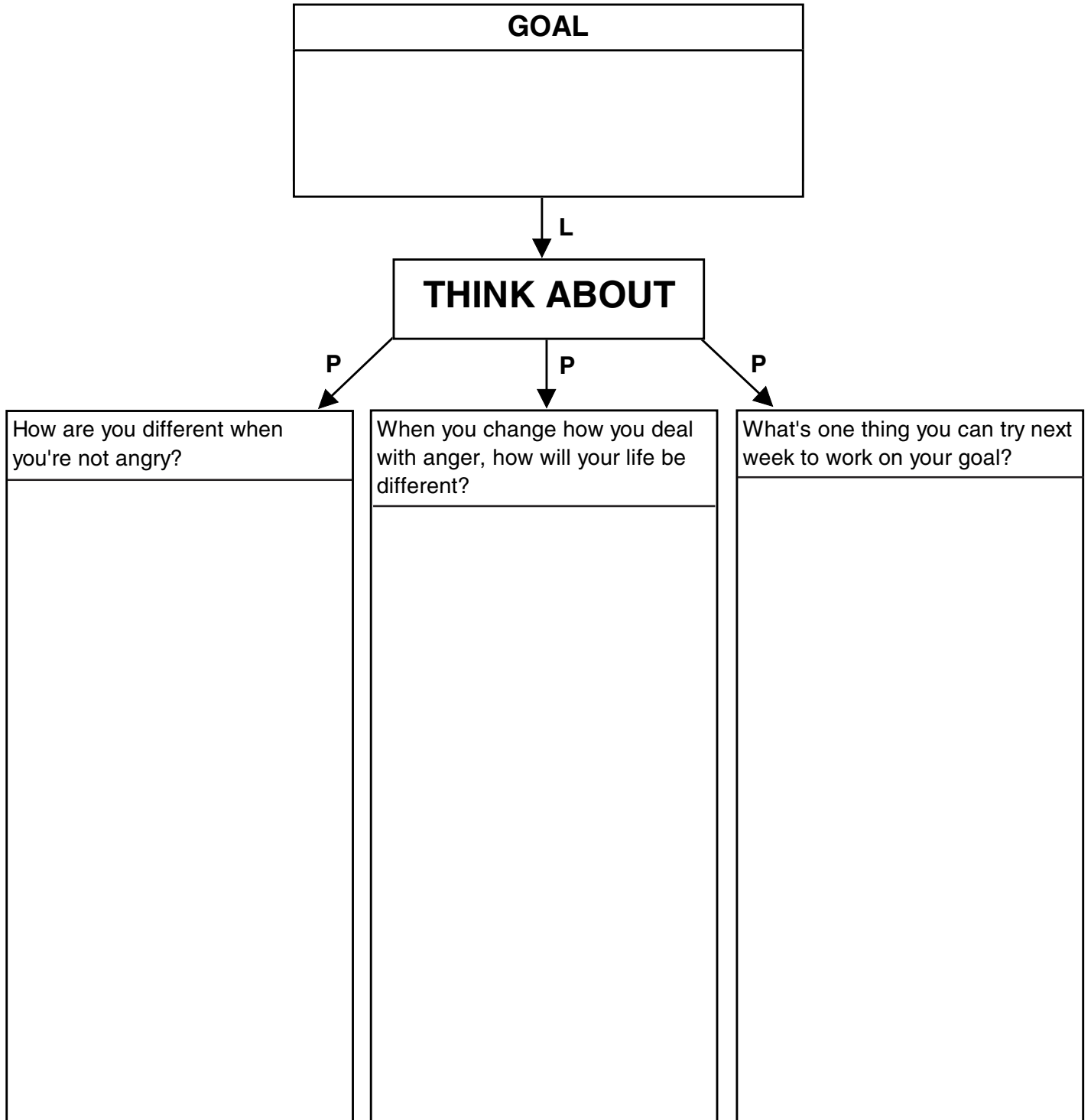
- ◆ **Ask each person to complete an evaluation.** Thank people as they leave and extend an invitation to return next week.

ANGER MAP



ANGER SOLUTIONS MAP

What do you want to change about how you deal with anger?



LEGEND
L=Leads to
P=Part

SESSION EVALUATION OF *STRAIGHT AHEAD*

SESSION 8

THIS BOX IS TO BE COMPLETED BY DATA COORDINATOR:

[FORM 77; CARD 01]

SITE # __ __	CLIENT ID# __ __ __ __ __ __	DATE: __ __ __ __ __ __	COUNSELOR ID# __ __
[5-6]	[7-12]	MO DAY YR [13-18]	[19-20]

Please answer these questions based on what you learned today. Select the best single answer.

1. Expressing anger in a healthy way:
 - (1) Enhances relationships
 - (2) Builds support from others
 - (3) Helps you on the job
 - (4) 1 and 2 only
 - (5) 1, 2, and 3 above

|__| [21]

2. A good way to deal with anger is to talk about it, resolve it, and let it go. 0=True 1=False [22]

3. To respect another person's rights when you're angry you should:
 - (1) Use I-statements
 - (2) Ask for changes for the future
 - (3) Listen and negotiate
 - (4) Be willing to resolve the anger
 - (5) All of the above

|__| [23]

4. There are no support groups for anger-related issues. 0=True 1=False [24]

5. A good way to let off steam when you're angry is to:
 - (1) Take a walk
 - (2) Talk it out with a friend
 - (3) Punch on a pillow
 - (4) Cuss out your neighbor
 - (5) 1, 2, and 3 above

|__| [25]

Straight Ahead

Session 8 Evaluation

Page 2

For the following items, please circle the number on each line to show how you feel about this session.

Full	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Empty	[26]
Rough	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Smooth	[27]
Weak	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Powerful	[28]
Relaxed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Tense	[29]
Worthless	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Valuable	[30]

Now circle the number on each line to show how you feel right now.

Pleased	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Angry	[31]
Quiet	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Aroused	[32]
Afraid	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Confident	[33]
Excited	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Calm	[34]
Worthless	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Valuable	[35]

If mapping was used in this session, place an “X” on each line to show your opinion about it.

Mapping was...

Interesting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Uninteresting	[36]
Difficult	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Easy	[37]
Comfortable ...	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Uncomfortable	[38]
Worthless	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Valuable	[39]