

Anger Management

For The Modern Professional



Put it back in **your** control

Mark Korduba

George Tumusiime

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Please Meet Mark Korduba



Mark is a Psychologist in private practice in Brisbane, Australia. He has special interest in the areas of adolescent and men's mental health.

For adolescents, Mark's work covers teenage –depression and helping young women and men in their late teens and early 20s make the transition into adulthood –providing support and teaching them how to make the necessary physical and emotional separation from their parents. Mark works with people of all ages.

For men, Mark works with clients on their anger management issues and dealing with conflict. He teaches assertiveness skills to help clients deal with their anger and resulting emotions in the workplace and at home.

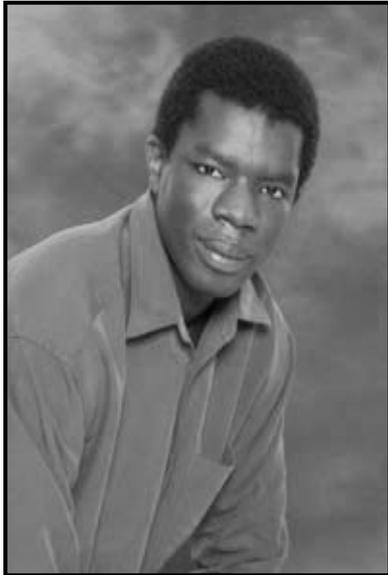
Mark also conducts corporate workshops for organisations on the topic of **Conflict Resolution**. His training in organisational psychology and experience advising on anger management in his practice provides a solid base when working with his corporate clients. Mark provides executive coaching for clients teaching anger management/ assertiveness skills and providing necessary life skills tools.

Mark conducts regular anger management/ conflict resolution group sessions.

Want to contact Mark and know more about his work? Please visit Mark's web-site at www.psychologistbrisbanenorth.com or phone (07) 3857 3777 to book an appointment

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Please Meet George Tumusiime



George Tumusiime is an advertising consultant who works in the news & media industry. Day to day, he works with his clients to help them communicate and deliver branded messages to their respective customers. Through researching the various markets his clients operate in, George analyses trends and customer behaviours to bring about effective advertising solutions for his clients. George uses his learnings from his psychology background to extend and improve his relationships with his clients as well as his colleagues.

George's fascination with helping and improving the lives of others was apparent during his high school years where he, along with Mark Korduba implemented the Peer Mediation program currently instituted at St Joseph's College, Gregory Terrace. Acting as a peer supporter and mentor to many students gave George a sense of pride and purpose which still resonates with him to this day.

After high school, George completed his degree in Psychology, followed by completing a Graduate Diploma in Marketing. George was driven from university to the advertising industry as he enjoys communicating ideas to a wider audience. This passion is also what motivates him as a writer.

George can be contacted by phone on 0412 159 483 or email george.tumusiime@yahoo.com.au.

INTRODUCTION

Firstly, welcome and thank you for purchasing this e-book or downloading it – now please take the time to read it!

Most of you are reading this book because you or a family member has a problem with anger and you want to understand the issues, get in control, and get on with your life. This book is designed to provide you with information to better understand and control your anger and to develop anger management strategies that work for you. This e-book is very practical in nature and is targeted at the layperson who doesn't know a lot about this topic. So we are going to keep the language simple to help you quickly understand the technical issues, and keep the content really interesting, to keep you motivated. How does that sound to you?

Understanding and undertaking anger management is not hard! It's actually really easy. The society that we live in makes it difficult; through the way that we have been brought up and socialised. We're here to tell you that you can successfully manage your anger, no matter what your present situation is! Throughout this book, we will discuss the importance of putting yourself first, as well as getting you to change your definition of being selfish. Effective boundary setting will also be discussed.

So you're probably wondering what anger and anger management is? Essentially anger is a negative emotion that causes a change in your 'mental state'. It can last 1 second, 1 minute, 1 hour or longer. It often causes people to tense up, becoming frustrated and to lash out. Anger management is all about recognising the emotion of anger and expressing it in a

positive manner and moving on with your life! This can be done in a variety of different ways and this e-book series will give you tools to successfully manage your anger.

This e-book is really about changing your context or your ways of thinking about anger and your responses to it. You need to understand that up until this point in time, how you handle your anger and the way that you think about anger management is not working. You realise you need help. And the main way that this book will help is to change your context or the way that you think about your anger and anger management.

Now, we don't claim to have all the answers to your anger management problems – every person is different. But what we can say is that after reading this book, you will have a lot of different ideas to help you to understand and control your anger. Some of these suggestions will create very specific, content-based ideas for you. While other suggestions may seem a little bit more vague and you will have to think about how you are going to implement them. And this is a good thing!

Why we decided to write this e-book series?

We didn't set out to write an e-book on anger management..... anger management chose us! As cliché as it sounds, the prevalence of anger in its many forms drove us to address this important issue. I started my psychology practice about two years ago and I am absolutely amazed at how much of a problem anger is within society. I found that, through seeing clients day in day out, that anger management was a huge problem that both individuals and families were having to deal with. And that the solution was always the same. So anger management really chose me and this is why we have decided to write this e-

book. And the solutions will be gifted to you throughout this e-book series. All the tips and techniques that have worked are now provided to you in this e-book series. So it is more than our opinion on anger management techniques. The e-book series details what actually works for other people. Just not some people, but all of my clients.

Who is this e-book series for?

This book, as mentioned, is for anyone who suffers from anger management problems. Or anyone who knows someone that suffers from anger issues. Or anyone who wants to find out more information about what anger management is. For example, you may be a coach or a therapist who has clients with anger management problems or you might be a teacher who wants to find more information about this topic. This book isn't designed to be read once and then to be put down. It's designed as a reference tool for you to come back to time and time again, as needed. We don't want you to spend a day reading the book and never seeing it again. Use it as an informative text or as a reference tool, whereby you read small sections of it regularly and you come back to important sections as need be.

Remember, people don't have anger management problems. People have assertiveness problems. What is assertiveness you may be asking? It is the ability to recognise your anger when it arises and to deal with it!

This is a key point that we want to go back to time and time again in this book. Again, it is important for you to change the way that you look at your or anyone else's anger management problems. What happens is that people who aren't assertive

allow their frustration and anger to build to a point where they “explode”. Anyone who puts himself or herself in this position will explode just the time and place may vary. More on this topic later.

This book is really just the first step

Reading this e-book is really the first step to controlling your anger. The next step after reading this book is applying it in your life. For many of you, it may involve seeking professional help - going and talking to a psychologist or psychiatrist, your family doctor, community social worker, etc. It may also involve going along to group anger management sessions or joining support groups. It may also involve going along to related groups such as co-dependents anonymous or alcoholics anonymous.

Final thoughts

Congratulations for taking the first step and embarking on your journey to positive living! But we encourage each of you to fully engage in the process of understanding the messages in this book and to think about the different questions that are being asked of you. To take your time in reading this book. To discuss the book’s contents with other people. And to really look inside yourself and to think about the different issues and questions that are being posed to you.

Once you’re finished reading this book, you need to consider what your next steps are. This will entail applying the different learnings and strategies in your life. It will also involve seeking group sessions or individual help and/or just opening up to friends and family about your journey to positive living.

This book will not be easy for some of you to read. It may bring up some painful memories and thoughts. Be ready for this and be ready to seek professional help when it starts to get too much for you. Real change never came easily. Nothing worth doing ever does.

THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT

“For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction”

Newton’s Law of Motion

Anger management is all about the butterfly effect! This means that no action in this world is isolated! No man is an island. We and our actions are all linked.....No matter how large or small the action may at first seem.

In a nutshell the lack of effective anger management is a problem in people’s lives because they let their anger and frustrations build up over time and they don’t do anything about it. Period. They don’t ‘nip it in the bud’. Like a pressure cooker, they let their anger fester and build over time until one day they explode, often at something very minor, and often at innocent family members or friends who don’t understand what they did wrong. Does this sound familiar to you? Is this why you are reading this book? Have you hurt someone close to you? Do you want to stop being isolated from friends and family because of your temper outbursts?

Assertiveness

When do you blow up at people? When do you verbally lash out? When do you physically lash out at people? Is it if someone doesn’t clean up after themselves, says the wrong thing, plays music too loud? Have you reacted badly and been confused about how to manage your actions? Is this why you are reading this book and looking at ways to control your anger? Ever been

told to count to 10 to deal with your anger? Forget this instruction! This is just a band-aid solution to the problem.

We don't believe that anger management is the problem. Instead how people deal with their anger is the problem. They simply don't know how to do it. Specifically they don't know how to be assertive and proactive once feelings of anger arise within them. This major theme is addressed throughout the e-book series.

Lets kick off this discussion through looking at the importance of conflict for humans and between humans and what we need to do to deal with our anger more effectively.

What does our evolution have to say?

Ultimately as human beings we are scared of conflict. Yes you did hear me clearly. WE ARE SCARED OF CONFLICT. This may seem like an outrageous proposition considering our history. After all we did descend from cavemen who's job it was to kill other animals. In fact they relied on conflict (specifically killing other animals) for their very own survival. Survival of the fittest, Darwinism in action. And what if you had a problem with another member of your tribe? Did you go to mediation? NO. Did you go to relationship counseling? NO. You would physically fight it out. And assuming you didn't kill each other, you both moved on with your lives. Do you think they had anger management problems back then?

Our evolutionary development is not the problem. It has provided us with a very effective way of dealing with our

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anger...by dealing with it at the time, through conflict resolution - usually physical conflict. In fact the use of physical violence to settle disputes has been present throughout history, it only has died off recently (excuse the pun).

I asked my grandfather and uncles how they use to deal with disputes during their school years. And in both generations they said that they would settle a dispute that they had with someone through a physical fight and shake hands with the other person afterwards. Now I'm not condoning physical fighting and suggesting that you should settle all of your fights with a physical confrontation. What I'm suggesting is that you should deal with your anger as it arises.

We are scared of conflict!

Human beings today are scared of confrontation. Period. We have been socialized to avoid confrontation at all costs, ultimately to our own detriment. If someone annoys you, what do you do? Probably bite your tongue and say nothing. And this is just the boys in the playground. It is called playing the game or playing politics. We learnt this as 5 year olds, when we first go to school and it continues throughout your life. Now don't get me wrong, there are benefits to doing this. But there are problems associated with it as well. And that problem is uncontrolled anger outbursts. What happens when someone annoys you and you aren't allowed to give them a piece of your mind or physically hit them? Cos this is what we would have done throughout the ages. You get resentful or frustrated and it builds within you over time.

Now just because we can't physically hit someone doesn't mean we can't confront someone about something and effectively deal with our anger. There are other ways to go about it but we don't know how, as we were never taught how to effectively deal with conflict or our anger growing up. Do you think in playgrounds or in schools today they are taught how to have constructive conflict? No way!

From my experience, people will gossip to their friends about a person who has annoyed them. This happens in the school playground, at universities, at the pub, and in the work setting. We learn these maladaptive ways of behaving by being passive aggressive and it only gets worse as we get older. Think about your own experience. Am I right? What is the point complaining about the other person to your friends who are going to agree with you anyway? Only bad can come from this strategy. Eventually what you said will get back to the person who you are angry with. They in turn, will get annoyed and eventually a larger, more intense confrontation will occur between the 2 of you down the track. Which ultimately could have been avoided if you decided to deal with the situation when it happened.

CLIENT STORY

I had a client recently who was a professional cage fighter. You know the sport where 2 guys are locked in a cage (alone) and have to fight it out until someone gives up. In fact this guy was a 'registered weapon', that was his dedication to the sport. Him fighting with his bare hands is like someone picking up a chair or crow bar and fighting with that instead. The damage inflicted on your opponent will be about the same.

He came to me for some anger management training. His way of dealing with arguments or disputes was to physically beat his partner. After a few sessions it became very clear that he was scared of conflict.

Yeah right! No he really was scared of conflict. He would actually avoid honest conversations with his wife, any possible source of confrontation he would run away from until he had no option but to lash out.

This guy is a really good metaphor for the 21st century male in relationships I believe. They avoid and avoid and avoid and eventually lash out with no control over their actions and make the situation 10 times worse than if they dealt with it at the time that they first noticed their frustration and anger brewing.

So we really need to change the way that society thinks about conflict. For example, if 2 people are arguing or fighting, then it must be really bad between them right? Why can't we think of conflict as a healthy thing? Although it really does depend on what culture you are living in as well. A number of the European cultures (e.g., Italy) arguments and heated discussions are part of life. However some western societies such as in Australia, New Zealand and especially England, any form of argument or confrontation is advised against and overall those cultures do not do arguments/ confrontation very well and it is no surprise that people from those cultures tend to avoid conflict and have more anger management problems as a result.

I must admit personally (being brought up in Australian society and having spent some time living in England) that I'm scared of conflict. There I said it. I am not some super human being. I'm just like the rest of you. A product of my upbringing. Every time I have to disagree with someone or raise an issue with friends, family or work colleagues I have to take a few deep breaths in to reduce my anxiety. Even when I see 2 people arguing, I think to myself that it is a big deal. But I use the tips and techniques outlined in this book to overcome my anger management issues everyday and I am able to have the difficult conversations. And this is what you need to be able to do as well.

Personal Story

A few years ago, I spent a year working in London, UK. And I'll never forget the way in which I was sacked. I saw it coming for about 4 months. I knew it was coming. My boss wasn't as friendly to me as she had previously been. My work tasks were being reduced. I was kept out of important meetings. There were even members of my team advising me to look for other jobs. Finally my boss brought me into her office at the end of the day. I could see the distress on her face. She had been working herself up to this for some time. And she fired me! It was really a relief for both of us. I could see it on her face. This period of limbo was over. Who knew how long before that she had been given the direction from her boss to do it. I would suggest months. She hated conflict and her way of dealing with it was to become passive aggressive towards me, which made me feel annoyed, questioned my sense of worth and frustrated me.

The more we avoid conflict, the more it builds up. It definitely doesn't go away. Often it comes out through anxiety and anger. This is what I mean by the butterfly affect. If you don't deal with

your anger, anxiety etc, often through confrontation it will build and your anger will come out in other ways. It is your choice. Either you embrace confrontation and realise that it will be a regular part of your life or you don't and you will eventually lose control of your anger, hurting those around you and yourself.

How people generally present

So here is the typical story of how people will present to me. Generally speaking the client will be referred to me by someone else. Often a family member, work colleague, even their children. They will firstly admit that they have anger problems and say that they need to do something about it, usually for the sake of their family.

So they are saying all of the right things. Then they'll proceed to blame other people in their life and maintain that if people had behaved differently and didn't get them so worked up then life would be fine and dandy..... Hold on, wait a second. A minute ago, you just accepted that you have anger management problems and you need to address it. Now you are blaming other people for it? Common sources of anger include: the state of the house, noisy children, wife nagging, etc. And they will go on and on about it and want to set action plans and goals etc. BUT THEY ARE NOT HERE. Let's focus on you for a second. So what's really going on (I ask them)?

Then they continue with the bitching and moaning. Then I ask them again WHAT REALLY IS GOING ON? And at some stage they finally get to what I like to call the Red Hot Buttons. What's

that you are asking? I'm going to get to the RED HOT BUTTONS in more detail later on in this e-book series. But essentially they are the things in life that you unconsciously react to. For example, for a lot of men who come to see me, their Red Hot Buttons are that they are not respected enough by their family. So every time their children don't clean up after themselves or don't include them in a conversation, this will often press a button for the father, that if left to fester, will eventually manifest itself in an angry outburst. We all have our Red-Hot Buttons. Have you identified what yours are?

Client Example

I saw this client who had enormous anger management problems. Initially he came in for relationship counselling with his wife. In the sessions I could see him physically restraining himself from reacting and I saw his face going red whenever his wife said something that he didn't agree with. Initially he would focus on all the things that the children or his wife were doing wrong. For example, messy house. As the sessions went on it was revealed that he felt massively disrespected by the family (the 2 kids and wife) and felt he was in a Me vs Them scenario. This was his real Red Hot Button – NOT the messy house. And once he was aware of it and other family members were aware of it as well, he was able to deal with his anger as it arose by being assertive and engaging in conflict resolution techniques with them.

Red Hot Buttons?

So you can either chose to ignore your anger and its causes or you can choose to deal with your anger head on. Sometimes the

best form of defense is attack. By this I mean, do the work. The next time you are experiencing anger – examine what was happening at the time and write down your observations...where you tired, hungry, carrying annoyances from earlier situations? And find out what your Red Hot Buttons are. And when you recognize that feeling and can appreciate that your buttons are being pushed, stop and address the emotion (namely anger) as it happens – either at the time or not too long after and build a bridge and get over it! And get on with your life. Simple. Not so simple in practice really.

If you don't do this, like the butterfly effect suggests, your anger will build over time to a point where you are no longer in control of it and you will go off like a volcano causing a path of destruction that will take weeks, months or sometimes years to fix. It is the small things that matter. You know what they are. You know what behaviours you need to work on and find a conflict resolution for them. Or if you don't, as you read this book they will become clearer to you.

At this point in time, some of you may be thinking that a lot of the points made in the e-book thus far are obvious. And my response to that is yes they are. Anger management is simple (intellectually) to understand. But just a little more difficult to implement in real life. And I honestly believe that it comes back to this fear of conflict that I spoke earlier of. If you accept that conflict will happen daily in your life and that you don't have to accept everything that happens in your life, then you are on the road to recovery. And the road to recovery is through conflict. Good conflict. Controlled conflict.



END OF CHAPTER

CHAPTER REVIEW

What are your red hot buttons?

(1)
(2)
(3)

How do you react when they being pressed?

(1)
(2)
(3)

BOUNDARY SETTING

What is effective boundary setting?

Effective boundary setting is as simple as saying NO! Sometimes no is the hardest word in the world to say. Why is this? Again it has something to do with conflict and people wanting to avoid it as well as not wanting to disappoint people. As well as wanting to be liked by other people. We are taught to believe that if we say no to someone, then they will react badly to us and not like us anymore. Ultimately it is a fear of abandonment. This fear is really primal going back to our childhood and to our evolution. Nobody wants to be left out in the cold, away from your mother and your tribe. The person who is kicked out from his/ her tribe is weak and will eventually die. This is what the animal kingdom and our evolution teaches us.

Nothing could be more further from the truth. Your experience could be different. In fact people generally respect me more for it and often thank me for it (later). I have come across a number of different boundary crosses in my life and when I have set clear boundaries with them essentially by saying no to them, it has improved our relationship. Often they will ask me why it has taken me so long? They were just wanting to know how much they could get away with. All they were really doing was testing me out.

Personal Story

Mum jokes are very common with males in all boys schools and with adolescent males in general. I won't give an example of a mum joke here because they really are quite crude. But I think we all know what I'm talking about. Who's mum cops the brunt of the jokes is anyone's guess. But for one reason or another my mother was the butt of a lot of mum jokes with my group of friends when I first went to university. And I went along with the jokes for a while because that's what I thought I was expected to do. In reality I should have told them all to piss off, when I first heard a mum joke.

I knew the jokes were really originating from 1 or 2 of my friends and everyone else within the friendship group just went along with the jokes. So after awhile I decided that I had - had enough of them. And I calmly went up to one of my friends and told him that he had stepped over the line and that mum jokes were to stop. He was the main instigator of them.

His response shocked me. He said "why has it taken you this long?" He was seeing how much he could get away with and for how long he could get away with it for. He really respected me for having the guts to tell him that he had crossed the line.

So you really need to be ready to disappoint people! And disappointing people is not easy. We are socialised to please other people. Why? Because pleasing other people means that they will like us and keep us in their tribe. It happens from high school. Look at the extremes that some teenagers go to - to be part of a certain peer group or sports group in high-school.

Shocking and harrowing hazing incidents have occurred throughout many schools and universities across the world. Often to the point where people lose all sense of their own identity and take on the groups identity and morals (which are often quite loose).

But some people don't know what they want. They don't know how to distinguish between what is acceptable behaviour and what is unacceptable behaviour from friends, work colleagues, family etc. In other words they don't have clear boundaries.

Lets talk about this in terms of your life. What are your boundaries? When do you know when someone has stepped over your boundaries? You probably don't know. Even if you did, most people are too scared to say anything when someone steps over them.

It comes back to the small stuff. It is the minor boundary crosses that we have to be aware of. That is how it starts. And if people feel that they can get away with small, minor boundary crosses then they will progress to larger boundary crosses. It will probably take you a little while to be clear as to what a boundary cross is. We will discuss this topic next. But before we do this, I would like to provide you with an example from my life.

Personal Example

It wasn't that long ago that I was talking with a mate who was looking for a new job and was going through recruitment agents.

We were discussing how employers and recruitment agents were wanting to talk with his previous employer for a personal reference to see what type of worker he was. However, he didn't leave on the best terms and was anxious as to what they would say about him if asked for a reference.

He proposed the idea that I ring his former employer, pretending to be a recruitment agent. This was a massive boundary cross. At one level, I felt pressured to agree to this request because he was a good friend. But it was a boundary cross in that it put me in an uncomfortable situation. I had to confront him and tell him that I was unable to do it, which was met with disappointment that he finally got over.

Did he never want to see me again? No. Did it mean that nobody will like me? No. If anything it actually improved our relationship.

What constitutes a boundary cross?

Boundary cross #1: Making decisions for other people

For me it includes when people get you to make a decision for them. When they make their problems your problems. From my experience, people hate making decisions and they love getting other people to make their decisions for them. It allows them to decrease their level of accountability if things don't work out. Sure be a good friend, husband, wife etc and provide people with your point of view but just be very careful that you are not making the decision for them.

Another boundary cross is when you feel driven to make decisions for other people. Parents do this all the time with their children. Instead of listening to them, they provide very specific advice. Always ask yourself, does the person want to be heard or are they looking for advice. Get off your high horse and stop dishing out free, unsolicited advice. Think about how annoying it is when people do this to you. I believe that this is one of the most common reasons why couples fight in relationships. The woman wants to be heard and the man wants to find solutions through giving her advice or generally telling her what to do.

Boundary Cross #2: Others doing for you what you can do on your own

Another boundary cross is when people get you to do something that they really can do on their own. Or vice versa. They do something for you that you really can do on your own. This becomes a form of control. There are obvious examples of mothers doing too much for their grown up children or children (teens and above) expecting too much of their parents but it happens in other areas of people's lives as well.

Now I'm not saying that you have to be Mr or Ms Completely Independent because there are problems with that way of operating as well.

Just to be mindful of this when it is happening. Please note that later on in this e-book series we will talk about a related topic of anger management within your family of origin.

Related to boundary crossing is control. People who boundary cross wish (sometimes subconsciously) to control others at one level or another. It is very important that you become aware of this. Often these people are fun and the life of the party and hide their controlling ways very well. But at the heart of it, they are controlling you. Think about this issue for a second. If you do not set clear boundaries down, they are in control and really can do whatever they want.

Through putting clear boundaries down and saying no, you in affect are taking back some of this control that has been taken away from you. I'm not suggesting for a second that you seek to control the other person, just to take care of yourself and take back the control that was taken away from you.

Personal Story

When I was at university, I went on a road trip with a very controlling friend of mine at the time. One of those people who "know it all". Especially when it came to cars. He continually told me how fast to drive, when and how to check the engine, fluids, when to fill up, when to change gears etc. He wanted to be in control of all parts of the road trip and really took all the fun out of driving on the road trip for me.

About half way through the road trip he had to fly back home. And I drove back home by myself. It was fantastic. And surprise, surprise, I found a way to check for all the things in the car that he was telling me to check for. It was a really empowering

experience. And the car didn't break down in the middle of the dessert.

Why is effective boundary setting soooo important?

It is vital for your own sanity! Along with performance in the different areas of your life. Lets take career for example. It starts really young. What do I want to do when I grow up? Some children make this decision on their own but most importantly they actually make the decision. Others look to friends and family to decide for them.

I really do worry for those people who follow in their father's or grandfather's footsteps. It is the cliché and we have seen this happen time and time again. All parents are naturally interested in their children's career direction but sometimes they overstep important boundaries, especially when it comes time for the child to decide what career path they want to follow. And some children know where the boundary lies and some do not. Often choosing a career path that is wrong for them.

Personal Example

I remember clearly a friend from high-school had a very successful dad who was a lawyer. And he would say over and over. "I don't care what you do with your life as long as you get a law degree". And this was when he was 12 or 13 years of age. No prizes for guessing what career path he decided to follow, who's house he now lives in and who he works for. Law, Dad

and Dad! This is all well and good for him but do you think he has learnt how to set effective boundaries in his life? Not a chance. Do you think he has become his own man? Do you think that he is happy?

Then it continues into your working life. Just like in your family, you will come across a number of different types of individuals (bosses, work colleagues, clients). Some will have clear boundaries a lot will not. What happens (for these people) when they do get annoyed or need to have an honest conversation with someone? They avoid it and they develop anger management problems down the track.

Personal Example

I know for me personally it is very important to have very clear boundaries. It is unethical not to have clear boundaries in the profession that I'm in. Every day I have a potential boundary crosser and I have to be very clear where my boundaries lie.

Supervision is very important for Psychologists and it is very important for me. I remembered I had an excellent supervisor when I was training and we spent a significant amount of time setting clear boundaries (sexual) regarding students that I was tutoring. I still come back to those discussions in my mind even today. The same principles can be applied to different areas in my life and in my practice as a Psychologist. Most professionals (including lawyers, doctors) are the same. So this is not a warm and fuzzy topic, it affects lives and can ultimately affect your

livelihood if you haven't taught yourself how to set clear boundaries. The time is now to take it very seriously.

And it also affects our interpersonal relationships as well. Whether that be friendships or in romantic relationships. Domestic violence is common problem in relationships today. It is a very complex problem but part of the solution lies in setting clear boundaries as to what is acceptable behaviour and what is not acceptable behaviour on the part of the person who is being abused. You need to be very clear about what standards of behaviour you require from the other person. I really want to emphasise that the same rules apply to both friendships and romantic relationships. As a friend of mine once said, 'love is friendship on fire'. For more of a discussion on domestic violence and anger management in romantic relationships please refer to the other books in this anger management e-books series. I would now like to give you another example of a boundary cross that occurred in my life.

Personal Example

I went travelling with a friend where we went to live and work in a foreign country. A bit like a working holiday that a lot of young people do these days. We initially landed and headed to a hostel, where we would stay until we could find longer-term accommodation and permanent jobs. After a few weeks of searching with not a lot of luck my friend come to me with the idea to move in together with another person who he had just met. In fact he had spoken to the real estate agent, put down a

bond (on my behalf) and sourced the whole thing without my approval.

Then the real estate agent found out that none of us had jobs as yet, she demanded 3 months rent in advance (which the other traveler didn't have). My friend put it to me that it was my responsibility to get the money and that we shouldn't miss out on this great deal. Once I come to my senses I told him that it was a ridiculous idea and we eventually moved on from this little fiasco.

Your friends and family will put you in uncomfortable situations and it is your duty to stand up for yourself and to set very clear boundaries. They will respect you more for it and probably won't do it again. And it is not something that you do every once in a while. You need to do it every week or at least every month of your life.

Why do we find it soo difficult to do?

As mentioned before we are scared of letting others down and ultimately we have a fear of abandonment. We fear that other people will not want to be our friends or not want to associate with us. And this is where the challenge lays for all of us. To face this fear and to do it anyway! And if we are able to do this, you will be rewarded for it many times over. How? Peace of mind and ultimately being in control of your anger.

So what do you need to do? Be very clear as to where your boundaries lay. It doesn't matter what area of your life you are operating in. Be it work, family, romantic relationships,

friendships. You need to be very clear what your boundaries are and what behaviour you want put up with.

Secondly, you need to realise that it is ok to disappoint people and that they will get over their disappointment and your relationship with them will be stronger than ever. They will probably respect you more for it in the long term. So practice saying no. Start small and build and build to the red hot buttons, the issues that really press your buttons. The issues that really matter for you

Link to anger management

And this is how it links in with anger management. Having clear boundaries, especially around your red hot buttons and enforcing those boundaries regularly, through telling people when they have crossed over those boundaries. Don't believe me? Then try it for yourself. See if it works. Remember to start small and work your way up to the bigger issues.



END OF CHAPTER

CHAPTER REVIEW

Who are the major boundary crosses in your life?

(1)
(2)
(3)

What are your important personal boundaries?

(1)
(2)
(3)

PUTTING YOURSELF FIRST

What does putting yourself first mean?

I don't believe our society really teaches us how to put ourselves first. We know how to put the needs of other people first, wherein we're encouraged to be considerate and understanding and empathic towards other people. But we are not really encouraged to look after our own needs. Society makes you think that if you choose to look after your own needs, then you're being selfish. Nothing could be more further from the truth. Some people focus too much on the needs of others, often to the detriment of their own needs.

Do you do this? Do you focus on everyone else's needs but your own? First, you need to change how you think about the term, "me first," or "being selfish". You need to broaden your understanding of this term. Putting yourself first is not necessarily a bad thing to do. In fact, it is needed for your own psychological, sometimes physical well-being. It does not make you a selfish individual, and if you can broaden your context around this. For example, how you think about this term, putting yourself first, then this is the first step to getting in control of your anger.

Why do we struggle with this, you may wonder. I honestly believe, it's because we need approval from other people, and when we don't get this, this destroys us inside. Think about your own life for a second. When you interact with other people, when there are conversations or when people ask things of you, is your first thought to please them or make them like you? The answer is probably yes. And this simple way of being really influences our behavior.

Think back over your life, maybe the last couple of years. How did you behave when somebody asked you to do something that you didn't really want to do? Or when someone crossed a personal boundary of yours? Please refer to the chapter on boundary setting if you are unclear about what I mean by this. What did you do? Did you stand up for yourself and think about, "what's important for me?" Or did you respond by thinking about what the other person wants and "how can I make them happy?" The answer is probably the latter. You would have not really cared about yourself and would have wanted to make the other person happy.

This can get people in a lot of trouble when it comes to anger management. It can cause people's anger to brew and brew and brew. It is not really a sustainable way of being, and eventually people will explode. Eventually, YOU will explode! So you may think that you are helping other people by being the nice guy or the nice girl, but ultimately this behavior is to your own detriment. It is really causing you anger management problems, and ultimately, negatively impacting your close personal relationships. It's a vicious cycle.

Putting yourself first also means making decisions for yourself and not letting others make them for you. Sounds like a crazy concept, doesn't it? Making decisions for yourself? You take the statement for granted. "Of course I do," you may be saying to yourself. But do you really? When you think about your life, how often are you actually making the decisions in your life? How often are other people really making these decisions for you? Think about this question and statement for a second. When you run your ideas through other people, i.e., friends and family, do you get them to give you specific advice on what decision you should make, or do you get them to give you their

perspective, i.e., different things that you need to be thinking about?

Personal Example

I was recently looking for a house to rent. I had some very specific things in my mind as to what the house should contain. For example, I wanted it to have wooden floors; I wanted it to be in a certain location, etc. And as I was talking about the houses, I would run the different ideas pass my friends and they would give me other ideas as to what the house should entail as well. For example, it might need a big backyard or to think about how much noise you get from the neighbors, but never once did I say, "I've got this house, do you *think* I should get it?," wanting a very clear piece of advice from them, and essentially, wanting them to make the decision for me. Once I decided what I wanted and had seen the different houses, ultimately, I decided which house I wanted to get and didn't allow my friends or my family to make that decision for me. I put myself first.

Think critically now on the way that you make decisions in your life. In the planning phase, before you make the decisions, do you get different people's input, i.e., what you need to be thinking about before making the decision, or do you go to the lazy option and just ask them, "What should I do?" When you make your own decisions, you are in control of your life. When you let other people make your decisions, other people are in control of your life. This is a very central theme in this chapter and also in this book. And that theme is control. And this book really is about helping you to reclaim control in your life,

because anger management happens when you're frustrated, and frustration happens when you are not in control of your life.

Co-dependency

I want to talk now about co-dependency and what it is. The simple explanation and definition of co-dependency is:

"It's when you need to be needed by others."

It's the opposite definition of what you would expect. For example, the person who is needy, i.e. the child in a mother-child relationship, you would think that - that person would be the co-dependent one. But in this context, the co-dependent person is the person who feels the need to be needed.

Think about this concept for a second. For example, co-dependent behavior is whenever you are unable to make a decision on your own and you feel the need to get other people's input. For example, other people's advice to make the decision for you. Co-dependency is when you feel the need to please other people, where you focus on everyone else's needs and not on your own. Co-dependency is when you don't have clear boundaries and you can't essentially say, "no" to other people, and they end up "walking all over you."

I don't know about you but co-dependent behavior is absolutely exhausting, and it really is not a sustainable way of acting and behaving. Co-dependents feel that if they don't behave in this

way, then other people won't like them. They really have a huge fear of abandonment (as discussed in the previous chapter).

Where does this behaviour come from?

Our inability to put ourselves first really comes from our socialisation. We are taught that it's important to be liked by other people, and that it is the most important consideration. For a child, "how do I get other people to like me?" And often the way to do this is to put other's needs ahead of our own or to focus on other's needs or be aware of others needs and not be aware of our own.

It really isn't cool in society to know what you want. For example, you go on a group holiday, where specifically do you want to go? Or if you're catching up with friends, which restaurant or which hotel or nightclub do you want to go to? As you're reading this, think about your own life. Think about, when I go out with my friends, what are the norms of behaviour?

Think back to your high school. What was it like then? Think back to your family upbringing. What rules and norms applied? I'm sure you're all aware of the term, "laid-back" or "easy-going". Or the negative term, such as "high-maintenance" or someone who's needing to be managed. When you were growing up, it was usually your parents who told you, where you're going, what you had to do. What would happen when your parents asked you to do something as a kid, for example, put the rubbish out or turn the TV off? They weren't questions. They were statements. You had no option but to agree to them or say yes, and if you said no, then there would be a little bit of trouble or

“hell to pay”.

So we are socialised to essentially say yes all the time. Think back to your childhood again. Was there any time in your childhood where your parents asked you to do something or asked you a question, and it was ok for you to say, “No, that really doesn’t work for me.” Very rarely is probably the answer. Now don’t get me wrong. I’m not encouraging children to neglect their basic household duties, and to rebel against their parents, and not to do anything. I’m trying to establish the point that our socialisation encourages us to say yes all the time, to everything. And it only becomes a problem later in life. When we need to say no, to get in control of our lives and specifically our anger.

And this continues on with our relationship with our peers, at primary school or even at high school. This is especially the case at high school. Socially, what is the one thing that everyone needs to do when they’re in high school, or wants to do? They want to make friends and be liked by their friends. And often people will go to extreme lengths to achieve this, often neglecting what is important or good for them.

Personal Example

I had these two friends at primary school. We'll call them Orlando and Michael. Michael used to do anything that Orlando asked of him, to the point of the ridiculous. He would throw water bombs at the girls. He would tip rubbish bins upside down. He would do anything Orlando asked of him. He did not know how to say *no*. I wonder what affect this had on him in later life?

And the behaviour that forms during childhood, in primary school and in high school, continues on into university and in your work life. And it can be a very big problem when you are unable to say *no* to people and are unable to think about "what's important for me here?"

Think about your life for a second. Were you confident enough within yourself to risk abandonment, to risk people not liking you or being upset with you by saying no? If you have feelings of anxiety and frustration right now, then this is normal and ok. This means you're gaining awareness as to where your anger is coming from.

Challenging old rules

You have been given a number of rules about putting yourself first. For example, that it's bad and that it should be avoided at all costs. Society tells you that putting yourself first is bad and means that you are being selfish. And Hollywood gives you a

number of negative images to go along with this socialisation. For example, Paris Hilton or the TV show: The Hills. You need to challenge these assumptions - starting right NOW!

Think about them critically in your life. Is it really that bad to put yourself first? Does this mean that you are that guy who's really selfish and thinks that everything is about him. Or maybe putting yourself first is very healthy for you and it means that you live a balanced life. Saying *no* can be good for the soul.

I like to call this changing your context or perspective. And when you're able to change your context, you're able to change your behaviour accordingly.

Challenging old stereotypes

You also need to challenge gender roles. For example, you may see yourself as the laid-back/knock-about kind of guy who doesn't really worry about anything and just says yes to everyone all the time, someone who everyone loves. Or you may see yourself as being "the good boy" who pleases everyone all the time, who has chosen the right university degree, who is going out with the right girl or boy, and fulfills that role to a tee, and ultimately never says no to anyone. Or you may see yourself as "the good wife" who always pleases everyone else and never really thinks about herself.

These roles and stereotypes really need to be challenged because they are one-dimensional. No person is this stereotype completely. It's not psychologically healthy to do this. Give up trying to be perfect in this way because it's not going to happen.

Importance of saying no

And you also need to challenge the belief or the assumption that saying "no" to people will mean they won't like me. Think critically back to your life when someone has asked you to do something, and you've said no. What happened? Maybe they were annoyed with you at that time but they've probably built a bridge and gotten over it. If they've chosen not to talk to you about that confrontation then maybe they're not the best friend or the best person for you to be hanging around. Again, awareness is the key.

Cathy Freeman Example

Some of you may be aware of an Australian athlete by the name of Cathy Freeman. Cathy Freeman won the 400-m gold medal at the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney, Australia. It was a very significant event in the nation's sporting history. She was the first aboriginal female to win a gold medal at an Olympic games. I remember reading her autobiography a number of years later explaining the process. She spoke of the people who were around her and the huge pressure she felt to please them all.

She only really gained this piece of awareness when she went over to America to train with the great Michael Johnson. For those of you who don't know who Michael Johnson is, he's one of the greatest middle-distance runners ever to live. He won the 200-m and 400-m gold medals at the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games and also at the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games. And as he was training and understanding Cathy Freeman's inner circle and her life, he was absolutely amazed at her inability to say no to people and to be selfish, and that was his advice to her. "You have to be more selfish." No Olympic athlete can possibly win an Olympic gold medal if they're not selfish.

And Cathy Freeman was stuck in that mindset of "I've got to be a good whatever; I've got to be a good female; I've got to be a good sister," and trying to placate everyone else's feelings and emotions and not her own. She definitely was not in the mindset of "I'm a professional Olympic athlete and I want to be the best in the world." Ever heard of the phrase, "You're too nice"? That's exactly what Cathy Freeman was for a very long time.

Collectivist vs Individualistic Countries

Researches have identified countries as fitting into two different categories, either collectivist or being an individualistic country. What does this mean? First, countries that focus on the individual and the individual's achievement are individualistic countries. For example, America is a very strong individualistic

country. Countries that focus on the collective, and emphasise the group or the family are identified as being collectivist countries.

The culture that you grew up in really informs the way you look at the world. All the stuff that we're talking about in this e-book and especially in this chapter, becomes a lot easier for people in individualistic cultures. This is because they are taught to focus on the individual, putting your needs ahead of other people's needs. But it really isn't about that at all. It's about reclaiming lost ground. That others have taken away from you.

People coming from big Italian or Greek families might find this process more difficult than people who come from individualistic cultures such America or Australia. It's very important to be aware of your cultural conditioning. And when you're aware of it, then you can utilise the things that work for you and you reject or you question the things that don't work for you.

This is what this process and what this e-book is all about. It is questioning some of the stories that either your culture has told you or your peers have told you or your family has told you or maybe you've told yourself. What's working for me and what isn't? Keep what is working for you and throw out the rest.



END OF CHAPTER

Chapter Review

Who are you trying to please?

(1)
(2)
(3)

What stereotypes are you buying into that aren't working for you?

(1)
(2)
(3)

PASSIVE AGGRESSION

What is passive aggression?

Passive aggression is a form of anger management! That's what people need to understand firstly. It is a way that people have of dealing with their brewing anger and frustration. It can involve use of sarcasm, put downs, humor, the silent treatment, wanting the other person to be a mind reader etc.

A lot of people have been in this position. Sometimes you are mad, angry, frustrated at someone or something but you are consciously aware not to make a scene. It could also be that you don't know how to communicate your thoughts without hurting other people. It can be one of the most annoying emotions to not only experience, but to also project onto other people.

Everyone does it. Think for a second..... What passive aggressive behaviours have you been guilty of in the past? Lets probe a little deeper now and look at the common passive aggressive behaviours that people have.

Common passive aggressive behaviours

(1) Use of sarcasm/ subtle put downs

It happens when you make sarcastic remarks or subtle put downs to the other person who you are angry with. You may not think this is a big deal. And on the surface of things it isn't. But

we need to call a spade a spade and recognise that this is a form of passive aggression.

Personal Story

A couple of years back now (before I started doing this work) I dated an American exchange student, who was studying in Australia. We both knew that the relationship had a time limit on it but that didn't stop us from getting extremely emotionally involved with each other.

She started doing and saying things that crossed some boundaries of mine and that I really needed clarification over. Unfortunately I didn't say anything at the time because I didn't want to 'lose her'. This was completely the wrong 'headspace' to be in. It's kind of ironic considering she was going back to America soon and I was 'going to lose her' anyway. As the relationship went on, these little seeds of doubts grew and grew within my mind.

One day we were at this charity event together. I was being auctioned off, along with a few other guys. One of the older guys started talking with her a bit. There was some chatter back stage about her, with the other guys that were to be auctioned off. At this stage my blood was beginning to boil and I told some of the guys that I was with her, so they stopped with the gossiping.

At this stage in the afternoon I should have probably just left because I was very upset and not in the frame of mind to be polite. However I didn't! I remember going up to her (and in my mind I was being polite) but in actual fact I was being sarcastic. I let her know that they were all speaking about her backstage. Then she snipped back with some remark that she was going to stay with him while in Melbourne anyway, as a way of getting back at me.

I remember leaving the day soo angry and absolutely yelled and screamed in my car on the way out of there. Not long after that we decided to break up. This was all thanks to passive aggression.

(2) The silent treatment/ shutting down

Have you ever been so mad you can't talk? A lot of couples can probably relate to this one. If someone upsets you, it's like they abused the trust you had in them. The pain you may feel and the fear of this same feeling reoccurring may lead partners to avoiding those vulnerable, intimate moments.

This is really a common one. It often happens when you are soo angry with the other person that you completely shut down. You can't look at them, you can't speak to them, you can't communicate with them. Effectively you give them the silent treatment. And it gets better. You expect them to read your mind and know exactly why you are soo pissed off with them. I'm sure everyone can relate to this one.

People who do this are no longer in their environment. They aren't aware of their surroundings. They are completely ineffective. And what is best for everyone is that they leave the situation until they have 'calmed down'. That's right. They may feel like they are cool, calm and collected on the outside. But inside they are melting down.

Personal Story

I remember spending some time at Byron Bay with a group of people a couple of years ago. I was introduced to this slim, beautiful girl who I seemed to get along with quite well. We were all joking around and in an attempt to be humorous I made an off the cuff remark about her being pregnant. Now, hindsight has told me this was a very stupid and insensitive thing to do. At the time though she denied being pregnant and I was under the impression that this had been dealt with. Two days later another person made a joke which she didn't take too kindly to.

"Someone forgot charm school", I muttered.

"You forgot charm school as well when you said that I was pregnant!" she screamed at me.

I was taken back. Two days had gone by and she had not said a thing about what I had said. I racked my brains for the whole holiday as to how her reaction occurred, not realising that passive aggressiveness clearly played a role.

(3) Avoidance

Let's say for example you are going for an influential promotion at work. However, you have 2, 3 or maybe more people applying for the same position. Negative internal voices could be saying that you're not good enough, other people may have more experience, they're just better than you. Avoiding this competitive situation may leave you somewhat satisfied. You could always say to yourself "I didn't get the promotion because I didn't put all my effort in, if I did then I would have gotten it for sure". It's a lot easier to create hypothetical situations in your own mind than it is to go after your goals. This can also take on the form of procrastination. Thinking about everything other than the task at hand is a very convenient way of addressing the challenges that are put before us.

It is the same with your anger. Passive aggression is essentially avoidance. When you are being passive aggressive, you are avoiding the situation.

Personal Story

In my advertising consulting role I come across many stressful situations. Dealing with deadlines, expectations from clients as well as managing issues that arise takes effective time management. One day my manager asked me to fill out a summary of my day-to-day activities and to send the report to him. At the time I was under a heavy workload so I didn't want to spend my time filling out the report. Although I knew I had to tell my manager I was busy, in a work environment I didn't want to show any perceived weaknesses, that I couldn't handle the task given to me. I avoided the report and the manager for days,

hoping that it would go away. When he called me into his office I instantly knew this was a big mistake.

Manager: “ George, there was an activity report that I gave you to fill out days ago. Why haven’t you done it?”

George: I’m not going to make any excuses. Although it was busy, I did know that I had to fill it out however I didn’t feel it was a priority”.

Manager: “Wrong answer. If it’s a priority to me, it’s a priority to you. This is information that I needed to take to the directors. If you are busy, you need to tell me. It’s a shame this wasn’t dealt with earlier. Thanks for being honest. Thank you“.

That sense of shame hung deep in my stomach for the rest of the day. I felt like I was avoiding the inevitable. The confrontation happened, but it was my avoidance that made the situation worse than it had to be.

(4) Apathy

Sometimes it could be as simple as you just do not want to invest emotion into a particular thing. I love the scene in the classic movie *Office Space*, where Peter is explaining to his superior Bob about his job role:

Example from a Movie

Peter Gibbons: You see, Bob, it's not that I'm lazy, it's that I just don't care.

Bob Porter: Don't- don't care?

Peter Gibbons: It's a problem of motivation, all right? Now if I work my ass off and Initech ships a few extra units, I don't see another dime, so where's the motivation?

It could also come after a long time in a relationship. It may have come to a point where you feel that the negatives have been far outweighed by the positives. Apathy can be defined as

“an absence or suppression of emotion, feeling, concern or passion.”

Further, apathy is an indifference to things generally found to be exciting or moving. Sometimes people suppress their emotions deep down so they don't have to feel anything. It makes dealing with life a whole lot easier. You can't be hurt if you don't feel anything, can you?

So why do we do it?

It starts with the negative attitudes. It could be the sense of displeasure you have against an authoritative person like your

parents or your boss. It may be your romantic partner isn't delivering on the expectations you have of them. Confrontation could occur, but instead you choose not to engage with it.

Is it out of fear of the consequences that could occur? You don't want to waste energy on the resulting argument that's bound to happen? It could be for a myriad of reasons. The point is that for some people they think that passive aggressive behaviour is the best action for dealing with these negative attitudes.

So why is passive aggression a problem?

The problem with passive aggressive behaviour is that it is not only frustrating and annoying to the people it is targeted at, it doesn't address the initial concerns the person may have in the first place. The only way to deal with what you may be going through is to communicate those feelings directly. If this communication then results in a confrontational situation, then confrontation should occur.

Remaining silent may give you quiet revenge, but at the end of the day both parties are not benefiting and the relationship is suffering. If need be, give yourself some time to assess how the situation or the relationship is going and find a way to voice your opinions. To paraphrase an old quote

"If no one is around to hear your concerns, do you make a sound?"

It's worth letting people know where you stand. If you constantly avoid a situation, you will never receive the answers you are looking for.

Issues will occur in our lives and it is up to us to step up. I'm often reminded of a famous quote by basketball legend Michael Jordan:

"I can accept failure, everyone fails at something. But I can't accept not trying".

In the same way, we owe it to ourselves to attempt to overcome the many obstacles that are presented in our lives. At least this way we can walk with our heads held high knowing that we did all that that we could to overcome our challenges. Instead of making excuses it's best to show some humility and admit that sometimes things don't work out the way we wanted them to.

It also helps us confront the mistakes we have made and gives us the opportunity to move forward. By being apathetic, we deny ourselves the opportunity to live our lives to the fullest. While some people may want to live robotic lives, I feel that emotions, good and bad are a large part of what makes us human. Passive aggressive behaviour should be dealt with, and once it's recognised it should be modified for not only those around you, but for yourself and your own well-being.



END OF CHAPTER

Chapter Review

What passive aggressive behaviours have you been guilty of in the past? (e.g., the silent treatment)

(1)

(2)

(3)

What are 3 things you can do to rectify your passive aggressive tendencies?

(1)

(2)

(3)

SUMMARY

We hope you have enjoyed reading this book. Some of the stuff in this book is really overdue. Four core topics of anger management were discussed in this book. They were;

- *The Butterfly Effect*
- *Boundary Setting*
- *Putting Yourself First*
- *Passive Aggression*

Reading this book is really the beginning. It has given you real awareness. Now is the action stage of the process.

Other books in this e-book series on anger management will provide you with tangible action plans that you can follow. Please consult the web-site:

www.psychologistbrisbanenorth.com

or give our office a call for more details 07 38573777.

So what are you going to do now? It's not about setting enormous action plans and spending the next 5-years carrying them out. This is not an academic exercise that will take time away from you.

It is about identifying where your personal boundaries lie and identify in the moment, when people cross those boundaries. As well as identifying your anger and doing something about it when anger rises within you.

Good luck and thanks for reading

Mark & George