

Managing Anger (2nd ed.)

Helen O'Neill

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Helen O'Neill's manual to help people with cognitive impairments manage problematic anger has been updated to include recent research findings, and expanded to include more practical tools and techniques. The manual is set out for use within a group over 30 sessions, but could easily be adapted for individual treatment or treatment over a different duration.

It has been written for therapists or health-professionals who have some familiarity with CBT and group work, but it is clear enough so that those less familiar could understand it. Whilst it might be of particular use in brain injury rehabilitation settings, it is also out to be applicable for use within mental health settings, and could also be useful for people with learning disabilities.

The phrase "managing anger" is specifically chosen to move away from "being-done-to" connotations of anger management treatment, towards ideas of imparting generalizable skills of self-management. The manual notes the danger for these kinds of groups to be seen as punishment groups for naughty clients, and stresses the importance of motivation and engagement (including tips for motivational interviewing) and maintaining an empathic, non-judgmental stance.

Thought is given to why and when anger might be seen as problematic, reminding us of the key distinction between healthy and unhealthy anger. Whilst it is noted that anger may be part of a grief reaction, or that some environments may generate or facilitate anger, the primary focus is what you can do with the individual where these are not the primary factors.

The findings of research are given with links to implications for practice, rather than giving any details of the studies. A grounding in practice is the real strength of the manual. This is a manual that tells you in great detail what you can do in sessions, whilst avoiding the pitfalls of insisting what you must do. It gives emphasis to the need to tailor where appropriate and includes materials for optional sessions such as "carrying a grudge", and "how to cope with being told no".

The manual is divided into different sections. *Background Principles* reviews the theoretical background of the treatment; the necessity and means of adaptation for clients with cognitive impairment. *Delivering Anger Treatment* focuses on the pre-group thinking process: suitability of clients, setting, therapists, de-escalation techniques and listening skills. *Starting the Process* shifts into pre-group planning; assessment, interviewing, and pre-session work (this phase is viewed as the beginning of the treatment process). *Sessions* outlines the content and directions for sessions over the 30 weeks following the three stages of cognitive preparation, skill acquisition, and application. It provides additional sections on recap sessions, bringing the techniques out of the treatment room, and creating a blueprint of therapy or summary of work for clients. The *Appendices* are split up into the physiological, cognitive, and behavioural components of the treatment, and provide reproducible resources, exercises and worksheets for client use, e.g. information sheets, monitoring sheets, pictorial anger scales, and think-feel-do sequences.

Notes for therapists are provided for each session, and throughout the manual cues are given for therapists to be reflective. Reading the manual is somewhat like having an on-line supervisor within the book, making helpful suggestions on what to think about or try. It does

not skimp on the basics, and for veteran therapists this might make some parts feel a little redundant. However, this also makes the manual suitable for a broad range of users, and it would be a helpful resource for anyone planning, running or supervising a managing anger treatment programme for people who have cognitive impairment.

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Overcoming Problem Drinking

Maracantonio Spada

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This is a useful and highly recommended self-help series and *Overcoming Problem Drinking* is an invaluable addition. Self-help sceptics will be pleased to note that there is an empathic preface that allows the reader to relate to the author as the therapist who has written the words and thus contribute to a notion of engagement. Spada is also realistic about whom the book will help and acknowledges very early on that the help of a CBT therapist may be needed, depending on the level of the problem.

The book demonstrates a very clear process of identifying and measuring the problem in behavioural theory terms, emphasizing the short-term positive reinforcement of feelings of pleasure and the negative reinforcement through numbing of emotions. It takes the reader through methods for enhancing motivation and then on to a model for intervention. It is a CBT course designer's dream in demonstrating how to structure and follow through a logical treatment plan. It moves on to look at challenging uncontrollability thoughts and permissive thoughts about drinking; tackling cravings; focusing on key skills such as assertiveness in assisting to refuse drinks, and lifestyle changes to increase pleasurable activities to deal with depression and to offer positive alternatives to drinking. The summaries at the end of each chapter are extremely helpful memory aids and can be recapped easily. It recognizes the financial, social, emotional and health impact of a drinking problem and offers useful chapters and contacts to deal with a whole range of secondary problems.

The stages of change summary I found particularly useful and I admit I have lifted this chapter to use in other situations where it is necessary to convey this theory clearly and concisely. The author acknowledges that people may like to dip in and out of the book according to the order in which it is relevant to them. For me, the enhancing motivation to change exercises were very useful but I would have preferred the goals last in the process to aid clarity. I also found that the "vicious cycles" that typify the maintenance of a drinking problem would have been easier to follow if simplified somewhat and shown as circles rather than boxes.

As with any self-help book, the proof is in the road testing. I became abstinent from alcohol for two weeks on the grounds that one should try out what one recommends and it helped me to challenge my beliefs about the necessity of a glass of wine to unwind and I found more time to spend in a pilates class. One person I recommended it to with a recognized problem doubted his ability to use it unaided because he was slightly intimidated by the science of it all. Spada acknowledges that it would be "awesome" if the book alone precipitated lasting