

25. Managing anger and conflict



Objectives

By the end of this session, group members will be able to:

- List ways to deal with anger.
- List ways to resolve conflict in a positive way.



Background notes

Anger is a completely normal, usually healthy, human emotion. But when it gets out of control and turns destructive, it can lead to problems. Anger is an emotion that ranges from annoyance to rage. Like other emotions, it causes physical changes. When you get angry, your heart rate and energy levels go up. You could be angry at a specific person or event, or your anger could be caused by worrying about personal problems. Memories of bad events can also make you feel angry.

Anger is natural, especially when others are attacking, hurting, or being mean to us. Anger helps us to defend ourselves. A certain amount of anger is necessary for survival. We cannot, however, physically attack every person that irritates or annoys us.

People use many ways to deal with their angry feelings: express them, keep them to ourselves, or relax.

1. Expressing your angry feelings in a way that does not hurt others is healthy. To do this, you have to learn how to say clearly what your needs are, and how to get them met, without hurting others.
2. Try to think about something happy.
3. Try to relax. This means controlling how you act, as well as what you are thinking and feeling. If someone says or does something that normally makes you angry, try to react in a new calm way.

When you are angry, try to control your feelings and actions. You cannot stop or avoid the things or the people that make you angry, nor can you change them, but you can learn to control how you behave. Counsellors now say that it is dangerous to express all of your angry feelings because it can actually make you angrier and does not help solve the situation. It is best to find out what makes you angry, and then develop ways to keep those things from making you angry.

Sometimes, our anger is caused by very real problems in our lives. Not all anger is wrong, and often it is a healthy response to difficult times. Not all problems have a solution. In these situations, try not to focus on finding the solution, but on how you handle the problem. Make a plan, and check your progress along the way. Try your best, but do not punish yourself if an answer does not come right away.

Resolving conflict

Conflict means to fight, argue, or disagree. Conflict is natural and happens in almost every relationship. Since conflict is unavoidable we must learn to manage it. Conflict is a sign of a need for change and better communication. Conflict cannot be resolved unless it is addressed with the person or people involved. We face conflicts with people who think and act differently or have different values and beliefs than we do. Young people face conflicts with friends, siblings, parents, teachers, and other adults. It is normal for people to disagree, but it is important to resolve these disagreements in a helpful and healthy way.

- Stay calm. If you keep your emotions under control you have a better chance of hearing what the other person is trying to say.
- Listen carefully without interrupting. Ask questions and listen to answers. Even if you know what the other person is going to say, resist the temptation to interrupt.
- Acknowledge the other person's thoughts and feelings. You do not have to agree with the other person to acknowledge his or her feelings and why he or she may feel that way.
- Be respectful. Separate the people from the problem, treat people the way you would like to be treated if you were in the same situation.
- Communicate clearly and respectfully so your viewpoint can be understood. If you do not communicate your views clearly, it will be hard to convince people that they should listen to you.
- Look for things you agree on and try to agree as much as you can. Your interests may be more alike than you think.
- Look forward, not backward. Stay in the present and plan for the future, do not think about the past. Move to resolving the situation and away from what happened in the past to cause the conflict.
- Stay focused on the topic at hand. Don't expand an argument. If there are a number of problems, deal with them one at a time.
- Work together. This requires that each person stop blaming the other person and take ownership of the problem. Make a commitment to work together and listen to each other to solve the conflict.
- Try to find a solution that makes both people happy, not a victory for one person. Conflicts don't have to end with a winner and a loser.
- Be creative. Finding a resolution to the problem that satisfies everyone requires creativity and hard work. Be careful not to give in simply to avoid conflict or maintain peace. Agreements reached too early usually do not last.
- Be specific. When problem solving be very specific. For example if you are using a roommate agreement to facilitate the discussion make sure that everyone fully understands each point that is written down. Clarify ambiguous terms that each person may interpret differently.



Session guide

1. Facilitate a discussion by asking group members the following questions:
 - Do you think anger is a normal emotion? Why or why not?
 - How can people deal with angry feelings?
 - What is conflict?
 - How can conflict be resolved in a positive way?
2. After discussing all of the questions, share the information from the Background Notes section.



Main points

- Anger is a normal emotion, but when it gets out of control it can cause problems.
- It is normal for people to disagree, but it is important to resolve conflict in a helpful and healthy way.



Activity: Conflict resolution role play

1. Divide group members into small groups with four people. Ask group members to talk about an argument they had recently and choose one.
2. Ask the group to role play the argument and how they would resolve it.
3. After 10 minutes ask group members to come back together as a large group. Ask group members to talk about their role plays and how they solved the disagreements. Allow other group members to share their opinions about how the disagreements were solved.

26. Drugs



Objectives

By the end of this session, group members will be able to:

- List the risks of drug use.
- List ways to help someone who is abusing drugs.
- Plan how to say no to drugs.



Background notes

Drugs are chemicals that change the way a person's body and mind work. When people talk about drugs, they usually mean abusing legal drugs or using illegal drugs. Common drugs in Kenya are marijuana or bhang, miraa, glue, alcohol, and cigarettes.

Not all drugs are bad or illegal. When we are sick, we may take medicines. Medicines are legal drugs that can help us. Doctors can recommend patients take them, stores can sell them, and people can buy them. But it's not legal, or safe, for people to use these medicines any way they want or to buy them from people who are selling them illegally. Cigarettes, alcohol, and miraa are legal drugs that can cause serious health problems.

Why are illegal drugs dangerous?

Illegal drugs are not good for anyone, but they are very bad for a young person whose body is still growing. Illegal drugs can damage the brain, heart, and other important organs. Cocaine, for instance, can cause a heart attack - even in a young person. While using drugs, a person is also less able to do well in school, sports, and other activities.

It's often harder to think clearly and make good decisions. People can do dangerous things that could hurt themselves - or other people - when they use drugs.

Why do people use illegal drugs?

Sometimes young people try drugs because their friends are using them or they might be curious or just bored. A person may use illegal drugs for many reasons, but often because they help the person escape from reality for a while. If a person is sad, a drug can - temporarily - make the person feel better or forget about problems. But this feeling only lasts until the drug wears off.

Drugs don't solve problems and using drugs often causes even more problems than the person had in the first place. A person who uses drugs can become dependent on them, or addicted. This means that the person's body becomes so used to having this drug that he or she cannot function well without it. Once a person is addicted, it's very hard to stop taking drugs. Stopping can cause a person to feel sick until the person's body gets adjusted to being drug free again.

Can I tell if someone is using drugs?

If someone is using drugs, you might notice changes in how the person looks or acts. Here are some of those signs, but it's important to remember that feeling sad or another problem could be causing these changes. A person using drugs may:

- Lose interest in school.
- Change friends (to spend time with people who use drugs).
- Become negative, in a bad mood, or worried all the time.
- Ask to be left alone a lot.
- Have trouble concentrating.
- Sleep a lot (maybe even in class).
- Get in fights.
- Have red or puffy eyes.
- Lose or gain weight.
- Cough a lot.



How can you help?

If you think someone is using drugs, the best thing to do is to tell an adult who you trust. This could be a parent, other relative, teacher, coach, or school counsellor. The person might need professional help to stop using drugs. An adult can help the person find the treatment he or she needs to stop using drugs. Another way young people can help each other is by choosing not to try or use drugs. It's a good way for friends to stick together.

Health risks

The health risks of commonly used drugs are described below.

- **Drinking alcohol** can affect your coordination, judgment, vision, and memory. Alcohol affects your brain and can damage every organ in your body. When you drink alcohol it goes straight into your blood and can increase your risk for a variety of diseases, including cancer. Alcohol affects your self-control and can lead to risky behaviours, such as having unprotected sex. Drinking large amounts of alcohol at one time or very fast can cause alcohol poisoning, which can lead to a coma or even death.

Young people's brains and bodies are still developing; alcohol can cause learning problems or lead to adult alcoholism. Alcohol that is made by people (and not bottled by a company) is sometimes called kumi kumi or changaa. This is even more dangerous because it is not regulated. It can cause headaches, blindness, or even death.

- **Cigarettes** have chemicals, like nicotine and cyanide, which are poisonous. The body knows when it is being poisoned, so many people find it takes several tries to get started smoking. First-time smokers often feel pain or burning in the throat and lungs, and some people feel sick or even throw up the first few times they try tobacco. Over time, smoking can cause cancer, and damages the lungs, heart, and other organs. It is hard for smokers to do well at sports. Smoking can make it difficult to become pregnant and can cause sexual health problems in men. Health problems from smoking may seem very far off when we are young, but smoking can affect a person's body quickly. Young smokers are sick more, do poorly at

sports, become injured more, and take longer to get better after falling ill. Also, they have bad breath, bad skin, and bad smelling hair and clothes.

- **Using glue** can cause personality changes, memory loss, seeing things, loss of coordination, not speaking properly, feelings of numbness, paralysis, and weight loss. It also damages the nerves, blood, brain, heart, kidneys, liver, lungs, muscles, and skin.
- **Smoking marijuana** (bhang) can cause memory loss, reduces learning skills, lead to chronic cough, bronchitis, and lung damage and increases risk of cancer of the head, neck, and lungs.
- **Chewing miraa** or (chat/khat) can cause sleeplessness, worry, loss of appetite, not being able to go to the toilet, bad dreams, and affect a man's ability to have sex. Soon after chewing, miraa can cause dizziness, fast heartbeat, and pain in the stomach. Chewing miraa can lead to reduced sperm count and increased risk of heart disease and liver problems.

Remember: Planning how you will say no to drugs and alcohol can make saying "no" easier if they are offered to you. Imagine different situations and what you would do.



Session guide

1. Facilitate a discussion by asking group members the following questions:
 - What are drugs?
 - What are some of the health risks caused by drug abuse?
 - What would you say if someone offered you drugs or alcohol?
 - What would you say to a friend who was abusing drugs or alcohol?
 - Why do you think that young people use drugs?
2. After discussing all of the questions, share the information from the Background Notes section.



Main points

- Drugs are chemicals that change the way a person's body and mind work. Common drugs in Kenya are alcohol, marijuana or bhang, miraa, glue, and cigarettes.
- Abusing legal drugs or using illegal drugs can be very bad for a young person whose body is still growing. They can damage the brain, heart, and other important organs and can make it difficult to think clearly and make good decisions.
- Planning how you would say no to alcohol and drugs makes saying no easier if they are offered to you.



Activity: Tree of consequences

1. Ask group members to explain why they think people start using drugs. Draw a “Tree of Consequences” and put the reasons for starting to take drugs as the roots.
2. Ask the group to list the consequences of using drugs; draw these on the branches and fruit. Ask group members to explore each of the different branches.
3. Ask group members to think about how they could help a friend who was using drugs.

