

## MODULE 5

**Class Title:** Anger Management – part 1

(1<sup>st</sup> part of a 4 lesson series)

**Aim of the lesson:** To identify the problem of negative anger in oneself and learn how to deal with it.

**Category:** Personal development

**Lesson format:** power point presentation with narration & discussion

(Greeting to students) *Assalam alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh*

(*Ta'awwudh*) *Aoodhubillahi min AsShaytanir Rajeem*

(*Tasmiyah*) *Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem*

(*Du'a*) *Rabbish rahli sadri wa yassirli amri wahlul uqdatum millisani yafqahu qawli* (Surah At Ta-Ha 20: Verse 25-28)

(Slides 1-3)

Today, we are going to start a series of classes on 'Anger management'.

Before we begin, let me ask, "How many of you actually have a short fuse? How many of you saw this screen and said, 'Ok, this is something I really need!'"

Students: All of us!

Teacher: What do you think happens when we are angry? What do you suppose is the most harmful result of your anger?

Student: we stop thinking.

Teacher: What is the one thing that really goes wrong due to your anger? That makes us say, 'Yes, this is the class I really need.'

Student: you lose control of the situation, and when you lose control, you do things that normally you would not do.

Teacher: And then what happens later on? You regret it big time! 'Why did I say that? Why did I open my mouth?'

Anger is an emotion that people use to respond to three things, generally speaking: first, to a threat; second, to some kind of stress; and last, to a loss. It could be a real threat, stress or loss, or it could just be something made up in your mind. You could just be imagining any of these causes. You could perceive situations that are not really there.

(Slide 4)

This is why, different people may respond differently to a same issue or event.

Have you ever noticed this? Let's say for example, you lost your cell phone. Some of you might feel very sad and depressed about it and not react at all, and some of you might just hit the roof! So, often there are different responses to the same issue or event.

What is the reason for this? Why do different people respond differently to identical situations?

Certainly, we are all different. However, what is different in each one of us, which makes our responses different?

Students: Your opinion, how you perceive something, your personality.

Teacher: Yes, all of these factors. Also, how about your upbringing? How have you been taught to respond to certain things? Have you been taught to be tolerant? Are people around you tolerant? Surely, others' behavior does rub off on you, right? If you have friends who are really short tempered, automatically you will also learn to be short tempered. It does happen. If you are with people who are calm and cool, this will have a positive effect on you, too. So there are different ways people respond to threat, stress and loss. Whichever way we respond - negatively or positively - will be reflected on the people around us.

(Slides 5 – 6)

There can be very different responses to anger.

One very common way is to intimidate others. How do you intimidate others? There are various ways to go about it. For example, scolding, lecturing, and verbally abusing others. So, who comes to mind when I talk about lecturing and scolding?

Student: Teachers.

Teacher: Who else?

Student: Parents.

Teacher: Teachers and parents, yes. Thus, we may intimidate those around us by scolding and lecturing, especially people who we perceive as weaker than us or inferior to us. For instance, we might scold our younger sibling, or a cousin or friend who looks up to us. In this position of superiority, we feel we've got the right and we feel we can say anything to those 'beneath' us.

(Slide 7)

We may also intimidate others by holding grudges against them. As a result, we may give the other person the silent treatment. Who comes to your mind when I talk about holding grudges? What kind of people might we hold a grudge against? ...People stronger than us?? ...Weaker than us?

Do we hold grudges with people weaker than us? No I don't think so...we just give it to them. People who are weaker than us really get it from us. So who are we likely to hold grudges against? These are usually people who are equal to us or stronger than us. For example, we may hold grudges against friends or someone older.

(Slides 8 – 10)

Then, when we are really angry and have had enough, we want to take revenge. Tell me something, who do you want to see in this cage? You know that there are times when you actually want to see someone in this cage. Right? You are so angry that you actually want to take revenge. You are very, very angry at this point!

Then sometimes, rather very often, we show displaced anger.

What is displaced anger? We show anger towards people who are weaker than us, rather than towards the person with whom we are angry.

For example, you might have a fight with your friend, and are very angry with him/her. As a result, when you go home, you start losing your temper on your younger brother. You are not in a good mood; you are angry and just want to vent it. Since you could not be angry and rude to your friend, now you have the opportunity to vent it out on your brother, who is not actually responsible for your anger.

Another way of intimidating others is to criticize and put the blame for something undesirable, on others. We may refuse to see our own part in the consequences. 'Oh it is all because of you! Don't look at me, it is not my fault!'

(Slides 11- 13)

Then sometimes, we may use the silent treatment. This is again a way of intimidating others. How? Well, what else do you usually do when you give the silent treatment? Are we merely silent? Rather, this is at times accompanied by cold stares, sighs, and rolling of the eyes. Who do you do this to?

Friends? What about parents? You say well at least I am not losing my temper! But you are rolling up your eyes and you are silently saying, 'Well, at least I am not saying anything to you'. Then, you bang the door! Is this not showing that you are angry?

Don't you dare try this with your teachers. If you have a mom like me, you better not try this with her, either.

The point here is that the outlet of anger is not just your mouth. It is also your stares. It has a lot to do with your stares, it has a lot to do with your sighs and it has a lot to do with your behavior. Just the way you look at another person can 'kill' him/her. This is quiet common with teenagers,

also with people who are not too educated. They also love to cuss and call others names. That is yet another way of intimidating those around you.

Next, how about this, the all-time favorite: sarcastic remarks. This is another way of showing your anger and superiority. There is always some kind of anger within you when you're sarcastic with another person. You are actually venting your anger.

In summary, all the things we have so far talked about are ways of showing **outward anger**. They are our own responses, which end up affecting the people around us.

(Slides 14 - 18)

On the flip side, there is another type of anger: this is inward anger. You turn your anger inward on yourself. How can you do this? What are some examples of the result of such anger?

Firstly, you may physically harm yourself, though this is quite extreme and it does not happen too often. There are certain people who start physically harming themselves by cutting themselves or hitting themselves. *Alhamdulillah* it is not that common, but it does happen. We must be clear that this is also a type of anger – inward anger. In this case you respond by blaming yourself, and stuffing your feelings deep within you. It is an 'It's all my fault' attitude. You say it's all your fault, and not out of sarcasm. In fact, you really mean it! You actually blame yourself, to your own detriment.

How else? Sometimes people just shut out their minds and numb out. Do you know how they do this? Any ideas how they numb their minds? Well, they may use drugs, alcohol and even start eating a lot as a diversion, or for comfort.

(Slides 19 – 21)

*OK*, then some start breaking things or just start hitting something. This is also a type of inward anger. Trying to control your anger by not showing it to people around you and you are doing strange things right? Are there actually times when you feel like just throwing something on the wall like? Breaking something? Hitting hard on the table? Does it happen?

Driving recklessly is often the result of inward anger. Although you guys don't drive yet... but just make sure that when you do drive, you don't drive when you are angry.

Another result of inward anger is running away and never addressing important issues. This is the 'There is nothing to discuss' attitude. Thus, all these were the examples of the result of anger turned inwards.

So far, we've talked about two types of anger, outward and inward.

Why should we learn about anger management? I want all of you to keep assessing yourselves and asking yourselves, 'Do I have this problem?' This is the whole idea behind knowing about

anger management. It is not to identify other people's problems, whether it is inward anger or outward anger. Rather, more essentially, it's for our own self-improvement. Anger management is about helping ourselves.

Are we constantly questioning ourselves? 'Do I react with outward anger? Do I react with inward anger? Do I react with both?'

(Slides 22 – 25)

Now let's just talk a bit about the harmful physical effects of anger.

What does it actually do to us? I am not a doctor and medical terminology really puts me to sleep. However, I'm sure you will agree with me that there is some sort of link between our bodies and our emotions... that there's a direct relationship between the two.

Just think about what happens when you are sad.... What do you usually do? You cry. There is a visible physical reaction because of your emotions: tears naturally and instinctively, flow out of your eyes.

What happens when you are afraid? Being afraid is an emotion. Your heart starts beating faster and you might want to run away, right?

What happens when you are nervous (another emotion)? There are lots of things to do when you are nervous: you may sweat, start tapping your fingers, bite your nails, or fiddle with something. Thus clearly, there is a direct cause and effect relationship between our emotions and our physical bodies.

(Slides 26 – 33)

Knowing this, what effects do you suppose anger has on our bodies?

To begin with, we may start having ulcers, acne and headaches. If you have an acne problem, it could be because of your temper. Yes, and if you have ulcers in your mouth, it could be because of your temper, too.

Furthermore, as we've all experienced, anger can cause the heart to race and the body temperature to become hot or cold.

Shoulder muscles become tense, jaws become tight, and you feel like eating all your teeth away! What else? Knots in the stomach are not only caused by nervousness; for some people it happens when they are angry, and then clenched fists! Glares, agitation, shaking and crying can all be caused by anger.

Clearly then, this is one emotion which can harm our own bodies. This is besides the harm it does to people around us. We ourselves are the ones, who are suffering, all because of our own

inability to manage anger. Right? So if you do not want to be considerate about the people around you, at least think about yourselves. These are actually only a few examples of the physical effects of anger.

(Slide 34)

If these conditions that we talked about continue to happen over an extended period of time, this can cause blood pressure and the heart beat to rise, and put the person at a very high risk of a heart attack, or a stroke. Please note that it's not just old people who have heart attacks and strokes these days, but the younger ones as well.

(Slides 35 – 37)

Now... as far as the psychological angle of anger is concerned, anger signals the fact that someone or something has come between you and what you want, between you and your desired goals.

And the goal could be as simple as finishing your homework. So, when your younger brother or sister accidentally spills water on your exercise book, your anger rears its destructive head.

From the time that something provocative happens to the time you react, is only one thirtieth of a second. You hardly have time to think; the reaction is instantaneous. Is this based on some research?? If yes, please give reference here as time quoted here is so precise

Now this is not because you don't get time to think; you just don't pause. We have not learnt how to pause when something happens in our lives that we do not like, when some incidence takes place that makes us angry. We just don't give ourselves time to think. At this point, when you are already provoked, it's too late to take an anger management class; too late to run to some institute and take an anger-management course or classes.

(Slides 38 – 39)

The thing is we need to understand today, and then train ourselves is to react positively. We must know how we react to certain triggers in our lives. It is extremely important that we understand this today.

Ask yourselves, 'What are the triggers in my life? What are the things that actually make me angry?' Identify them, and work on them.

For example, some people hold rigid patterns of thinking with regards to what they or others ought, should and must do. "Oh, she should be doing this... and you ought to understand this...and I must do this". They have rigid expectations of other people and even themselves, so their anger is triggered when things don't go their way. What do they say? 'It's my way or the highway!' Yes, so having expectations is a trigger in their lives. And again when I am giving

you these examples, I want you to keep assessing yourselves: ‘Is this my trigger, too? Do I get angry when I don’t get my way?’

(Slides 40 – 43)

Anger can be triggered by five different threats in our lives..... What are these threats?

Firstly, threats to our body.

This could be your trigger. For example, if you are standing in a queue and somebody just comes and pushes you, or if somebody hits you. This is a trigger. Keep assessing yourselves, because we are going to be identifying and discussing our own triggers.

Secondly, threats to our personal property.

When we talk about property, it could be as small as your hair pin or something as big as your mobile phone, or your lap top. Is this your trigger? Do you feel threatened when you fear that someone is going to take away something that belongs to you?

Thirdly, threat to our self-esteem.

Such as being insulted, ridiculed or being criticized. Is this your trigger? If someone criticizes you, does that make you angry?

If a girl is called by a nick name she dislikes in school, and it’s very common to do this... we all do this at some point...she might not like the name, she in fact hates it but students keep calling her it ...Bang! Naturally, a disliked, derogatory name could easily trigger off a person’s anger.

(Slides 44 -45)

Fourthly, threats to our values and beliefs.

Here, the sense what is fair and right has been violated. For example, if you feel your teacher was not fair in giving you low marks on a project you put a lot of time and effort in. We are not talking about wrong or right, but if you get the *feeling* that your teacher is not being fair to you... you might lose your temper. So, maybe that could be your trigger, that you feel people are not being fair to you.

Or for example, you are accused of some wrongdoing and aren’t given the opportunity to defend yourself, when you should have had the right to talk and to explain what really happened. This could make you angry.

Finally, a very common threat we all experience at some time or another is that of not getting what we want.

Does this make you angry? Is this your trigger? For example, you want to go out to the movies with all of your friends, but your parents don't let you. Or you want to buy that particular outfit but it's not suitable enough for you, according to mom.

So you could be prone to react to one, or a couple, or all of these triggers.

So the first thing if you actually want to learn how to manage your anger is to understand your triggers. And what triggers me can be very different from what triggers you. So let's just take a minute and think about what provokes you. Think about your triggers ...it should not take you long....what makes you angry?

Student: Threat to beliefs and values?

Teacher: Can you give us an example?

Student: If all your friends and you are in trouble and they back off and leave you all alone, and say they were not involved, you feel this is disloyalty. Yes, this is a threat to your values, i.e. to always be loyal to one's friends.

Student: If someone takes credit for something I have done, that is my trigger.

Teacher: Who else? Yes ... you don't like it when people say stuff behind your back. That is your trigger.

Who else? Yes...when people don't let you talk, they don't listen to what you are saying, right? Who is this person, by the way, I hope it's not one of your parents, because usually children have the complaint that our parents do not listen to us, they just keep telling us what we are supposed to do.

Student: When people don't understand you.

(Slides 46 – 47)

I want you to keep listening to the different triggers for different people, as I want you all to establish what is right and what is wrong. You should understand when you have the right to lose your temper, and when you are not justified in doing so.

Now, what is the process that actually takes place when you become angry?

Let's suppose a provocative incident takes place, any incident. You then give a meaning to that incident. You could give it a positive meaning or a negative one. You lose your temper when you give a negative meaning to an incident. What happens then? You emotionally and physically react. When your body reacts, it goes into a fight or flight mode or condition. Your body starts responding very fast. Does this happen to you? Depending on how threatening the incident is, on how it is interpreted, the body reacts.



Worse still, there is a bit of negative self-talking that goes on in our minds, right? Negative self-talk further heats up the situation. This is actually the most threatening response. ...How the incident is interpreted and then how the body reacts, whether we fight or take flight, along with a little, if not a lot, of negative self talk. Isn't this the normal chain of events?

(Slides 48 - 51)

Now, what are some examples of 'negative self-talk'?

'I would like to wring her neck!' Or 'I want to kill her!'

Do we say that? This is self-talk. 'I want to give her a piece of my mind!'

Then sometimes we just assume things. For instance, we assume that the other person deliberately wants to harm us. Or that she did something on purpose: "You broke my pen purposely so that I don't beat you in the test!"

Another example is making mountains out of mole hills, exaggerating the importance of small incidents in our head. For example, your sister just teases you a bit, she says something slight and you just hit the roof. So you react by giving her a whack! Now, that is overreaction! She just teased you for fun, but you exaggerated the importance of this slight incident.

(Slides 52- 53)

What else? We just make prejudiced judgments that weaklings and wimps need to be punished. This is also negative self talk.

Then we say things like, 'How dare she say that to me?!' Or, 'She did it on purpose to hurt me; she does not care about me!' ... 'She certainly can't get away with that! 'I will get her back!' Or, 'She needs to be punished! 'Or, worse still, 'I hope she burns in hell!' Oh my God!

So, you do not actually say all this to the person whom you are angry with; rather, these are self-angering thoughts that are coming to your mind. You haven't lost your temper yet.

We are talking about the chain of events. What happens is:

An incident takes place to which you give a negative meaning through negative self-talk. As a result, your body reacts negatively, and then you talk angrily.

(Slides 54 – 55)

So, this is the chain of events: a potentially threatening incident, its perceived meaning-- and this meaning is usually negative, negative self-talk, and body reaction—boom!! Voila, you are really angry!

This whole chain takes one thirtieth of a second, believe it or not.

What happens after years of this same pattern, which is repeated over and over again, is that the person develops a locked in, automatic response to a threat. It becomes a habit. This is what we normally do. Whoops! Sorry about that automatic response and reflex action, doctor!!

You show your temper at places where it is really not required. Since it has become a habit, you don't think. An incident happens and all you can think of is about a similar previous negative incident that took place and how you reacted. You don't actually notice and observe the small levels of differences, or think about your thoughts that occur between the two: the incident and the reaction.

Rather, your focus is on what? Your focus is on what the other person did. Do you ever say, 'Oh maybe I gave a negative meaning to that incident.' Never, it is always the other person or the situation that is at fault. Right?

We are going to stop here. *InshaAllah* next week we will talk about the cure for negative reactions to triggers, for the antidote to losing one's cool.

The whole idea of doing anger management is to learn how to use our pause buttons during that **one thirtieth of a second**. This is the crunch of anger management; you have to slow down, you have to give a pause and think.

We normally don't stop to think. So, it is a combination of a couple of things: learn how to use your pause buttons and then actually do a little bit of clear thinking. Though the remedy is so simple, we don't use it; we are in the habit of just responding spontaneously, immediately to any event takes place that we do not like. Right?

*InshaAllah* we will stop here. I do not want to give you the antidote right now; we will take it from here next week.

(Du'a for end of a gathering) *Subhana Rabbika Rabbul Izzati 'amma yasifun wa salamun 'alal mursaleen, walhamdulillahi Rabbil 'alameen*

(Parting salutation to students) *Assalam alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh*