

Cognitive Behavior Therapy for Anger and Aggression

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Abstract

Aggression is an emerging psychological issue in society. Adolescents and aggression are crucial and ardent issues of the current scenario and steps need to be taken to reduce violence among youth. Exposure to media, gadgets, chaotic family environment, and locality can precipitate the aggressive behavior of an individual to a great extent. The rise of conflict with parents is increasing nowadays even though it is regarded as normal during teens. Adolescents generally have an identity crisis, are often temperamental, venture into risky behavior, seek more independence, and love to be in the company of friends rather than family. Aggression is an act of hurting or harming others by direct means such as hitting, kicking, punching, biting, and indirect means like backbiting, rejection, social isolation, telling rumors, using bad words, threatening others. Anger has always been associated with a multitude of problems such as substance abuse, emotional and physical abuse, domestic violence, psychological disturbances like poor concentration, sleeplessness, insecure feeling, and self-mutilative behavior. Cognitive behavioral therapy is a therapeutic intervention that helps in identifying maladaptive cognitive schemas that leads to negative emotions and behaviors. It aids in resolving behavioral problems of adolescents and youths. It inculcates instruction, coaching, and strengthening positive human behaviors and certain intervention strategies such as social skill training, moral reasoning training, and anger management. Cognitive behavioral therapy is a kind of umbrella that covers all kinds of behavioral intervention strategies in psychology.

Keywords: Aggression, anger, benefits, cognitive behaviour therapy, techniques

INTRODUCTION

According to UNDP reports, psychological problems such as mental strain, gloominess, emotional arousal, and anxiety have been exploding and hitting record levels over the last decades. Many countries spend less than only 2% of health-care budgets on mental health.^[1]

Adolescence is a transition time between childhood and adulthood accompanied by somatic, affective, and mental changes. It is a distressing and difficult time as they get to realize and accept themselves and get in touch with reality,

moral issues, and the perplexity of life. Mental illnesses start in the mid-teens including mood disorders, neurosis, psychosis, depression, personality disorder, and substance abuse. Many teenagers report that they feel irritated and have problems managing anger.^[2]

WHAT IS ANGER?

Anger is a cathartic process of releasing mental tension and emotional pressure triggered by feelings such as hurt, disappointment, or sorrowfulness. We need to identify the root cause of anger, knowing the actual problem, and dealing with the problem rationally may help in resolving it.^[3]

Sometimes anger may be intense with physical and emotional discomfort causing great difficulty in thinking and behavior. A person who is unable to deal with angry feelings may have a great desire to act directly on the feelings even at the cost of risking himself and others. Handling the consequences of anger is as much a problem as the anger itself. Managing anger involves helping adolescents learn that it is a normal feeling, but the way they choose to deal with it is a choice.^[4]

Date of Submission: 08-03-2023

Date of Revision: 24-03-2023

Date of Acceptance: 25-03-2023

Access this article online

Website: <http://innovationalpublishers.com/Journal/ijnmi>

ISSN No: 2656-4656

DOI: 10.31690/ijnmi.2023.v08i01.003

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Cognitive behavioral therapy demonstrates great success in helping people get to grips with their anger and channel it as a positive and constructive force. Anger is a normal emotion, but when it crosses over into frequent outbursts, hurtful words at others, or being easily triggered, then cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) could be an effective form of treatment. CBT works to help you understand your triggers and replace them with coping strategies.^[5]

WHAT IS COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY?

Cognitive behavioral therapy teaches us to identify pessimistic thoughts/feelings and replace them with more rational thoughts.

There are two main aspects to CBT.

Functional analysis

Analysis means focusing on the thoughts and triggers that lead to maladaptive behavior.

Skills training

Centers on new coping abilities that can be used in daily life including homework, keeping a daily mood log, and understanding how thoughts can affect feelings and actions. It is important to be consistent when practicing the method and keep in mind that changing negative thought forms and behaviors takes time.^[6]

HOW DOES CBT FOR ANGER WORK?

CBT utilizes an array of exercises to help you realize the triggers that cause anger to become intense and lead to an explosion. When identifying the triggers and their root causes, your therapist may display certain methods to manage anger more efficaciously, equipping you with strategies to break up and control your anger, such as deep breathing, relaxation techniques, and problem-solving.

CBT techniques for anger direct on replacing competitive, unhealthy communication with calm, and assertive communication. Remember, anger is a human emotion that should be expressed if there is a justifiable cause. The key is to find out reconciling ways of communicating anger without crossing set boundaries.^[7]

CBT: AN AID TO PROBLEMS OF ANGER

Cognitive behavioral therapy for aggression involves effective strategies that can change a person's life. Here is the CBT process.

Step one: Find out the root cause of the problem

This will help you make a clever decision about prioritization and resolving problems and goals first.

Step two: Gain awareness and understanding

Self-awareness is an essential aspect of managing anger issues. If a person gets angry his ideas, thoughts, and orientation may get affected. The counselor will explain the importance of conversing with yourself (self-talk).

Step three: Regulate faulty and negative thoughts

The counselor helps to realize your thoughts and behavioral patterns when you are facing a problem. During the treatment, the counselor will ask you to pay close attention to your emotions, behaviors, and physical responses.

Step four: modify negative thoughts

Need to reflect on whether your thoughts are either distorted or real. Sometimes, you see life events as either bad or good, based on your emotions. CBT helps you to reframe your memories. Many people find this stage very challenging. However, practicing healthy thinking and positive behavior can be established.^[8]

AGGRESSION HYPOTHESIS

According to Berkowitz's Neoassociationistic Model, when all negative emotions pile up to reach a threshold, aggression tends to bout and even a minor anxiousness, remorse, and shame may lead to anger and aggression. That means an act of anger or aggression is likely to be caused by bottled-up negative emotion rather than the current incident or issues.^[9]

CBT TECHNIQUES FOR ANGER

Deep breathing and muscle relaxation

You need 10–15 min for doing this exercise. Breathe slowly through your nostrils into your belly and then exhale slowly, you will feel relaxed, relieved, and have more sense of control. Continue breathing if you feel that your neck is still stiff. Move your head toward one shoulder and then the other along with your breathing slowly and gently. Repeat this several times until you feel that tense muscles in your neck are relaxed a little.

Excessive anger increases heart rate and breathing and causes muscle tension in the neck and shoulders.

Cognitive restructuring

Cognitive restructuring means identifying negative and faulty thought patterns that fuel your anger and replacing them with healthy and balanced thoughts. Anger is triggered by the way you perceive a situation. Thought record is a powerful tool to identify and track dysfunctional thoughts and anger triggers to get a better insight into your thinking pattern and reaction. Instead of reacting, the challenge is to replace them with positive thoughts.

Problem-solving

It is vital to have a problem-solving goal rather than taking your negative feelings out on everyone around you. CBT Therapist will utilize a problem-solving strategy by being flexible in thinking and reframing angry thoughts. Always consider a cost-benefit analysis while seeing a situation from an angry perspective.

Behavioral rehearsal

Behavioral rehearsal helps in identifying and reframing anger triggers by describing a specific anger-provoking situation which is then role-played by the client and therapist. Genuine

feedback is given after each exercise by the therapist to help the client improve their skills.

Assertive communication

It means respectfully expressing your thoughts without violating the rights of other people. Assertive communication helps in minimizing conflicts, build self-confidence, and improve relationships.^[10]

Is CBT FOR ANGER EFFECTIVE?

Aaron T Beck is the father of cognitive behavioral therapy helping to explore how people think and perceive things concerning their environment. CBT is the cornerstone of anger management that emphasizes identifying triggers and replacing them with more adaptive responses. CBT for anger management is very detrimental to improving overall health, career, and relationships. When a person realizes his or her behavior, there is a higher chance of changing negative perceptions and emotions.

ANGER MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES— BENEFITS OF CBT THERAPY

1. Understand the root cause of anger that ignites anger in present-life situations.
2. Helps to reduce overwhelming physiology which triggers an angry reaction
3. Replace angry actions with clear and effective communication that fetches better results
4. Discover the positive power in your anger and how to channel it in a way that enhances your relationships and overall well-being.
5. Learn different anger management techniques to aid in assertive expression rather than losing control.
6. Channel anger responses in a constructive manner wherein situations can be channeled.^[10]

CONCLUSION

Uncontrolled anger when left untreated can aggravate mental health issues. Unrestrained anger may cost your inner peace, psychological state, physical health, relationships, and career. If you feel uncontrolled and overwhelmed by anger, do not hesitate to reach out and get help to manage anger triggers

adaptively. Remember, anger should not be suppressed or repressed but should be communicated assertively and healthily.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This is to certify that the article submitted is an independent and original work. We have duly acknowledged all the sources from which the ideas and extracts have been taken. The article is free from any plagiarism and has not been submitted elsewhere for publication and has been approved by the ethical committee.

FUNDING

Self.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

None.

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How to cite this article: Zachariah RA. Cognitive Behavior Therapy for Anger and Aggression. *Int J Nurs Med Invest*. 2023;8(1):10-12.