Understanding anger

What anger is, when it becomes a problem and what helps.

Anger is the feeling that comes up when something seems unfair, threatening or in the way. It gives you energy to protect yourself, set a limit or put something right. Everyone feels it.

Anger is a feeling. Aggression is a behaviour. You can feel very angry and still choose what you do.

What happens

Body
Heart speeds up, muscles tense, face gets hot, jaw and fists clench. The same alarm system as fear, pointed towards fight.

Thoughts
"How dare they." "This is not fair." "They did that on purpose." Blame, demands and snap judgements.

Urges
To shout, hit out, slam, argue, or go cold and withdraw.

When anger becomes a problem

- [ ] It comes up very often, or very fast
- [ ] It is much bigger than the situation
- [ ] It lasts a long time
- [ ] It leads to shouting, threats or violence
- [ ] It damages relationships or work
- [ ] I regret what I said or did
- [ ] I bottle it up until I explode
- [ ] I turn it on myself

What is often underneath

Anger often covers another feeling. Underneath there may be hurt, fear, shame, tiredness or feeling powerless. Anger can feel safer than those.

What helps

1. Learning your triggers and early warning signs.
2. Stepping back before the point of no return.
3. Cooling the body down.
4. Checking how you are reading the situation.
5. Saying what you need, firmly and without attack.

The aim
To notice anger sooner, understand what it is about, and stay in control of what you do. The aim is not to get rid of it.

My notes and questions

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My anger warning signs

The first signs that you are getting angry.

Name _____ Date _____

Situations that set me off

People, places, topics, times of day

Things that shorten my fuse

- [ ] Tired
- [ ] Hungry
- [ ] Stressed
- [ ] In pain
- [ ] Drinking
- [ ] Rushed

The first signs

In my body

- [ ] Heat
- [ ] Tight jaw
- [ ] Fists
- [ ] Shoulders
- [ ] Breathing
- [ ] Shaking

In my thoughts

What do I start telling myself?

In what I do

- [ ] Loud voice
- [ ] Pacing
- [ ] Going quiet
- [ ] Sarcasm
- [ ] Glaring
- [ ] Swearing

What other people notice before I do

My "point of no return". What does it feel like just before?

What I will do the moment I notice the first signs

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