

CPD: Skills Development Training  
**Psychotherapy Skills Toolbox**  
**ANGER THERAPY: HATRED, HOSTILITY & BITTERNESS**



**Jane Gallagher speaks to Paul Grantham, Consultant Clinical Psychologist, Founder of The Skills Development Service Ltd**

**March 2010**

**JG: Hi Paul, can you please describe for us briefly how your course on Anger Therapy differs from other Anger Management trainings?**

**PG:** I think a large number of practitioners are disillusioned by the claims of a great number of "anger management" programmes. The promise of many of these have not delivered what was hoped for and expected. Indeed in some fields (the offending area for example) reviews, such as the Moncton Report, have become very suspicious of "anger management" as an intervention and even suggested that such programmes might increase rather than decrease problems. Even in "anger management" with children, the effectiveness of traditional interventions based on psycho-education, cognitive interventions and arousal control have produced good results in some instances but have hit a brick wall in others. This training suggests an alternative model for addressing anger problems which recognises the fact that many children and adults are at best ambivalent about dealing with the issues and at worst are often receiving help under compulsion. Through the use of a multi-factoral model and giving a central role to Motivational

Interviewing, delegates will be given a highly effective toolkit for their anger work.

**JG: Why do you think this course is topical at the moment? Surely in difficult economics times people would suffer from depression and anxiety more than from anger problems?**

**PG:** Well... I would have thought that anger towards the banks at present clearly suggests that this emotion is in the forefront of many peoples minds. Generally speaking, depression tends to be a reflection of loss of meaning (and has a tendency to be present and past oriented) whereas anxiety tends to be a reaction to threat (and be future oriented). Fear is clearly a pervasive emotion at the moment in society and indeed, I've certainly noticed that I see more clients now with pressing anxiety based problems rather two or three years ago - a fact born out elsewhere. Anger however is a close relative of anxiety. The fight-flight response suggests that and as emotional reactions, both represent states of arousal that it is very easy to move between. A lot of anxious clients also have anger problems and visa versa. The interesting thing about anger though is that it also relates closely to depression and sadness. "Hurt" as an emotion is strongly related to both sadness and anger and the etymological origins of both are identical. It is a misnomer to assume that depression and anger are the antithesis of each other. Research by Sharkin for instance shows that suicidal males often are both very anger and very depressed at the same time. Basically, the three emotional states are closely bound up with each other.

**JG: The Mental Health Foundation reported in 2008 that 64% of the population believe people in the UK are getting angrier – how would you explain this tendency?**

**PG:** The obvious primary culprit is increased stress related to the demands of a consumerist society and the polarisation in society that accompanies it. However, I think, there are other factors around as well. I believe the MHF were tapping into a slightly different issue - not simply the presence of anger but its more frequent expression. Anger has always existed but its public manifestation on a daily basis has significantly increased for a much larger proportion of the population. This is substantially related to changes in our attitudes towards its expression. Anger expression is now seen as both justified but and healthy (a fact incidentally not supported by research). Hence it is seen as more "normal" and is felt to be more "morally acceptable".

Whether seen in soap operas or late on Friday nights in the centre of town, anger expression is normalised. Secondly, I think it is very difficult to look at anger issues without thinking about substance consumption and particularly mood altering substance consumption - which has increased enormously over the last decade. This incidentally means that it is very difficult to help clients with their anger problems without closely working with their substance consumption at the same time - a fact which most practitioners acknowledge but which few services are set up to address.

**JG: With anger management as a therapeutic approach being around for so long now one would expect that the problem of anger should be sorted by now. Why is it not happening?**

**PG:** Really for the reasons I've already mentioned. Firstly, I think our models have been erroneous - whether viewing anger as the antithesis of depression or placing too much faith in psycho-educational approaches. Anger is actually a complex emotion. St Thomas Aquinas called it "impure", not in the sense of being sinful but in the sense of it being a combination and refraction of other emotions. Hence a multifactoral model needs to be developed that recognises this and develops powerful tools for treating it when a problem. Secondly, we are currently living in a society "set up" for people having problems with their anger. Our society now socially values the expression of this emotion and has created an infrastructure that cultivates and exploits it. "Going against the grain" is not easy. However, having a more accurate model of anger problems along with proven powerful tools to address it, is definitely a step in the right direction that I know from experience can make an enormous difference in helping people.

**JG: Who is your seminar for?**

**PG:** Any professional who wants to get a better understanding of how anger problems develop and what can be done to address them more effectively. If you want to learn about more effective evidence based tools that you can use with clients you will find the day invaluable. It is rare to find much training on anger management, let alone training that fully grasps the complex issues involved whilst providing a detailed route map for addressing them. I also think that anyone who is working with anger problems and has unmotivated clients will find the day enormously helpful and motivational for them!

**JG: Have you ever tried to run this course not just for practitioners who are helping people with anger problems but for the clients who experience these problems themselves?**

**PG:** Well, I've certainly had practitioners on past versions of this seminar who have brought along their clients. The feedback has typically focused on them saying they felt they got a better understanding of their anger problems when previously they had found them very perplexing or uncontrollable. The course is primarily designed for professionals in the field but I would like to hope that the day is communicated in such a way that clients would also benefit from it.

Regarding a seminar specifically for those with anger problems, we are in the early stages of developing a programme that will be ready for clients to attend later this year... so I guess its a question of "watch this space".

**JG: Thank you! Looking forward to your seminars on Anger Therapy.**

**PG:** And I am looking forward to seeing you all there.

**Paul Grantham leads SDS seminars on ANGER THERAPY: HATRED,  
HOSTILITY & BITTERNESS:**

**14 June 2010 Belfast**

**15 June 2010 London**

**16 June 2010 Harrogate**

**17 June 2010 Nottingham**

**18 June 2010 Birmingham**

**21 June 2010 Bristol**

**22 June 2010 Portsmouth**

**23 June 2010 Glasgow**

**24 June 2010 Newcastle**

**25 June 2010 Manchester**

**05 July 2010 London**

**21 Sept 2010 London**