

# INTRODUCTION

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Thank you for purchasing **Men & Anger; Understanding & Managing Your Anger**. We are pleased that you have chosen to work on your anger as part of your personal program of recovery. Anger is unavoidable. All people experience anger in their lives. You are reading this because you are in treatment for another issue or you are recognizing that anger has become a problem affecting your life. Perhaps you have broken the law out of anger. Or you may have an abusive pattern that is fueled by your anger and has gotten you into trouble.

As you begin to explore your anger through using this book, we encourage you to keep a couple of things in mind. First, remember that if you have assaulted someone, what you did (your behavior) is terrible— but *you are not* terrible! You *can* change your behavior! Second, remember that emotions either cause you (and others) problems or helps you live a full life. Your anger can work for you or it can work against you.

This book covers some very difficult topics, and you may feel pretty uncomfortable as you read through this material. Keep in mind that the end result will be positive, worth any discomfort you might feel along the way.

Anger alone is not the problem, the problem is how you deal with it. How you deal with it can run the gamut from healthy expression and constructive action through screaming and yelling, throwing things, to destroying property and hurting people. Some of these behaviors may be chargeable criminal offenses.

Many criminal offenses, especially assaults, begin with feelings of anger and revenge. These feelings are often directly linked to a strong desire to demonstrate control over another person, your victim. Using offensive or criminal behavior to express or relive emotions usually creates feelings of guilt, shame, frustration, and embarrassment. These feelings often lead to more anger, another offense, more feelings of guilt, shame, and embarrassment, more anger, and on and on in a cycle that continues to feed on itself—unless you intervene to stop it! Whether or not you have committed a illegal offense in response to your anger, you likely have other ways of acting out toward other people that create feelings of guilt, shame, frustration, and embarrassment within you and that feed into your anger cycle.



You can apply the principles of Relapse Prevention and anger management that you will learn in this book to your personal program of recovery, or not. It is up to you to decide, just as you decide whether to use a hammer to drive a nail, or a wrench. The right tool makes all the difference. We encourage you whenever possible to work on these issues in a specialized anger management program or with a treatment professional experienced in treating people with anger problems. If you must work on your own without professional guidance, we encourage you to discuss your efforts and share what you are doing with a family member or friend who is someone you can trust and who knows about your anger problem.

As you work through this book, you may come across words or terms you are not familiar with. We encourage you to look them up first in the glossary at the end of the book, or, if you do not find them there, look in a dictionary.

Finally, we know from experience with hundreds of men with anger problems that it is very important for you to complete all exercises at the end of each chapter. The only way you can change this behavior is by observing your patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, understanding your cycles, learning the skills, and practicing new responses. Doing the exercises helps you understand your anger and learn what to do to control it. A good way to get these homework exercises done is to set aside a few specific times each week—perhaps after your religious services, and Tuesday after supper. If you are trying to stay away from alcohol and bars as part of your program, use some of the time you would have spent hanging out in the local tavern to do your homework. The most important thing is to get into a routine.

We recommend that you keep a journal during this whole process: use a spiral bound notebook for completing your exercises and writing down your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Keeping all of your exercises in the same place will help you review when they build on previous assignments, and they can easily be given to your teacher, group leader, or counselor.

We acknowledge and appreciate your effort to work towards a safer society by working to make yourself a safer person. We wish you good luck in your work with your anger and your recovery.

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