

Helping Kids Prevent Violence

Skillbuilding for Anger Management and Conflict Resolution

A Two-Part Video/Discussion Program for Middle School Children

Video One: *Anger! Handle It Before It Handles You*

Facilitator's Guide

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Facilitator's Guide

Background Information for the Facilitator

Far too many of our children live with the fear of violence in their schools. It's not surprising that the constant threat of violence has a devastating effect on their psychological well-being and their ability to function and learn in a school environment. Research indicates that children who attend school where violence is prevalent find it difficult to concentrate because of anxiety and fear of physical harm.

Violent outbursts between students and between students and teachers are increasing, not only in urban schools, but in rural communities as well. A National School Boards Association survey found that 43 percent of school administrators reported increased violence in their schools, compared with five years ago. Parents and educators have awakened to the realization that violence by and against young people is a growing national problem that cuts across geographic and economic boundaries.

The National Education Association reports that every school day 160,000 students skip classes because they fear physical harm; and more than 6,000 teachers are threatened with injury, and 260 are assaulted.

Most experts in youth development agree that the causes are rooted in the social and economic changes sweeping the country over the last two decades. Because of financial pressure and fast-paced careers, parents spend more hours on the job and fewer with their children.

From a national sample of nearly 50,000 school-age children surveyed by the Search Institute, almost half the sixth-graders said that they regularly spend two hours a day at home without an adult present.

Add to the mix an increasingly violent society and popular media in which violence is often depicted as glamorous, exciting, and the pathway to power. Kids begin to accept violence as a normal way to get what they want or to solve problems.

Apparently, as the data indicates, anger and aggression erupt in children and adolescents today with unprecedented intensity and frequency. In the past, angry conflicts among young people may have resulted in pushing, shoving, or heated verbal exchanges. Today, however, it is not unusual for young people to express their anger or resolve conflicts by threatening to use or actually using dangerous weapons to "win an argument" or "save face."

We know that today many parents unwittingly teach their children to act violently by their example and exhortation. Many parents are so frustrated, overworked, financially stretched and afraid that they have little time to stop and calmly address the needs of their children.

As a consequence, parents often exemplify violence to their children by exploding at them, yelling at them, being physically, emotionally, or sexually abusive. Generally, kids today don't know how to handle anger by using words to talk it out. They use their fists, feet, or weapons instead. They don't know how to walk away from an argument or fight. They don't know how to back off, cool down, take some time or how to negotiate, compromise, or use humor to break tension. They apparently only know how to react—violently, quickly, and without forethought. This has created a terrible pressure within schools because this type of violence can and does erupt frequently.

In the United States, because violence has become the norm, expressed in film, video, TV, toys, sports, music, broadcast news, newspapers, magazines, children have actually become "desensitized" to the level of violence around them. The media portrays violent behavior as normal, ordinary—the kind of behavior heroes engage in as a matter of course to resolve conflicts or solve problems quickly and triumphantly. The prime messages that are being conveyed to children are that good guys use violence as a first resort, and any amount of killing is okay if the end justifies the means. Violence is the hero's way to solve problems.

These messages also imply that violence doesn't really cause lasting injury, at least in the movies or on TV—the heroes always seem to escape. Kids also watch many of their

peers use violence to their advantage with only shallow warnings or prohibitions imposed by parents or other adult authorities, including educators. Experts call this the "disinhibition of children toward violent behavior."

Two main forces emerge from the research data concerning the predominant causes of youth violence in schools: *entitlement* and *tolerance*.

Violence is occurring in schools with increasing frequency, because many kids feel *entitled* to act violently, especially toward passive or weaker kids, and their lack of sensitivity toward violence inclines them to think it's perfectly normal to express their anger, get their needs met, or fulfill their desires in violent ways.

The other aspect is *tolerance*. This attitude of feeling entitled to act in violent ways is not being addressed effectively by adults. Prohibitions against violent behavior are pretty much ignored by kids because many adults ignore it or let them get away with it, and their peers take their cues for tolerance from adults. The natural result of such tolerance is that too many kids think wrongly that violent behavior is okay and is sanctioned by adults as well as by their peers.

Purpose of the Program

The Johnson Institute believes that children must be taught by responsible adults, that no one is entitled to use violence to express anger or resolve conflicts, and that violence will not be tolerated. We believe that the key to preventing violence lies in shaping children's ideas, attitudes, and behavior *before* violence becomes their automatic answer to expressing angry or aggressive feelings, resolving conflicts, or simply as a way to get what they want.

Program Description

Helping Kids Prevent Violence: Skillbuilding for Anger Management and Conflict Resolution was especially designed to help middle-school children ages 10-14 acquire a self-control strategy to manage anger; communicate constructively in a conflict; respond to negative behaviors by peers; avoid fighting; resolve interpersonal conflicts through negotiation and problem-solving; and take positive action against violence in their schools. The program has three major outcome goals: changing kids' attitudes; giving them knowledge of non-violent ways to manage anger and resolve conflicts; and teaching alternative behaviors that help them resist aggression and find healthy and safe solutions to problems. A solid research base indicates that training children in anger management and conflict resolution skills has dramatic results in reducing incidents of violence in the school setting when coupled with positive reinforcement by adults.

Helping Kids Prevent Violence: Skillbuilding for Anger Management and Conflict Resolution is the only video/discussion program available that explains and defines violence in a clear, dramatic, and understandable way so that kids can recognize their own use of violence and how it hurts themselves as well as others. The videos not only challenge kids' mistaken ideas, feelings, and attitudes about using violence, but also teach them step by step how to use two effective skills—anger management and conflict resolution—as alternatives to violence. Finally, through the combined use of dramatic vignettes, animation, and simulated participation in an interactive video game, kids learn two critical lessons: that no one

is entitled to use violence and that they must not tolerate the use of violence by anyone.

Helping Kids Prevent Violence is unique in that, unlike other programs, it does not assume that kids already understand what violence is and that they only need alternative behavioral skills. Each video therefore, weaves together cognitive lessons that give kids a clear definition of violence and dispel current myths with behavioral skill lessons that kids can immediately learn and practice as they view the videos.

Helping Kids Prevent Violence was designed to encourage and support the development of two particular behavioral skills—anger management and conflict resolution—and additionally to encourage and support the development of these lifeskills: processing feelings; decision-making; refusal skills; communication skills; and safety and survival skills. Lifeskill development lies at the core of Johnson Institute's philosophic and theoretical framework for designing its educational materials and training events.

Helping Kids Prevent Violence: Skillbuilding for Anger Management and Conflict Resolution can be used alone or as a part of any other violence prevention program; as a supplementary educational tool for student assistance programs; to supplement support group activities or to supplement classroom study on health, social problems, or family life.

Audience

Helping Kids Prevent Violence is recommended for use by all adults and children grades 5-8 participating in:

- ◆ classroom lifeskills or behavioral skills development programs
- ◆ health and family life classes
- ◆ school or community prevention programs
- ◆ school or community COA support groups
- ◆ student assistance programs
- ◆ family counseling
- ◆ family programs in treatment centers
- ◆ child and youth programs
- ◆ youth and family groups in churches, synagogues, and community centers

Video One: *Anger! Handle It Before It Handles You*

Purpose

To teach kids what violence is, how it hurts them and others, and how learning to manage anger helps prevent violence.

Cognitive Learning Objectives

Upon completion of the video discussion program on anger management, students will understand that:

- ◆ Violence can be any mean word, look, sign or act that hurts a person's body, feelings, or possession
- ◆ When they use violence to hurt others, it makes others want to hurt them back.
- ◆ Violence often starts and spreads when people use mean words as weapons to hurt others.
- ◆ Violence doesn't solve problems; it just creates more problems.

- ◆ People who use violence *choose* to use it; there are other choices.
- ◆ It's okay to *feel* angry and to express anger appropriately using "I statements."
- ◆ It's *never* okay to express anger with violence.
- ◆ Sometimes anger is a cover for other uncomfortable feelings such as hurt, frustration, fear, or jealousy.
- ◆ You have the power to *choose* how to handle your anger in every situation, but you are *responsible* for your choice.

Behavioral Skill Objectives

Upon completing this video discussion program on anger management, students will be able to:

- ◆ use "I statements" to express anger appropriately and safely.
- ◆ use the ABCD steps to manage their angry or aggressive feelings:
 - A. AWARE: Be aware of signs that you're getting angry.
 - B. BACK OFF: Give yourself some time to cool down and sort out what's wrong and what you're really feeling.
 - C. CHECK OUT CHOICES AND CONSEQUENCES: Think of the choices you have for handling your anger in this situation and the consequences of each choice.
 - D. DECIDE AND DO: Decide which choice is safest for everyone and do it.

Video Summary

Anger! Handle It Before It Handles You takes a unique approach to teaching kids about anger and violence and provides them with a simple four-step process they can use to manage angry feelings before they lead to violence.

When four friends get into an argument at a video arcade, they're caught off guard when one of the games, the "Anger Commander," issues a challenge to play. The object, it says, is "to handle your anger before it handles you." As the kids respond to the challenge, they soon realize that this game is very different from the others in the arcade. This game literally puts the player into the action, confronting each kid with a real life situation—Tanice discovers her younger brother has "borrowed" her CD's, Derek is blamed by the teacher for something he didn't do, Mia overhears another girl putting her down, and Marcos finds out someone's spreading lies about him.

Using a combination of music, graphics, and high tech wizardry, the video game teaches and helps the kids practice the ABCD steps for managing anger:

- A. AWARE
- B. BACK OFF
- C. CHECK CHOICES AND CONSEQUENCES
- D. DECIDE AND DO

As the kids interact with the game, they learn what violence is, how it hurts them and others, and how anger can lead to violence. Playing the game not only allows the kids to see the consequences of choosing violence, but by showing them how their own mistaken ideas, attitudes, and behavior contribute to violence, motivates them to discover and use alternative

strategies. By sharpening their skills as they play, the kids experience the power that comes from being able to handle their anger and express it in safe and effective ways that prevent violence and that help them feel good about themselves.

Preparing for the Video

Materials

1. Chalkboard and chalk
2. Paper and pencil for each student
3. Poster boards and colored paper

Focusing Activities Before Viewing the Video

1. Write the word "violence" on the chalkboard. Ask students to give their definition of violence.

Then write this definition of violence: "Any mean word, look, sign, or act that hurts a person's body, feelings, or things."

2. Write the word "anger" on the chalkboard. Ask viewers to give their definition.

Then write this definition of anger: "The strong feeling of displeasure that results from real or imagined injury, mistreatment, or opposition by another and that causes the desire to seek revenge."

3. Ask the viewers, "Has someone ever made you so angry that you felt like using violence to get back at the person?" (Encourage the group members to share some personal experiences by sharing an example of your own.)
4. Ask the viewers the following questions about their behavior:
 - a. If you did use violence to express your anger at that person, what happened as a result? Did using violence to express your anger help the situation?

- b. Did you use violence to express your anger because you felt you had to? To save face? To win?

- c. Do you think you have other choices for handling your anger besides using violence?

5. Introduce the video *Anger! Handle It Before It Handles You!* by explaining that everyone feels angry at times and that it's okay to *feel* angry, but it's not okay to express anger with violence. Tell the viewers that this video will show some situations they may have experienced themselves but didn't know how to handle appropriately. Tell them that if they pay close attention, they'll learn some healthy choices for handling their anger appropriately and *without* using violence.

Show the Video.

Notes

Activities After the Program

All Grades 5-8

1. Lead a discussion with students by asking some or all of the following questions:
 - a. Why was Mia angry at Karla?
 - b. Why was Tanice impatient with Mia?
 - c. What did Tanice plan to do about her fights with her brother? What did her friends suggest?
 - d. Tanice gets angrier when she thinks her mother takes her brother's side in their arguments. Name some other choices she has in this situation.
 - e. Why was Carlos angry? What happened when he accused the others of starting a rumor?
 - f. Think of a recent time when you felt very angry. What did you do? Could your friends have helped you in that situation? How?
 - g. What messages did the Anger Commander give the kids about violence?
 - h. What did the Anger Commander mean when he said, "Violence often starts and spreads when people use words like weapons to get back at someone"?
 - i. Derek tries to tell his teacher he didn't throw the paper wad. Have you ever been wrongly accused? How did you feel? How does Derek feel? What does he choose to do?
 - j. Derek says he doesn't want to lose face (look stupid). Who is he trying to impress? Do you think his behavior impresses others?

- k. Name the four ABCD Steps for managing anger.
 - l. Do you usually let your anger control you? What can you do to back off and cool down?
 - m. What did the Anger Commander mean when he said, "Sometimes anger is a cover for other feelings"?
 - n. Anger can sometimes help energize you to take a positive action. Describe a time when this happened in the video. In your own life.
2. Write the first two lines of this rap song about anger and violence on the chalkboard.

Mean words, mean looks,
mean signs, mean acts,

They all make people want to
hurt you back.

Then in groups of three or four,
ask the students to finish the rap
song about violence by adding
two more lines.

Example:

Mean words, mean looks,
mean signs, mean acts,

They all make people want to
hurt you back,

(So watch what you say and
watch what you do,

If you don't want violence
comin' back at you.)

Have the groups share their completed rap songs with each other.

Grades 5-6

3. Role play: Write the ABCD steps on the chalkboard.

Aware—Be aware of signs you're getting angry.

Back off—Take time to cool down and sort out what's wrong and what you're really feeling.

Check out Choices and Consequences—Think of the choices you have for handling your anger and the consequences of each choice.

Decide and Do—Decide which choice is safest for everyone and do it!

Then, in groups of three or four, have the students role play the following situation. Tell them to create an ending for this situation using the ABCD steps for managing anger.

At school a boy named Dave is always picking on another kid, Alex, who is small for his age but an excellent student. Dave's friends often join in with him when he picks on Alex. One day, Dave and his friends have Alex cornered and are calling him names and shoving him up against his locker. When Manny and Maria see what's happening, they tell Dave and his friends to leave Alex alone. Then Dave and his friends turn on Manny and Maria and start pushing them around. Manny feels very angry and is about to get into a fight with Dave and his friends.

Give the students eight to ten minutes to prepare and try out their role plays. Ask the groups to share their role plays with each other.

- boards and post them in your school building. Be sure to include the Anger Commander's four ABCD steps for managing anger.
7. In groups of three or four, have the students create a radio or television commercial on how to prevent or stop violence in your school. Perform the commercials for classmates or audio or video record them if equipment is available. Share the commercials with other classes in the school.
8. Have the students write the name of the music they like to listen to when they feel angry. Ask them if this music helps them to deal with

9. Have the students write a story about a time they or someone they know got into a fight because they were angry. Have them name the characters and tell what led up to the fight. Tell them to describe what happened. Then have them write two different endings to the story.

6. Have the students break up into groups of three or four and create advertisements about how to prevent violence in school. Transfer the advertisements to poster

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Supplementary Materials from Hazelden

Classroom Materials

Learning the Skills of Peacemaking (activity guide)
Facts, Feelings, Families, and Friends (curriculum)
From Peer Pressure to Peer Support (curriculum)
Conflict! Think About It, Talk About It, Try to Work it Out (video discussion program)
Peer Mediation (video)
How to Control Your Anger (booklet)
Dealing With Anger (video series)

Family Violence

Tulip Doesn't Feel Safe (video and coloring book)
Della the Dinosaur Talks About Violence and Anger Management (support group manual)
Anger Management and Violence Prevention (support group manual)

Program Development/Evaluation

StudentView survey

To order any of these materials, contact Hazelden
at 800-328-9000 or visit hazelden.org.

Handout #1

(Grades 5-6)

Anger, Violence, and You

Check Yourself Out

Do you think you are a violent person? yes___ no___

Do you think you have ever used violence to express your anger at someone? yes___ no___

Here's a Definition of Violence

Violence: When you use mean words, mean looks, mean signs or mean acts to hurt another person's body, feelings, or things.

Write down some examples of "violence" that you were involved in at school this past week.
Describe them as best as you can.

Write down a time when you used mean *words* (putdowns, name-calling, racial slurs, telling stories, starting false rumors) to hurt someone.

Write down a time when you used a mean *look* (staring, making faces, eye rolling) to hurt someone.

Write down a time when you used a mean *sign* (a dirty gesture or a gang sign) that hurt someone.

Write down a time when you did a mean *act* (slapping, pinching, hitting, punching, kicking, tripping, threatening, pushing, shoving) to hurt someone.

What can you do to keep yourself from using violence to express your anger?

Handout #2

(Grades 5-6)

ABCD Anger Management Exercises

What are the four steps you can use to handle your anger before it handles you?

Fill out the rest of each step as best as you can remember.

A — A _ _ _ _ _

B — B _ _ _ _ _

C — C _ _ _ _ _ C _ _ _ _ _ and C _ _ _ _ _

D — D _ _ _ _ _ and D _ _

Remember a time when you were angry. _____

What happened? _____

How did you become *aware* that you were angry? _____

Did you *back off* and cool down? How? _____

If not, how could you do this next time? _____

What *choices* did you have to deal with your anger? _____

What were the *consequences* that could have happened with each choice? _____

What did you *decide* to do? _____

Would you do the same thing next time? yes _____ no _____

If no, what would you do next time? _____

Handout #3

(Grades 7-8)

Your Anger Commander Body Barometer

In the video, each of the characters had warning signals from their bodies that told them they were getting angry and needed to back off:

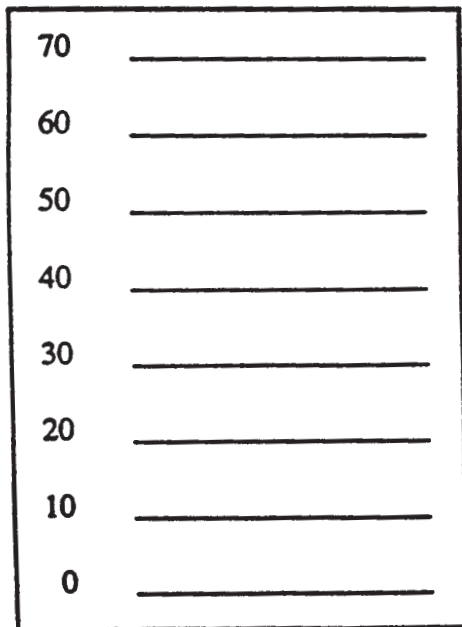
Feeling hot inside or face turning red (Blood Pressure)

Difficult breathing (Breathing Rate)

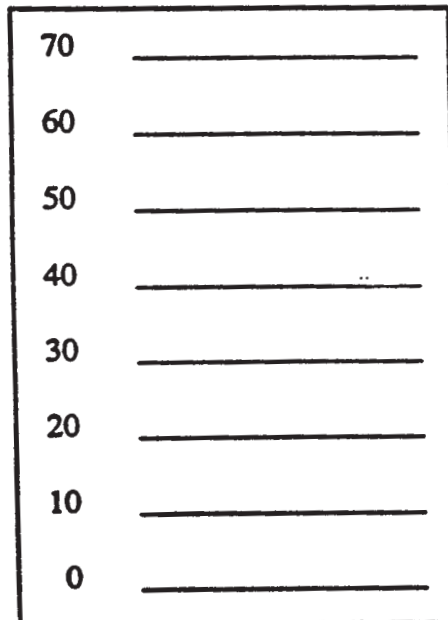
Pounding heart (Pulse)

Describe how your body felt the last time you were very angry at someone.

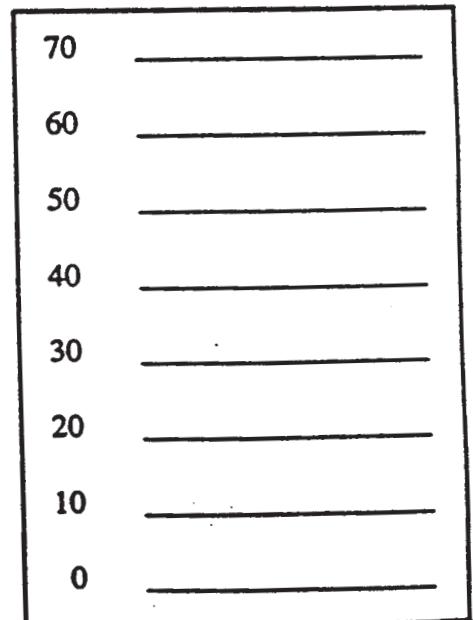
Now, chart your own anger signals on the body barometer to show how your body warned you the last time you felt very angry at someone.



Blood Pressure



Breathing Rate



Pulse Rate

Handout #4

(Grades 7-8)

Name Calling

Some of the characters in the video *Anger! Handle It Before It Handles You* are called names or call each other names.

Have you ever been called names? yes ____ no ____

By whom? _____

How did you feel? _____

How do you think the name caller felt? _____

How did you react? _____

Did you try to talk it out with someone you trusted? yes ____ no ____

If no, what did you do to handle your anger? _____

Would you have liked a different ending? yes ____ no ____

If yes, what is it? _____

Have you ever called others names? yes ____ no ____

If yes, who? _____

How did you feel? _____

How do you think the other person felt? _____

How did the other person react? _____

What happened? _____

Would you have liked a different ending? yes ____ no ____

If yes, what is it? _____