

Eighth Grade, Session 5

Understanding Anger

Your feelings are your feelings, and you get to have them. It's also good to know what's going on in that brain and how to manage our feelings so we don't get emotionally hijacked.

What's Going On in Your Brain: Event + Interpretation = Emotion

- You experience an event.
- Your brain starts processing and sending signals to your limbic system.
- Anger is the result of a perceived threat, either physical or emotional. If your brain senses a threat, it activates your amygdala before you even know.
- Your amygdala sends chemicals to the rest of your body telling it to get ready to be on guard to protect you.

Purpose of Anger: Why It's a Good Thing

- Anger is the response to a perceived threat.
- The function of anger is to identify violations to your well-being, which can be either physical or emotional.
- The brain processes getting punched the same way it processes emotional threats like social rejection.
- It is a self-protective emotion.

When Anger Is Hard: It Can Cloud Your Vision

- Since your brain sees anger as a function of self-protection, it can make it hard to manage in the moment.
- It can be difficult to stop and think about others when we are feeling a lot of anger because our bodies are sending chemicals telling us to think mostly about our well-being.
- Anger is a powerful feeling and can make us feel like we are in the right no matter what, shut down communication, and escalate conflict.

Is It Really Anger? Anger Is an Iceberg Emotion

- Anger is often not really about anger. It can be about more vulnerable emotions that are harder to manage, so your brain decides anger is easier.
- Vulnerable emotions that can cause anger are things like embarrassment, shame, humiliation, disappointment, guilt, hurt, sadness, anxiety, frustration, uncertainty, etc.
- To protect you from vulnerability your brain can shortcut to anger.

Processing Options: Having Tools Is Empowering

- Get some space from the person or event that is upsetting you. Take a walk and a few deep breaths.
- Ask yourself if it is really anger or if the anger is masking more vulnerable emotions.
- Write it down; being able to get meta about your emotions is super helpful and makes you feel more in control.
- Being able to name your emotions is the first step toward taming your emotions.
- You know yourself best, so think about strategies that would make you feel in control.

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