



Getting to the Bottom of It: A Comprehensive Approach to Anger Management

A Review of

Anger Management in Counseling and Psychotherapy

by Howard Kassinove and Raymond Chip Tafrate

Mill Valley, CA: Psychotherapy.net, 2014. \$159.00 (Institution DVD Version + Instructor's Manual); \$150.00 (Institution Streaming Version + Instructor's Manual); \$59.00 (Individual DVD Version); \$49.00 (Individual Streaming Version)

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Anger is an emotion that every human experiences. It is often referred to as a secondary emotion, one that is quick to show itself but also one that hides deeper emotional expression (Christensen, 2010). Many people struggle to control their anger and need help in therapy to work on anger management. Howard Kassinove and Raymond Tafrate introduce many different ways for clinicians to work with clients on anger management in their video, *Anger Management in Counseling and Psychotherapy*. This video provides a comprehensive look at anger, includes their anger episode model, cognitive approaches, and the Barb technique. It is a valuable resource with some follow-up and additional training in the different techniques described.

We are in an age of psychotherapy where evidence-based practices are the most supported, both by professionals in the field and by managed care practices that fund therapy services. Using approaches that can directly impact clients is part of the goal in using models that have been proven successful through research. One common issue that is addressed in psychotherapy is anger management. Many people struggle with anger; whether it is a part of a larger diagnosis or the main problem that brought them into therapy. Kassinove and Tafrate (2014) have created an evidenced-based model for anger management that may be implemented using their video program. This innovative program, with visuals to help the trainee or clinician "see" the problem, is a successful way to tackle a common problem seen in the therapy setting.

One of Kassinove and Tafrate's approaches to anger management in the video is the anger episode model. In this model, there are five dimensions to the anger episode: the triggers for the episode, appraisals, experiences, expressive patterns, and outcomes. In the video, viewers see a client's anger episodes and see the client work through the five dimensions

with the therapist. Evidence-based approaches for anger management have been shown to be successful when including an empirically-based approach (CBT, relaxation, problem solving, cognitive therapy, etc.; Hamelin, Travis, & Sturmey, 2013). The authors' model also includes a shared definition of "anger" to ensure that clients understand the difference between anger and other emotions. This is important to the standardization of the model, which is an aspect of evidence-based models.

This model is similar to other emotion models in the field, such as the emotion-focused therapy model. In this model, clients are taught to work through secondary emotions such as anger to uncover more primary emotions that underlie the situation or relationship. In doing this, the client is able to experience the thoughts (cognitive) that led to emotional expression (such as anger) and allow clients to identify and feel the emotions that are underlying (such as sadness or fear; Greenberg, 2004). In the anger episode model, clients also focus on the triggers or thoughts (cognitions) and then identify the emotional expression (anger) and also work on outcomes (consequences). The main difference is apparent here. In this anger episode model, clients become aware of how their anger is impacting them negatively and thus can provide motivation for change. Both models focus on coaching a client into understanding and expressing their emotions differently.

In addition to this anger episode model and cognitive techniques, the video also introduces the Barb technique. In this technique for anger management, developed by Tafrate and Kassinove (1998), a cognitive and behavioral component is used to control anger. In the video clip, the client is exposed to increasing intensive "barbs" or trigger statements that typically elicit anger. Upon hearing the "barbs," the client is coached through delaying response and deep breathing to cope with anger. The video does provide a warning to have an established relationship with a client before using this provocative approach to anger management. This is one area that may be improved upon in the video, for example, the video could be developed into a series where the more intensive approaches could be used by more experienced clinicians or trainees.

This video is a comprehensive and welcomed resource for clinicians and trainees who are working under the proper supervision. The models described are consistent with other popular approaches in the field, such as CBT and emotion-focused therapy, while also introducing more directive approaches such as the Barb technique. The techniques in the video, in particular the Barb technique, should only be used when an established relationship exists and sufficient knowledge of the approach exists, and so some of the approaches may be appropriate for an additional volume. Kassinove and Tafrate have contributed a useful tool to add to the anger management field.

References

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