

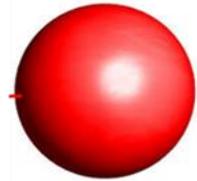
# BUILDING RESILIENCE

Brought to you by:



## Section #3

*REGULATE NEGATIVE EMOTIONS –  
where the anger comes from!*



Bouncing back to  
good mental health



## Understanding Emotions

The ability to experience and express emotions is more important than you might realise. As the felt response to a given situation, emotions play a key part in your reactions. When you're in tune with them, you have access to important knowledge that helps with:

- *decision-making*
- *relationship success*
- *day-to-day interactions*
- *self-care*

## About negative emotions

Negative emotions can be described as any feeling which causes you to be miserable and sad. These emotions make you dislike yourself and others, and reduce your confidence and self-esteem, and general life satisfaction.

Emotions that can become negative are hate, anger, jealousy and sadness. Yet, in the right context, these feelings are completely natural. Negative emotions can dampen our enthusiasm for life, depending on how long we let them affect us and the way we choose to express them.

## Holding onto negative emotions causes a downward spiral

Negative emotions stop us from thinking and behaving rationally and seeing situations in their true perspective. When this occurs, we tend to see only what we want to see and remember only what we want to remember. This only prolongs the anger or grief and prevents us from enjoying life.

The longer this goes on, the more set the problem becomes. Dealing with negative emotions inappropriately can also be harmful – for example, expressing anger with violence.

## Emotions are complex reactions

Our brain responds to our thoughts by releasing hormones and chemicals, which send us into a state of arousal. All emotions come about in this way, whether positive or negative.

It's a complex process and often we don't have the skills to deal with negative feelings. That's why we find it hard to cope when we experience them.

## How to deal with negative emotions

There are a number of coping strategies to deal with negative emotions.

These include:

- **Don't blow things out of proportion** by going over them time and again in your mind.
- **Try to be reasonable** – accept that bad feelings are occasionally unavoidable and think of ways to make yourself feel better.
- **Relax** – use pleasant activities like reading, walking or talking to a friend.
- **Learn** – notice how grief, loss and anger make you feel, and which events trigger those feelings so you can prepare in advance.
- **Exercise** – aerobic activity lowers your level of stress chemicals and allows you to cope better with negative emotions.
- **Let go of the past** – constantly going over negative events robs you of the present and makes you feel bad.



EMOTIONS

## The Anger Iceberg

**Emotions rarely exist on their own.** They are tied to other emotions, thoughts and feelings. It is useful to look beneath any emotional behaviour we might exhibit as a way of becoming more self-aware and it can help us communicate more effectively with other people.

*This diagram illustrates the characteristics of an iceberg - 10% is above the surface of the water and 90% lies beneath the surface. This is the same composition as the Anger emotion.*



## ANGER ICEBERG

### So, what lies beneath Anger?

When people get angry, their anger shows up **above the surface**, meaning we can see hear and feel that anger (*screaming, shouting, hitting, punching, swearing*). What we can't see, is **what is actually causing the anger**. In most cases, the emotions that lie beneath the surface have been triggered.

## Here are the emotions that lie beneath the anger:

- **HURT** – in a specific moment, prior to any outburst, something has caused hurt either physically or emotionally. There are lots of different things that can hurt us. Maybe its being ignored, not being heard, being picked on, being called names or being laughed at. Whatever it is, try to identify it.
- **NEED** – When a basic need is not being met or has been taken away, it feeds into the anger emotion.

There are 2 types of human needs:

**Practical** (eg. shelter, food, water, money, clothing)

**Emotional** (eg. love, a sense of belonging, respect, loyalty)

- **FEAR** – something we believe will happen as a result of the situation we are in at that moment, even if there is no evidence to support that belief.

There are 2 types of fear:

**Real** – something that could happen as a result of the current situation (eg. death of a loved one, losing everything, becoming ill, fear of letting someone down)

**Unreal/Fantasy** – something that you imagine or create in your mind, that may never happen, or the chances are slim. (eg. Scared of what people will think, scared that you are not able to be yourself, scared of making a fool of yourself – there are many more examples)

### A Real-Life Anger Iceberg Story by Heather Butler Smith

"I was driving my car home from work. It was November and it was cold and dark. I was driving along a road I knew very well. However, as the traffic lights in front of me changed to red I realised I was in the "yellow box". This meant that I was blocking the side road and traffic that might be wanting to join the main road. I knew I had made a mistake, so I put my hand up as an apologetic gesture to the man in the car waiting to turn. Much to my surprise, he was going "ballistic" in his car, honking his horn continuously, and screaming at me through his open window. However, there was nothing I could do. The lights would change, and we'd all be on our way. But no, he just kept honking and shouting. He had a little boy in the car, and I could see he was getting upset. But the man's behaviour riled me. I reversed back a couple of feet - not enough for him to get through but enough for me to look him in the eye. Taking my glove off, I slowly raised my middle finger in a different gesture this time. I was no longer sorry, I was angry! Eventually the lights changed to green and he screeched round behind me, overtook and sped off.

*I later reflected on the incident and here's my explanation of what led to my anger:*

- ANGER** I expressed my anger via a rude gesture *(which was very controlled on my part as I wanted to.....well lets not go there!)* I did swear but not out of my window, just in my car, to myself.
- HURT** So what had he done that had hurt me? Well, having acknowledged that I had made mistake driving into the yellow box, I had attempted to apologise by gesturing and mouthing "I'm so sorry".  
*He hurt me by ignoring my apology and continuing to rant and honk, drawing attention to my "mistake".*
- NEED** I *needed* him to recognise that I had made a mistake and was attempting to apologise to him. I *needed* him to acknowledge that. I *needed* him to be civil and understand that people make mistakes. *None of these needs were being met.*
- FEAR** Ridiculous as this may sound now, *I was afraid people were looking at the situation and thinking "stupid woman driver".* Yes, it was that simple.

*I also thought about things from the other driver's perspective (lets call him George). I didn't know why he was "raging", honking and screaming like a banshee. So, for a bit of fun I decided to try to unpack his anger to see what might have been going on for him to cause such rage. Here goes! I hope you can appreciate the humour.*

- ANGER** Well I've already described how that showed up. *Loud and aggressive.*
- HURT** Maybe George felt hurt that I had taken away his legal right to turn onto that road. *(Or maybe hurt that I had done this in front of his son and now he would have to show him how to treat women drivers who'd clearly made a mistake.....I'm sticking with that btw!)*
- NEED** Maybe George needed to be somewhere at a certain time *(maybe George should have left a bit earlier...just saying!)* and maybe he needed me to respect the highway code - I'm sure he must follow it to the letter *(although he did speed off rather quickly in a 30 mph zone).*
- FEAR** Maybe he was afraid he would miss the train! *(Again, time management George!)* I think it more likely that he feared my blocking him would make him look less masculine in front of his son *(hence the need for the manly honking and screaming which set a great example for his son...NOT!)*

*Its healthy to laugh about situations once they're over. But seriously, the important thing is to become more self-aware. Get to a point where you can identify where your anger or frustration is coming from, which will lead to more considered reactions moving forward".*

The following **exercise** can be very enlightening. Give it a try.

1. Describe a recent situation where you became **ANGRY**.

2. There is usually a layer of **HURT** underneath the anger. In your situation, what could have caused you to feel hurt?

3. Beneath hurt there is often a **NEED** that's not being met. In this situation what need of yours was not being met?

4. Underneath hurt and need we often find **FEAR**. In this situation what could you have been fearful or scared of?

*"It's a lot easier to be angry with someone than it is to tell them you're hurt."*

**LIZ PICHON,**  
Author of the Tom Gates books



*"Holding onto anger is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die."*

**BUDDHA**