
FireWorks Journal v.2

A short course on anger management in adult-child relationships

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Website: <http://www.ksu.edu/wwparent/courses/fireworks/>



How to use this journal

This Journal is meant to be used as part of *FireWorks: Anger management in adult-child relationships* found at <http://www.ksu.edu/wwp/parent/courses/fireworks/>.

Anger is a part of every person's humanity. The course is intended for:

- A general audience from adolescence through adulthood
- Individuals struggling with anger management
- Professionals who work with families (especially those supervising those taking the course)

Activities

As you become involved in reading the course, you will occasionally arrive at a page that involves a activity for your *Journal*. The journal entry follows the alert icon:



Bookmark where you are at in the course and complete this *Journal* assignment. When finished with the activity, continue where you left off at the online course.

This *Journal* is for your use. You will not submit it as proof of participation and no one will ask you to reveal what you wrote. Each activity is an important part of your personal learning experience. Keep your *Journal* in a safe location so you can return and reexamine in the future. For example, you might want to retake the course in the future to refresh your learning. As you do, you might want to review what you originally wrote in the *Journal*. Your *Journal* entries can become a permanent record of what you have learned.

If you are taking the course as part of a course mandate

I am glad you found the course. You take *FireWorks* anonymously. There is no way for me to track your involvement. If you need proof of participation, contact someone **suitable** to the courts who would supervise your involvement and then provide written testimony of your completion. This person might be a member of the clergy, a parent educator, a social worker, a counselor, or a family life educator. I would encourage this professional to take the course to learn about the core principles and skills underlying anger management. If this person has any questions for me, I would be happy to respond by email.

The course is not exclusively focused on those taking it as part of a course mandate. Learning about anger and putting anger to work effectively is a challenge for all of us. Even so, as I wrote *FireWorks* I envisioned someone who is struggling to control anger and who might even feel angry about taking the course. The conversational format is informal and accepting. Read the comments in the margins from those who have taken the course.

Put your heart and soul into meeting the challenge of anger. With more than 200 conversational frames (i.e., web pages) there is a lot of material in the course. Each frame is very short.

If you are *not* a parent

All of us have to face the issue of understanding and managing anger. Anger is, after all, a part of our humanity.

I think you will find most of what is in the *Journal* and the course useful. The majority of activities in the *Journal* are not focused on parenting.

If you are a professional

There are at least two possible uses of *FireWorks* for professionals. First, taking the course could prepare you to teach a general audience about anger. If you need handouts, the course was converted to a “PLUS” program for *Basic Parenting*, which includes a series of low-reading-level one-page handouts. You can read about and order this material at <http://www.k-state.edu/wparent/programs/anger/>. You can order this program from <http://www.k-state.edu/wparent/programs/basic/order.htm>. You do not have to have the *Foundations* program to use any PLUS program.

Second, taking the course would prepare you to supervise someone who is taking the course as part of a court mandate. I suggest meeting weekly with the student to discuss the principles or skills they have covered. You might also talk about their journal entries. Please do not expect students to submit the journal to you as proof. Their work in the journal is for their eyes only. Even so, you are free to discuss any of the entries. If you need a certification of involvement that you can sign and submit to the courts, let me know at my email address (casmith@ksu.edu), give me your local professional address, and I will mail you one at no cost to you.

If you are simply curious

You may have found the course on a web search or from a referral by friend. If you are curious about anger, its impact and management there is much in the course that will illuminate the challenges of anger. Since anger is an important part of all of our lives, learning about anger is a part of self-discovery.

If you are a student

You might be taking this as part of a high school or college course. As you read the material and complete assignments keep parents who are struggling with anger in mind. Consider your experiences growing up and the challenges your parents may have had to face. You may discuss the principles, skills, or journal assignments in your classroom.

If you are taking the course at K-State Online for three graduate or undergraduate credits, you will receive instructions for participating in a threaded discussion forum as well as the course credit website.

#1 Anger associations

Establishing a point of beginning

Take out your journal (or a blank sheet of paper) and have a watch or clock nearby. Write the word "anger" at the top of a page and list it as Journal Entry #1. Time yourself. In one minute write every word that comes to your mind when you think of anger. Write as fast as you can and try not to stop. If you run out of words to say, pause and relax and wait for something else to come to mind. When you have finished your list, then click on the first principle: Anger has a "bad" reputation.

Words when I think of anger

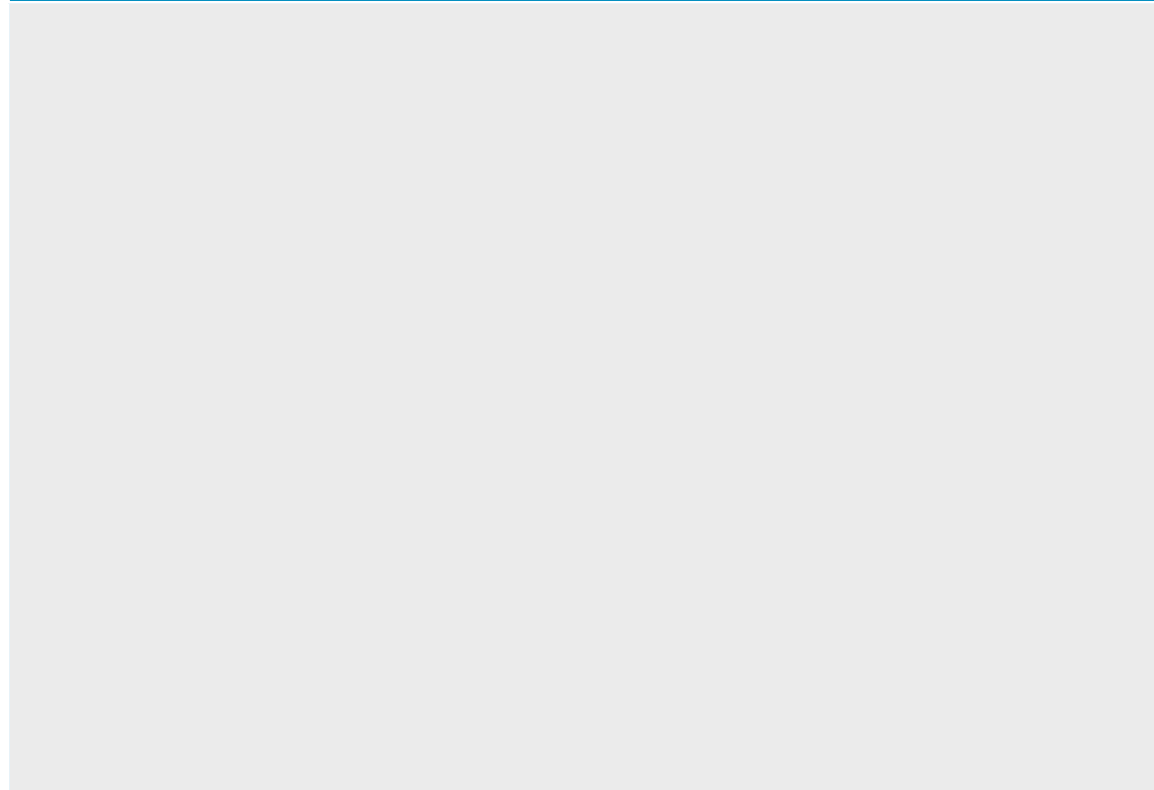


#2 Definition of anger

Focusing on what anger means

Define anger in your journal. What does it mean to be "angry"? Write the first ideas that come to your mind. When you have a definition go to the next page on the website.

What does anger mean? Define it as clearly as you can.



#3 An angry time

Describing what happened

Think of a time when you became angry. Write it down in your journal. What was unjust? What was the threat? Where was the danger, the challenge to your well-being or power?

When I became angry

The source of the danger or challenge

#4 Anger to fear

Their evolving relationship

In the first column, you feel angry in response to an event. What might happen for that feeling to turn to fear in that circumstance? Identify two more situations that could start with anger and then shift to fear.

Anger	Fear
1 Child spitting in your face	
2 A stranger bumps into you	
3	
4	

Examine the two columns once again and notice how our minds, how we interpret a situation, can cause our emotion to change.

#5 The anger intensity scale

The evolution of anger

In your journal, draw a horizontal line. At one end, put very mild irritation, at the other, extreme rage. Write in various situations that would trigger anger at different points on this continuum. So for example, where would you put:

- A. Hitting your own finger while hammering a nail to a wall
- B. Your child swears at you
- C. Your child puts a big scratch on your car
- D. Your child hits another child

mild
irritation

extreme
rage

Can you identify other situations that you could distribute along this continuum?

Other people are likely to arrange these and other circumstances differently on their scale.

#6 Hate: The ultimate anger?

The bitter hand of anger

Can you recall "hating" someone or something? If you do, write in your journal, "I hate (or hated)...because..."

I hate (or hated)

because....

Before you continue, think for a moment about anger and hate. Is hate associated with rage? Can hate ever be good?

#7 Hate to anger

Peeling the emotional onion skin

Go back to your previous journal entry. If you could recall a hate, try to find the anger that hate buried. Rewrite the statement, substituting anger. "I feel (or felt) angry with _____ because _____." Now peel the onion skin to find fear that might be there. "I feel (or felt) afraid with _____ because _____."

I feel (or felt) *angry* with

because....

I feel (or felt) *afraid* with

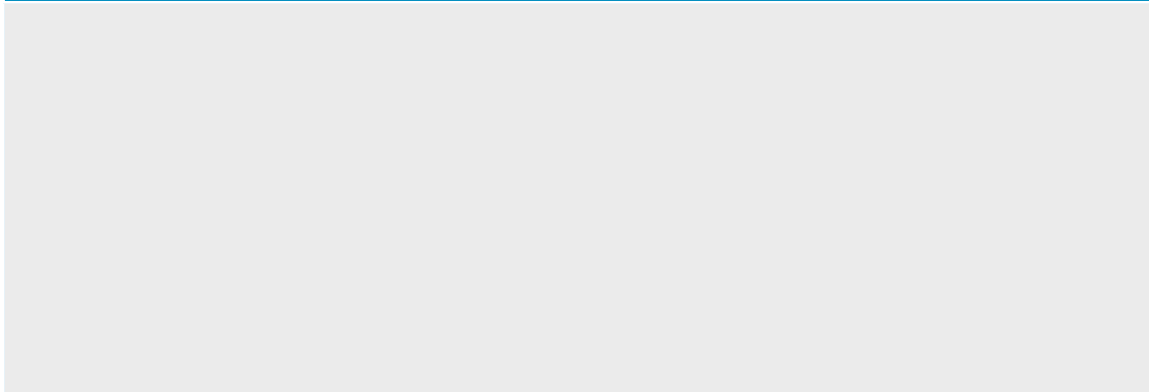
because....

#8 Anger positives

Finding the purpose of the human heart

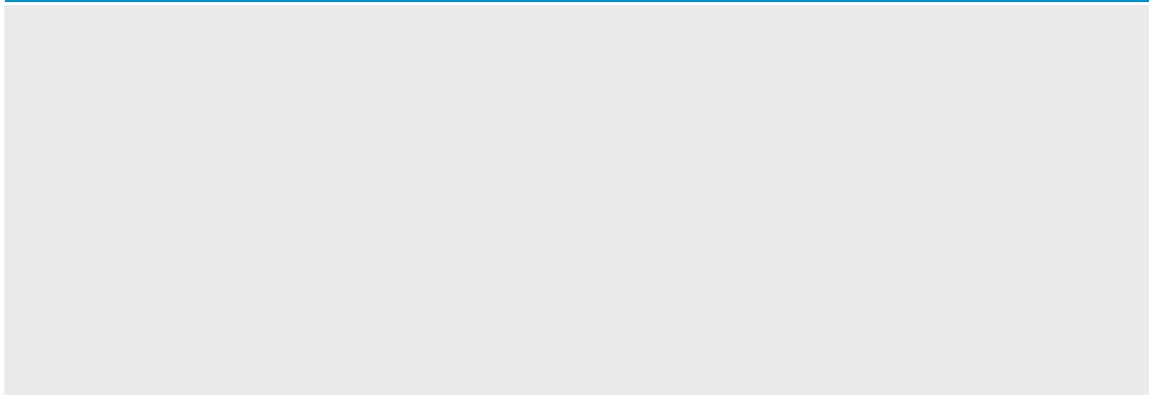
Take out your journal. Make a list of reasons why you think anger could be a positive emotion. Don't worry if you cannot think of anything. Just give it a try.

Possible anger positives



Can you imagine any situation in which anger could be helpful?

Anger could be helpful when....



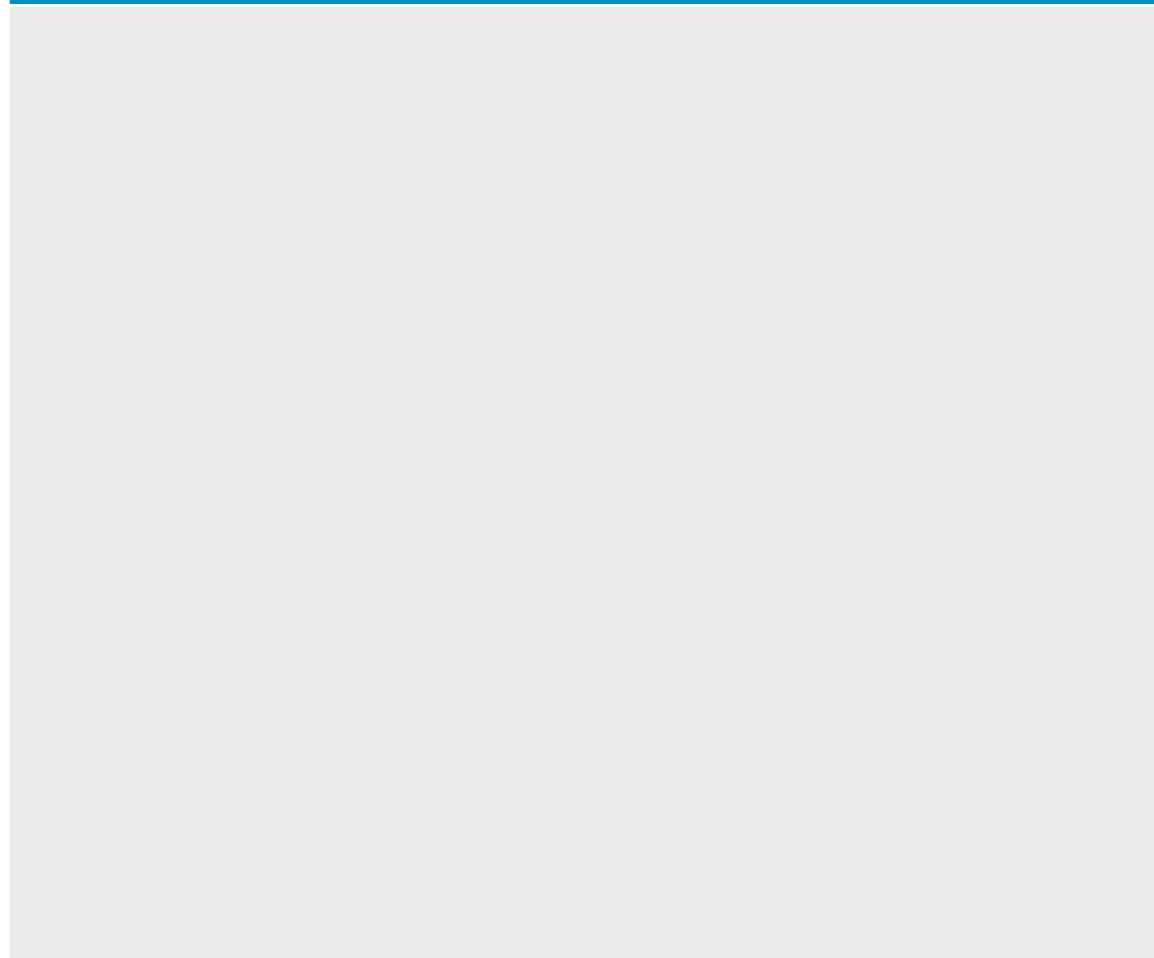
Continue the course when you are finished sketching some of your ideas.

#9 Anger as support

Being thankful for anger

Can you recall a time in your childhood when your parent's anger was something they felt on your behalf (instead of you as an object of that anger)? If you have no recollection of such an event, then can you imagine a situation in which this might be true? Before continuing, record your example in your journal.

A time when anger was (or could have been) a form of support

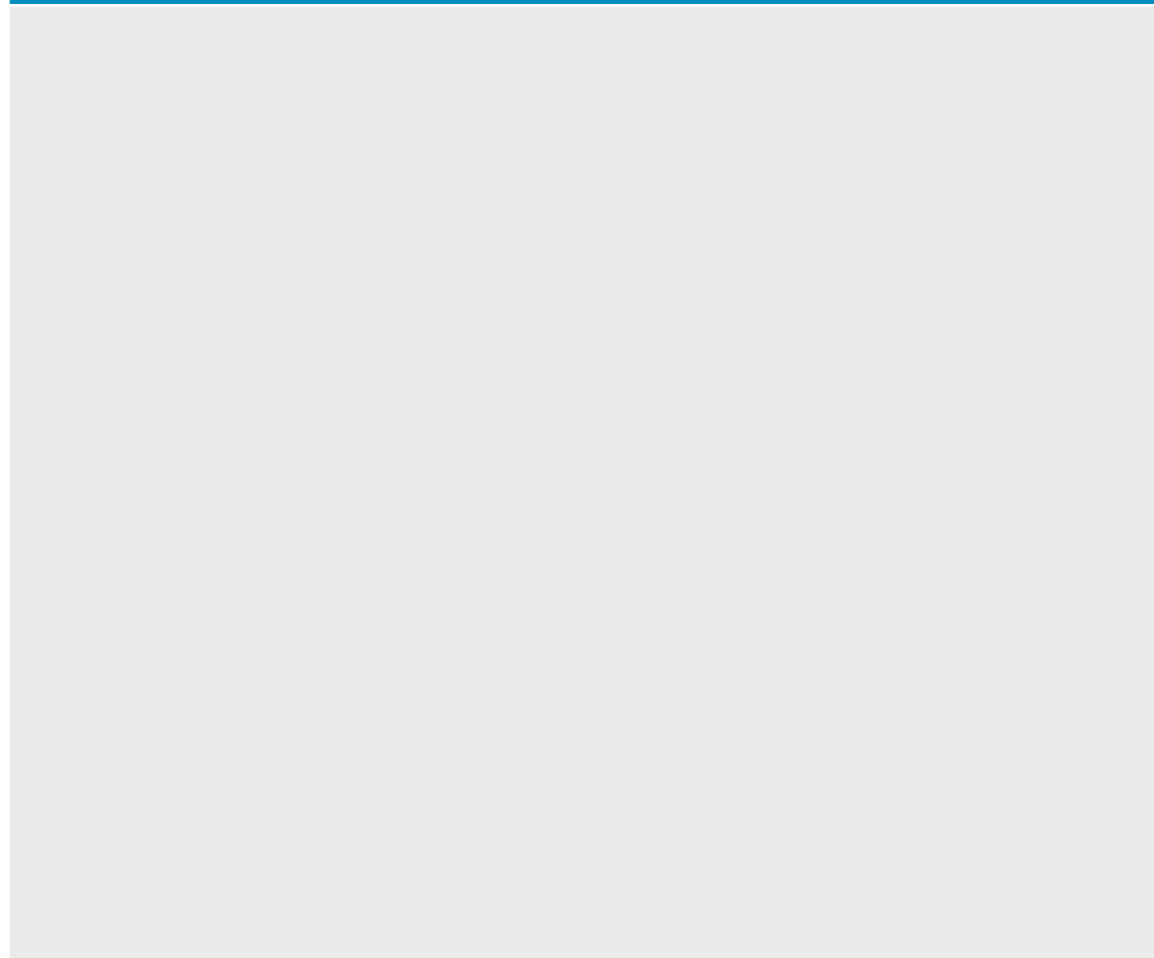


#10 Anger's impact on my body

The cost of anger

Consider how your body reacts to anger. What system is the most likely to be affected when you are angry, especially if you remain angry over time? Make a list in your journal of the physical reactions you have to anger.

How anger affects me physically



#11 Negative outcomes

The destructive path

Each of these feelings can have positive value. What destructive forms of behavior can follow if they become unmanageable and extreme?

	Destructive forms of emotion
Fear	
Sadness	
Anger	

#12 Emotion risks

The dark consequences

What risks are associated with each of these behaviors? Write down what could happen next for each one.

	Risks of extreme emotions
Panic	
Depression	
Rage	

#13 Personal responsibility

Learning about myself

If a man is accused of harming a child while in a rage, could he use an "emotionally highjacked defense"? Could he blame his brain? What do you think? Record your response in your journal. For example, if a man is accused of harming a child while in a rage, could he use an "emotionally highjacked defense"? Could he blame his brain? What do you think? Keep in mind that we are not always in control of *how* we feel. But we have the responsibility for how we *act* on those feelings.

Are we responsible for how we react to anger?

Yes

No

Explain your response

#14 Anger memories

Connecting past to present

If you are willing to consider them, think back to your earliest memories of another person's anger. What happened and how did you feel? Describe your earliest memories. Are there any connections between these early experiences and your experience of anger now? If you are not comfortable doing this now, set this activity aside and return later if you want.

Early memories of anger

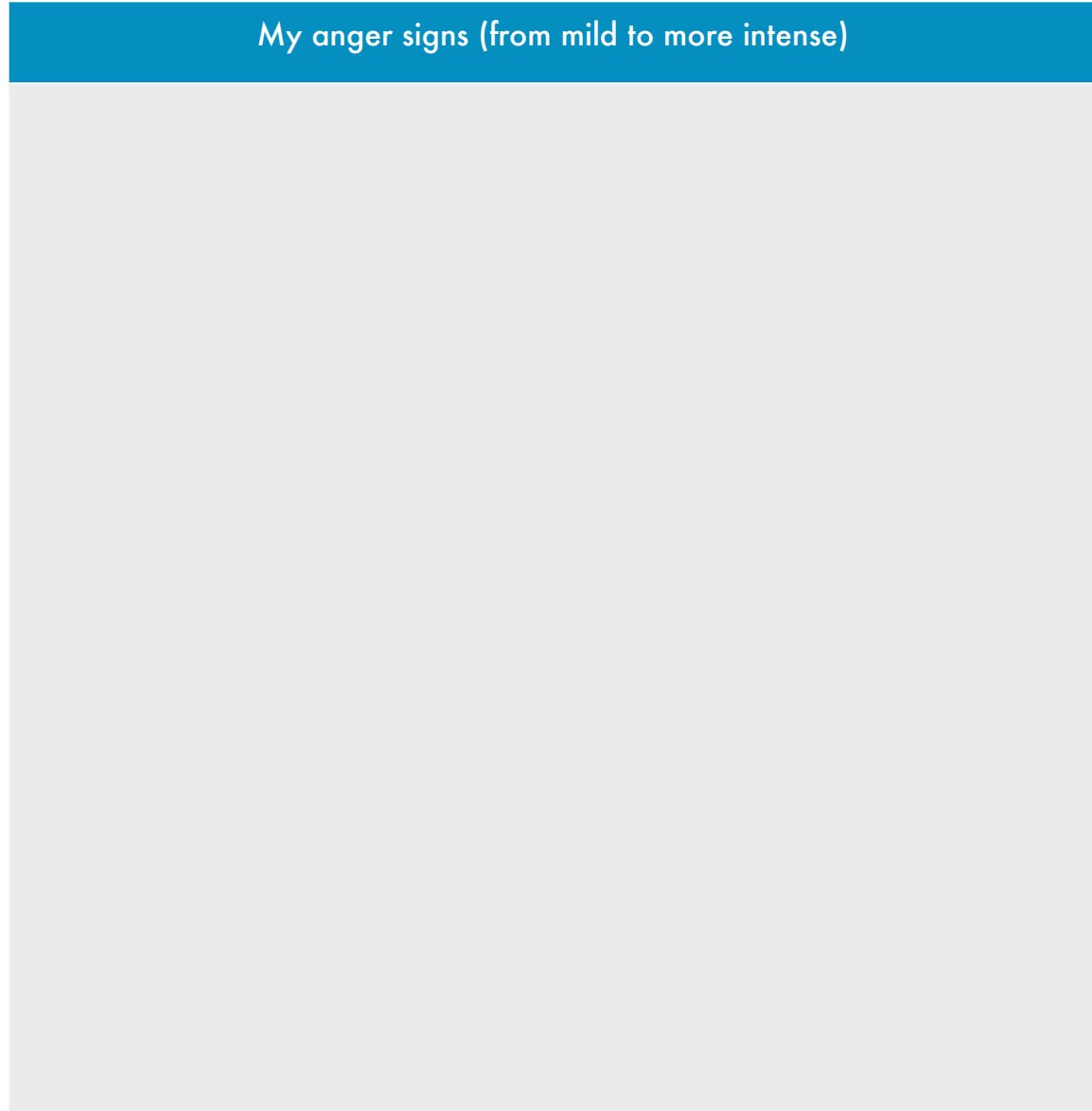
The past and its impact on me now

#15 My anger signs

Taking a look at myself

Identify what happens to your body when you feel anger. Start with signs of low-level irritation, and then increase to more intense forms of anger. Identify as many physical reactions as you can to your experience of anger. Write them down.

My anger signs (from mild to more intense)

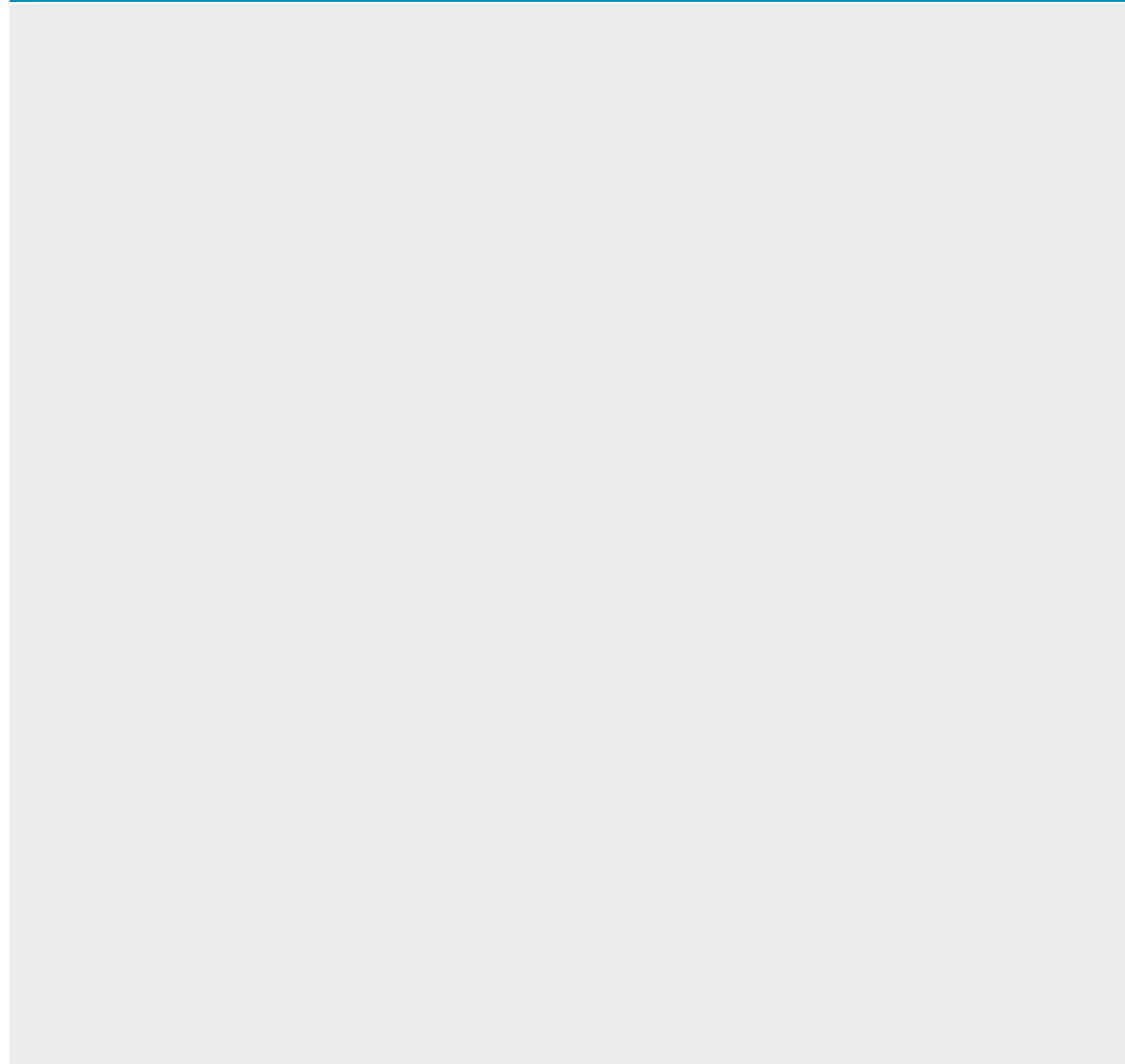


#16 Anger occasions

Taking a snapshot in time

Look over the entry you made for Journal Entry #3, An Angry Time. Generate a list of other occasions when you are angry. Consider the time. Is there a time of day when you are more likely to feel angry? We know, for example, that fatigue can lower our frustration for tolerance. Knowing that you feel most angry with your children right after work is important information you can use to manage the anger.

Times when I get angry



#17 Rating anger intensity

Taking the anger thermometer

For each of the following situations, rate the intensity of how you would react from 0 (No anger at all) to 100 (furious rage). Other than a zero rating, no rating should be the same for more than one situation. Keywords for each circumstance are in ().

- ___ 1. Your five-year-old child accidentally spills milk. (milk)
- ___ 2. Your nine-year-old child forgets his homework and you have to bring it to his school. (homework)
- ___ 3. Your nine-year-old child takes money from your wallet without your permission. (money)
- ___ 4. Your eleven-year-old child swears at you during an argument. (swearing)
- ___ 5. Your seven-year-old child slaps his five-year-old brother in the face. (slaps)
- ___ 6. Your ten-year-old child spits in your face during an argument. (spits)
- ___ 7. You see your six-year-old child bullied by an eight-year-old on a park playground. (bully)

#18 Restating false ideas s9

Recasting irrational thoughts

Restate each of the following false ideas we might tell ourselves so the idea is more rational and positive.

False idea	Rational idea
My child has to be perfect	
Bad things should not happen to me	
Others always have to keep my best interests in mind	
I can't change	
All anger is bad	
I am a weak person	

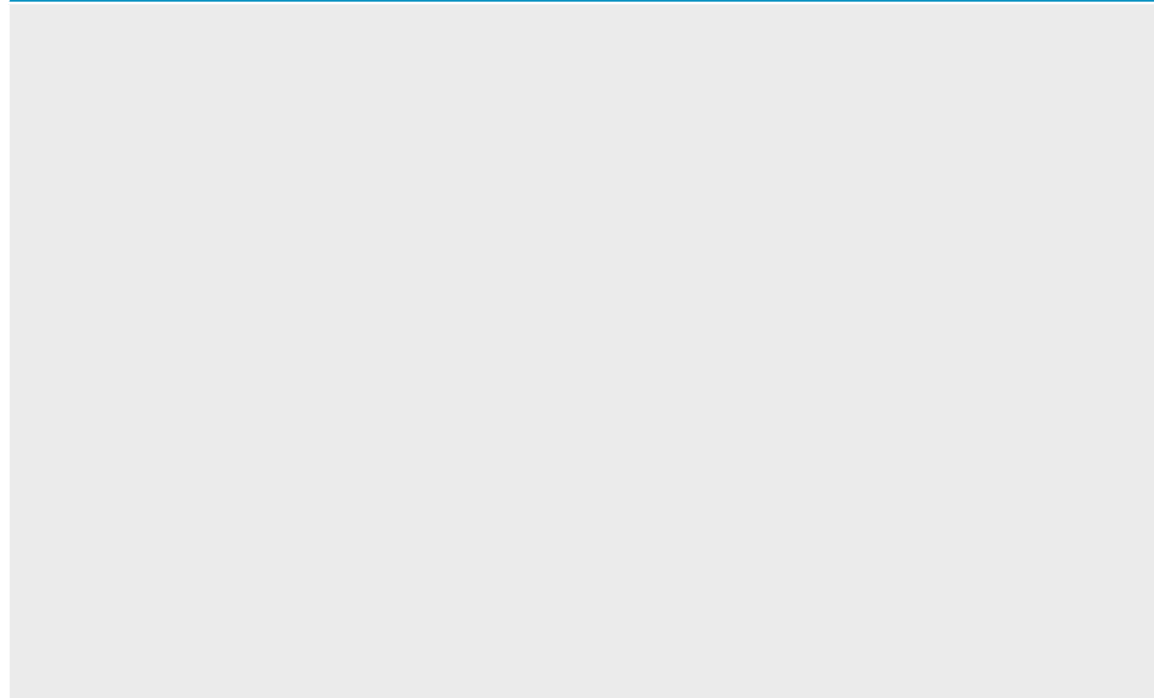
#19 Dropping the ball s12

Taking control of myself

Releasing physical tension is often paired with taking a breath of life. To illustrate, take a small object that fits comfortably in your hand and a container that will hold it, e.g., a wadded up piece of paper and a bowl. Hold the object in your hand over the container. Then tell yourself, "Tense!" Grip the object as strongly as you can. Then after a moment, tell yourself, "Release!" Open and relax your hand and let the object fall into the bowl. Your mind is exercising control over your muscles. Try this several times. Close your eyes and focus on the actual tension in your hand and the release when you let go. Try to achieve a total release, a total relaxation in your hand.

As you engage in this holding and releasing be aware of your breathing. Bring slow and deep breathing into synch with your tension releasing. Record your observations in your journal. What relevance does this activity have for your life?

My observations of releasing tension



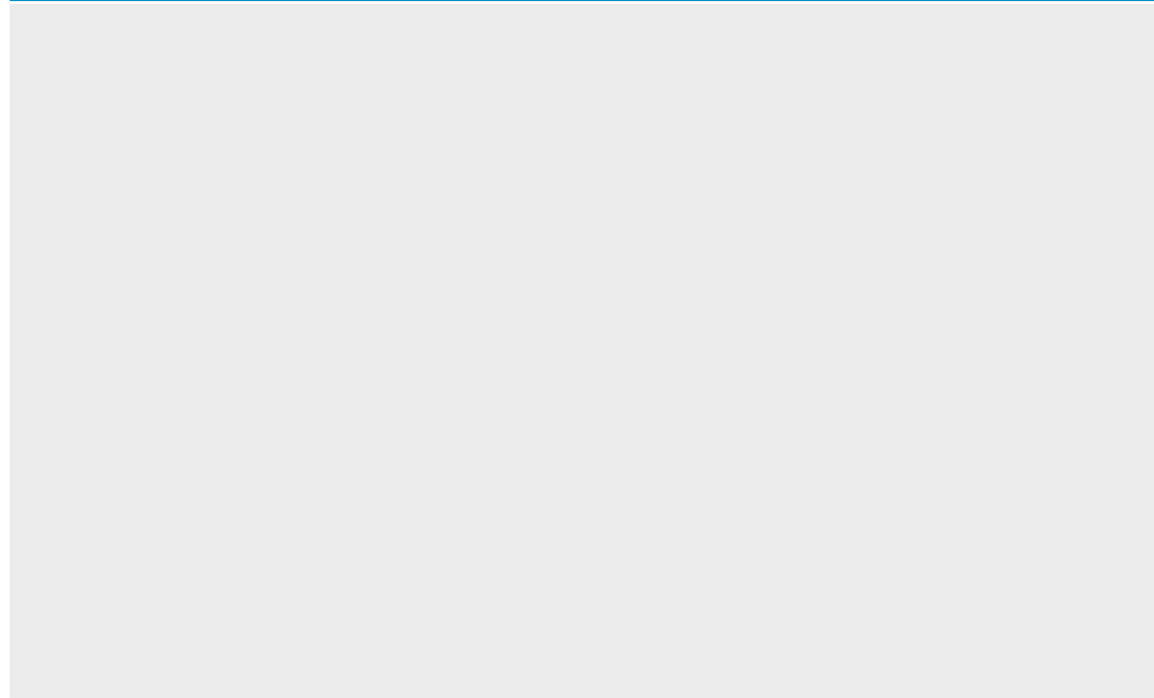
#20 Letting go 12-1

Search and release

Sit comfortably in a chair. Close your eyes and conduct a tension check throughout your body. Start with your feet and move up. If you feel any tension, try the "Tense-Release" combo with the muscle group. When you release, let all the tension in the muscle go. Do the combo several times, letting more tension go each time. If you have intrusive thoughts like "This sure is stupid" or "I'm not getting anywhere with this," let the thoughts float by and return to the focus on your body. Pay particular attention to your neck, jaw, and face, areas often affected by tension. Be aware of your breathing while you do this.

Record your observations in your journal.

My observations of letting go



#21 Make a direct expression of emotion 16-4

Making language real

Write each of the following statements in your journal. Then change each one to be a more direct expression of emotion.

Indirect expression of emotion	Direct express of emotion
Look at what you did! You broke your new toy! You MAKE ME SO MAD!	
You are so irritating when you chew with your mouth open!	
Stop your nagging! You are embarrassing me!	
Don't use that language with me! I feel that you should treat me with more respect!	
What are you doing riding that bike so fast! I've told you before to slow down!	

Once you have each statement rewritten, go the next frame.

#22 Turning a problem into a partnership s18

Taking a different perspective

Consider this example from the course:

A child has a temper tantrum in a store when you refuse to buy her a toy. Onlookers stare at you as though you must have committed some horrible act of child abuse. You are in a rush to get home and now you have a toddler going ballistic in a toy store. You react with embarrassment and anger to the tirade.

Before continuing, find something in common you hold with the toddler. Look at the situation through the eyes of the child. What is the child's experience? How is it similar to your own? Try to convert the conflict into a partnership.

The child's experience

What we might have in common

#23 Teenager and party ^{s19}

Avoiding emotional traps

Your fifteen-year-old daughter wants to go to a party where alcohol is being served. You won't let her go, and she throws a fit and says some cruel things to you. You can feel your anger bone being tickled, but respond to show understanding. Identify what you might say in response to restate what you hear and see.

The teenager's experience

What you might say to show you understand

#24 Standing my ground s21

Using anger to stand firm (but reasonable)

How could you use your anger to stand your ground with the child who continues to purposefully belch while you are standing in line? Make an entry in your journal, title it the belching boy, and describe how you might use your anger to stand your ground.

What I would do to “stand my ground”

#25 Offering a conciliation s22

Considering the other person

In your journal, record the key words for how you feel in each of the following circumstances:

1. Your two preschoolers are teasing and shoving each other during a long car trip. (trip)
2. Your spouse is angry with you because you don't want to go see the movie she (or he) wants to see. (movie)
3. Your teenager is angry because you won't buy him a music CD he wants for his birthday (music)

What reasonable conciliatory gesture could you offer in each of the situations?

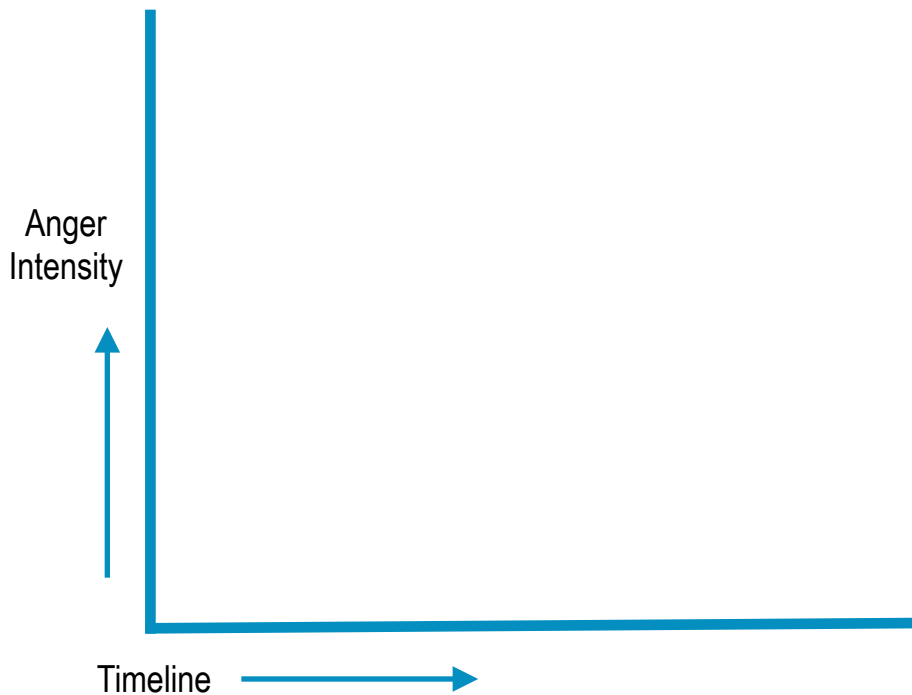
	Key words for how you feel	Conciliatory gesture you could make
Trip		
Movie		
Music		

#26 Graphing an anger episode 26-1

The surge and flow of anger

Think back to your most recent experience of anger.

The vertical line in the graphic below measures anger intensity (low at the bottom) during the experience and the horizontal line is a measurement of time from the beginning and end of the experience.



Now draw a third line (possibly curved) inside the graph showing how your anger increased or decreased in intensity over time. Then draw an “x” on this line to indicate the moment along the timeline where you acted. Then continue the course.

#27 Words for anger s29

Revealing how we feel

Imagine two different experiences: one when you are afraid and another when you are angry. For each of these two emotions, how would you describe your feelings directly or through metaphor, or through the action you feel like doing?

Direct means using a word that is very similar to anger or is a synonym for anger. Write a few words in the row other than anger that could be used to alert the other person how you feel.

Metaphor is a "feel like a" expression. You compare your anger to something else. In this row, write a couple of statements that begin with "I feel like a _____."

Action means talking about the action the feeling urges you to do. If the action is inappropriate, make sure you say so. You are not saying you are going to do something, only that you *feel like* doing something. In this row, write a couple of statements that begin with "I feel like _____" and name the action.

Fear	
Direct statement "I feel..."	
Metaphor "I feel like a"	
Action "I feel like [action]...."	
Anger	
Direct statement "I feel..."	
Metaphor "I feel like a"	
Action "I feel like [action]...."	

Final comments

Reflecting on the experience

Congratulations on finishing the FireWorks course. Your comments are important to me as I reflect on the impact of the course and plan on its revisions. The link to the course evaluation is in one of the final pages of the course. Or once you have finished the course you can go directly to <https://online.ksu.edu/Survey/take/takeSurvey.do?offeringId=160228>. An easier link to the same location is <http://tinyurl.com/28hj2uq>. Thanks!