

Anger Management.

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Introduction.

Every theorist who has sought to offer a comprehensive psychological or philosophical explanation of human behaviour has put forward a theory in relation to emotion. Anger as it is an emotion and one that leads to many social difficulties has had its fair share of attention. The suggested ways of working to be found within this package are driven by theory. It is important that the practitioners intending to work in the ways suggested, understand the theoretical basis for the content. Primarily because this can only be a starter pack. It is not intended to be all encompassing but is intended to give a skilled teacher the tools to get started on their work with children who appear to have, “uncontrollable tempers”. Please note I bite my tongue when writing that phrase. As the reader progresses through this introduction I hope that it will become clear that what we are dealing with is not an uncontrollable “outburst” of anger but a child who has organised his/her cognitive map with relation to anger somewhat differently to the expectations of the teachers\school\greater society. If the practitioner understands the theory then there is a basis for development. Thus when difficulties arise within the practitioner’s context, knowledge of the theory will enable the creative generation of pragmatic and practical solutions, relevant to the context.

Prior to an explanation of the theory driving this pack I would like to take a few moments to deconstruct the notion of “outbursts” of temper. This phrase is linked to a cathartic notion of anger, for which we must thank Freud and others. The general idea being that within all humans is a continuous welling up of anger, rather in the manner of a dripping tap. This is an innate phenomenon, present within all humans. After a while the pressure builds up and out pops a fit of temper. Within this theory there are usually ways to release the build up to stop an outburst of anger, these usually revolve around sport and exercise. The theory of social constructionism, which is the theoretical driving force behind this approach, could not be more different. Rather than attributing a totally physiological origin to anger a contextual/psychological/physiological explanation is offered.

Things may become clearer if I describe a series of experiments undertaken by Schacter and Singer between 1962 and 1979. Subjects were injected with epinephrine, which is a drug that induces the following physiological responses: flushing of the face, tremors, and increased heart beat and increased perspiration. Some of the subjects were told what they were injected with and the effects it would have.

Others were not. All the subjects were then asked to fill in a questionnaire in a waiting room. There was another subject in the waiting room who was also filling out a questionnaire. However, this subject was a stooge. In all cases the stooge either acted in an aggressive fashion, complaining at the lengthy wait, or acted in a euphoric fashion. The subjects who were not told about the effects of the drug tended to follow the behaviour pattern of the stooge. Whereas the subjects who knew what effect the drug was having upon them did not. Schacter and Singer's explanation for this was that the subjects who did not know that they were feeling flushed etc. due to the drug, concluded that they were feeling as they were because they were either angry or euphoric. Whereas, the subjects that knew that they were feeling the effects of the drug did not then attribute their physiological state to the cues being given by the stooge. Hence they let him get on with it without joining in.

In essence the argument is that the body releases certain chemicals, which the mind detects and then attributes an emotional state, which depends upon the context. Thus, emotion is more to do with social constructions and psychology than physiology.

So what has all this got to do with children who lose their temper in school? To discover this we must first look at the groups children belong to and the cultures they are immersed in. There is the culture of their family and subcultures within the family. There is the culture of the street corner and their friends. There is the culture of the immediate area. Then there is the culture of the school and teachers and greater society. The question is where do the children's norms come from? We know as teachers that being called names is a foolish irrelevance that should be ignored, how do we know that? However, out on the estate an insult to one's Mother may well warrant a violent physical response. Whose culture is right? The question really should be whose culture is in charge? The culture of United Kingdom 1997 greater society says that name-calling is not serious, whereas violence is. Teachers are successful people within greater society; would/could they be so without adopting the norms of greater society? It is part of a teacher's job to teach children about the norms of greater society. What schools are doing is helping children cope with the expectations of greater society. I hope that you are beginning to realise that anger management is a murky business. What you are essentially doing is teaching children to reject certain aspects of the cultural influences that they are subject to and take on board the norms of greater society. Do we mean middle England? Personally, I can live with this. I think that children are ultimately

happier if they are taught to fit in with the majority. This is not to say that I think one culture is better than another that is a very dangerous road to go down. I do think that the pragmatic approach is probably the best shot these kids will have within the prevailing norms most of us accept.

Take for instance a child coming from Sicily to live in the part of inner London where I used to work, let us say that he speaks excellent English. I would bet my house against a bottle of Scotch that within a week someone will have “Cussed his Mum”. In Sicily the cultural norm for an insult such as this usually involves violent death and shotguns. Therefore people don’t do it. What are we to do with this boy? We had better teach him some new norms before he gets to find out where to buy a shotgun. What is the difference between teaching him some new norms and saying that the host culture is better than his indigenous culture? Personally I would rather live in a culture where no one insulted my Mum. On the other hand I don’t really think that insulting one’s Mother warrants a violent response, but then I would say that wouldn’t I. Likewise, a street wise youngster who is subject to someone cussing his mother on the estate will know what the credible and essential response is to this slight in the specific context he finds himself in. The expected response is in all probability very different to the one expected by his/her teachers and society in general within the context of school.

In summary, the theoretical basis for the work that will be detailed in this pack is a tame version of social constructionism. Tame social constructionists see people as being entities that generate chemical responses to situations. The chemical is interpreted by the brain in accordance with the context. People pick up their norms from a large number of groups. Sometimes children get confused and bring norms from outside school into school. Being as school is in charge their behaviour is then seen as inappropriate, which it is for the context. This pack contains details of how children who are bringing outside norms into school can be taught the norms of the school.

A final note, clearly there are children who may indeed be having temper outbursts because they are subject to a huge array of problems for which they see no solution. For these children the cathartic model may have more relevance. This programme is not directed at them, although many of the activities may help. The generation of an array of different responses to complex situations will help in their problem solving. The prediction of consequence may help them to choose better contexts in which to release pent up frustration.

Who should run this programme?

Unlike the Listening Skills Programme and the Social Skills Programme, which can be run by ancillary helpers, I would suggest that only a qualified teacher be encouraged to undertake this type of work. However, it should be noted that some ancillary helpers are of extraordinary quality. If the Head Teacher feels the school is blessed in this way then it may be permissible for an unqualified person to undertake this type of work.

Who Would Benefit.

Children who present acts associated with anger within the school context on a regular enough basis for there to be cause for concern.

Children who appear to under react to difficult social situations.

How is This Programme Delivered?

In a group. A group can be one child and one adult. If you think a child may find these activities particularly difficult at first, then run your groups with just one child. Include other children as the skills of the most needy child develop. What is important is that you run the sessions as a group, even if there is only one child present. What I have found with particularly needy children is that by running the activities with them in a one to one they become familiar and quite expert at the activities. Once they have achieved a good level of competence they feel more inclined to operate in a group. I have never been clear as to why this should be. I would suggest that to some extent the one to one sessions have given them the attention they need. As they feel fulfilled in this way they begin to feel a need for acclaim from peers which, as they are expert at the group activities they are able to achieve within the group. The whys and wherefores of why it works like this is largely irrelevant, it works so don't worry about how and why.

What Resources Will be Needed?

To run two group work sessions per week a total of two hours of teacher time will be required which includes preparation time. A room where the sessions will not be disturbed will need to be available for these sessions. The sessions should be seen as important work by the management of the school.

I would recommend that all the school staff are included in a training session. This would usually take the form of a brief outline of the theoretical basis of the groups, followed by running a sample group with the staff. This is important because it will allow all staff to experience something of what the children are experiencing. It will also allow them to be in a position to make referrals to the group and be better able to describe the work of the group when discussing the referral with parents. Some of the activities do take children near to their limits, they may then be returning to class a little agitated on occasions. Teachers that have taken part in a group are more likely to be understanding if this happens.

Preparation.

Unless you have run groups such as the social skills and listening skills groups or some other type of group work I would not suggest you cut your teeth on anger management groups. As such the practitioner coming to these sessions should have some previous experience in the art of group work.

I would suggest that you begin the process by bonding the group together. Use games from the Social Skills and Listening Skills programmes, or other sources. Basically, get the children used to being in a group with each other. It is important that the children see the group as being formed from people who like and respect them, before the anger management training starts. This will not necessarily take long. Two or three sessions should be enough before you start to introduce the early games. This is something that you as a professional must judge. If you think one or more of the children in the group are not meshing then you can either remove the child and see them in a one to one group until they are ready for another go with other children present, or continue to try and bond the whole group together.

Session One

This group is a sample of the type of group you might run prior to starting the serious anger management training. The main focus of this group is trust and group bonding.

1. Introduction to group.
2. Ground rules.
3. One minute conversations.
4. My favourite page.
5. Blindfold walk.
6. The last time I felt.
7. Positive about session.

Session Two

In this session we take trust and bonding a step further.

1. Check in.
2. What we could do if.
3. Design a costume
4. I catch you and you catch me.
5. Positive about person on left.
6. Positive about self.

Session Three.

We begin to address anger, via some basic assertiveness training and with the start of their relaxation training.

1. Check in.
2. The last time I felt.
3. Take book back to shop.
4. Positive about person on left.
5. Positive about self.
6. Relaxation.

Session four

In this session we begin to unpack the cues that the children feel warrant an angry response.

1. Check in.
2. A trust game: walk or fall and catch.
3. The things that make me angry.
4. Brainstorm responses, predict consequences.
5. Role play / In the Bin
6. I feel great when.
7. Positive about self.
8. Positive about person I dislike.

Session Five.

In the next series of sessions we begin to assist the children in developing an understanding of their own cognitive map re offence and response.

1. Check in.
2. I made a choice!
3. Ten things that other people can do to me.
4. Sort in order.
5. Children choice.
6. The last time I was kind.

Session Six.

1. Check in.
2. I made a bad choice.
3. Ten things I can do to other people.
4. Sort in order.
5. Positive person on left.

Session Seven.

It all comes together in this session. You will probably need to run this session twice to get through the work.

1. Check in.
2. I shared.
3. What I would do if.
4. Firm handshake and greeting.
5. Positive about school.

Session Eight

As session seven

Session Nine.

You will need to run a few sessions now to support the children as they adjust their behaviour. This is a very uncertain time. By now you will be responding to the needs of the children when planning sessions. Make them fun but include check in, as this will enable the group to address any problems that arise. Now is the time to let the children play board games such as snakes and ladders or noughts and crosses. It important that they play the board games according to your rules of social behaviour. Sample support session below.

1. Check in (a problem arises).
2. Brain storm alternatives and predict consequences.
3. Role play the options.
4. Board games.
5. Positive about self.

Session Ten.

The end of term is a good time to begin to wind down the group. However, do not leave the children up in the air. They will have treasured this group and the support it has given them. It is essential that they feel it is still there for them. So wind down by increasing the time between groups. Two weeks, four weeks, six weeks and termly. You should also be reducing the time the group runs. You can run quite a fun session in ten minutes or so. I call these mini group sessions contact groups, because you are letting the children know that you are still interested and you do this by keeping in contact. A sample of a typical contact group can be seen below.

1. Check in.
2. Children's choice.
3. Remember when.
4. A positive game.
5. Handshakes.

How to play the games.

Introduction to group.

This should be an honest but gentle account of why the children are there. I usually tell them that we all find some things difficult. “I can’t spell, my daughter can’t ride a bike, you have trouble with your temper. “No big deal, lets get down and teach you how to get your temper under control”. I usually go around the group to see if anybody wants to stay as they are. I’ve never found a child that did. I genuinely believe that what is being offered to the children comes as a great relief. They know full well that things aren’t right but they don’t see a way out. This group will offer them a way out of a hole as well as giving them permission to stop digging.

Ground rules.

Most group work practitioners will start groups with a session on ground rules. This is best done if all the group members agree that rules are needed and the members generate the rules. The use of a flip chart is useful the agreed ground rules can then be pinned up each week that the group is running. To be honest, I don’t run this activity once groups are established as part of the school routine and culture. I think because the groups I ran in school were so popular and seen as a real privilege to be a member of, that stepping outside the limits rarely happened. However, I do think that it is an essential component when establishing the system within a school for the first time.

The type of ground rules would often include the following:

- We agree to take turns.
- Only one person to talk at one time.
- I can talk to other children about what I did in the group, but not what my friends in the group did.
- Agree to be on time, this may not apply, I usually pick up the children from class, this gives me a chance to take a quick look at their work and make positive noises about it. It also gives you a chance to say hello to past members, tussle their hair and heap praise on them for the quality of their work and aren’t they doing well. I have found that for some reason they like to know that I have thought about them outside school. So comments such as, “I was only telling my wife/daughter the other day how pleased I was with you”. Go down particularly well.

One-minute conversations.

This is rather like a party. The members of the group circulate in the room making conversation with each member of the group for a maximum of one minute. If the children are likely to find this difficult then ideas for things to talk about can be put on the flip chart.

My favourite page.

Tell the children that they have three minutes to choose a book, that they think looks interesting to them. Encourage the children to choose a number of books as they go along and then choose the best two/three at the thirty second warning, then the best one at the ten second warning. The children are then given two minutes to choose the best page in their book. Again encourage them to choose a number of pages as they go along and choose the best two/three at the twenty second warning and the best page at the ten second warning. You then give the children one minute to choose the best thing on the page they have chosen. Give them a warning about ten seconds before time is up. Then give the children thirty seconds to say what it is about the book that they found interesting. When the children are telling about their page they should be making eye contact with the rest of the group, speak clearly and confidently. This is really an assertiveness game. The group who are listening should be assertive in their listening, nodding and making eye contact.

Walking Blindfold.

This involves the children working in pairs. One is blindfolded, while the other leads their partner around the room/corridor. The leader holds the blindfolded pupil gently by the elbow and helps steer them as well as delivering a string of instructions and information about where they are, what is coming next and what is about to happen. This game helps to develop trust.

The Last Time I Felt.

To play this game you will need a set of cards with an emotion or feeling written on each. You can make your own or photocopy the materials from appendix 1 onto card and cut them up if you prefer. If you have non-readers, get the children to hold their cards toward the centre of the group. You can then give them the word by saying, "John would you tell us when you last felt Angry (or whatever is written on their card)." Begin this game by modelling it, "The last time I felt sad was when I broke a vase that my Mother had given me as a special present". Pass to someone else in the group.

Positive About Session.

The group leader begins by example and says one positive thing about the group session. For instance, "I really enjoyed the way the group took turns today". Pass over to your left/right and so on around the circle.

Check in:

This is simple but an essential component of any group that seeks to be supportive. Each member of the group takes their turn to report on their week. Instigate this by asking an age appropriate question such as, "Has anybody got any news" or "How have things been". With an anger management group this will become the core component of the groups work. This is the time when the children will tell you about the difficult situations they have been in during the week. If they don't you will no doubt be aware from your own observations or from other staff that there have been some difficulties. You can bring these up if the child doesn't. The way I tackle the problems that are discussed is to give the group a summary of the child's account of the event and ask if anyone can suggest how this situation could have been handled. The whole group is then immersed in a sea of words that will encourage the development of a more complex array of strategies for coping with situations. You may need to note down the alternative options down and then one by one ask the group to predict the outcome of each alternative, in its fullest sense. For instance, "What would be likely to happen if John told the teacher that Tom had spat at him?" "Tom would get in trouble, John would be allowed to go to the toilet and clean himself up, smaller children would see the best way to deal with things like that etc."

What We Could Do If.

This game is similar to the exploration of difficulties experienced by the children and detailed in "Check In". The only difference being that you offer the children hypothetical situations. For instance, "Just say that a boy hits you in the playground, what could you do?" Again note down the different options offered by the group. Explore the consequences for each option to the fullest extent, using a sentence like, "what would happen if you did that?" Get the children to role-play out one inappropriate reaction, such as hitting and role-play a couple of the better options offered. At the conclusion of each role-play ask how the actors felt and how the observers felt.

Design a Costume

This is quite a good way to get a group working together, with the consequent effects on the bonding of the group. Provide an array of materials, coloured paper, off cuts of cloth, what ever you have available really. Scrap projects are useful resources for this game. Make sure the children have a good supply of cellotape and ask them to design a costume. Allow them about twenty minutes. You will need to remain near enough to the group to monitor their interactions but far enough away that you do not see the final product. Naturally, when you are presented with the final costume you glow with pride and much praise is given. I have never insisted that the children draw out their designs, I usually just let them get on with it and I've never been let down yet.

I Catch You and You Catch Me.

This is a trust game. Meaning that you must trust the children to play it responsibly and the children must trust each other, which they do in turn. Put the children in pairs of approximately equal physical stature. Demonstrate the game by standing behind a volunteer, with your hands poised just behind his/her shoulders. Then ask the volunteer to keep their legs stiff and fall backwards. As they fall back you push them forwards again. Gradually increase the amount the children fall. It feels absolutely wonderful, particularly if you close your eyes.

Positive About Person on Left.

Model saying a positive comment to the person on your left, e.g., "John I really like your hair, shoes, smile" etc. Ask the children to do the same. They may find this difficult and need lots of encouragement.

Positive About Self.

Begin by modelling this and saying something positive about yourself. Maintain eye contact with the group whilst you are doing it. For instance, "I like myself because I try and be happy all the time". Pass to your left or right. At first the children will probably say something about liking their trainers. Let this go at first but slowly and gently push for something about them as people. I find saying something like, "Yes I like your trainers too, but just imagine you are in the bath, what would you like about yourself then." If you have a child that is reluctant I find the following approach useful. Say something like, "John is having trouble with this one, lets help him out and all say something positive about him". This will immerse John in a sea of positive language about himself and give him some ideas. If this still fails, I usually pick two of the positives that he has heard from the group and offer a choice. Something like, "OK John you have nice hair and a great smile which do you want to say". If that doesn't work leave the child for that week. They will think about it before the next group and say something next time the group meets. I've never known a child go two weeks without saying a positive about themselves.

Take book back to shop.

This is an assertiveness game. The scenario is that a book has been purchased from a shop and it has a page missing. The children take it in turns to be the customer taking the book back and to be the shopkeeper. There are three roles for the customer. Mr/Mrs Wimp (submissive), Mr/Mrs Angry (aggressive) and Mr/Mrs Strong (assertive). I usually let the children try Wimp and Angry and only model if they don't get it right. I always model Strong. After each role play ask the shopkeeper how s/he felt, ask the customer how s/he felt and ask the children who observed how they felt. Usually Mr/Mrs Wimp makes everybody feel like they don't want to change the book, whilst Mr/Mrs Angry gets everybody cross. The strong approach means that the customer comes away from the shop with a new book. Because, by being assertive, people want to help you. The important lesson here is the effect being angry has on other people and that there is a much better way.

Relaxation.

This is a very simple but powerful technique. I have used it to good effect with children as young as six but it is probably more effective with older children. The idea is to tense each part of the body, note the feeling of tension/tightness and then relax/go floppy. After about one month of regular practice a stimulus is needed. With adults a red dot is ordinarily put onto their watch upon seeing the dot they will check their body for tension. With older children the watch technique can and does work. With younger children they may need some form of mark on the board or perhaps a soft toy placed where they might tend to look regularly. The children would usually be sitting in a chair although I have found that some children rather like to practice this laying on beanbags. This is the form of words I tend to use.

Sit comfortably close your eyes and think of nothing.

Now make your hands into fists, go on really squeeze those fists. Feel that tight feeling,----- feel that tight feeling. ----- And now relax/go floppy. ----- Think of that lovely feeling of relaxation (or think of that lovely floppy feeling for younger children.)

Make your hands into tight fists again and bring your hands up to touch your shoulders. Feel that tight feeling along your arms. Feel the tight feeling and relax, think of that lovely feeling of relaxation (or think of that lovely floppy feeling.)

Now relax your arms, let them hang loosely by your side. Push your shoulders up and try and touch your ears. Go on really push upwards. Feel that tight feeling in your shoulders. Feel the tight feeling and relax, think of that lovely feeling of relaxation (or think of that lovely floppy feeling.)

This time scrunch up your face. Really scrunch up your face. Feel that tight feeling in you face and relax, think of that lovely feeling of relaxation (or think of that lovely floppy feeling).

Now make your tummy muscles tight go on really tighten those muscles. Feel that tight feeling. Feel the tight feeling and relax, think of that lovely feeling of relaxation (or think of that lovely floppy feeling.)

Push your tummy forward this time, make your back arch, feel the tight feeling all along your back, feel that tight feeling and relax, think of that wonderful feeling of relaxation.

Tighten the muscles in your legs, feel those muscles tightening, feel that tight feeling and relax. Feel that tight feeling along your arms. Feel the tight feeling and relax, think of that lovely feeling of relaxation (or think of that lovely floppy feeling.)

Now make your toes into fists, really scrunch up those toes. Feel that tight feeling. Feel the tight feeling and relax, think of that lovely feeling of relaxation (or think of that lovely floppy feeling.)

Take a deep breath hold that breath, feel that tight feeling in your lungs, feel the tight feeling now let the breath out slowly and feel all the tightness go away. Think of that lovely feeling of relaxation (or think of that lovely floppy feeling.)

Keep your eyes closed, we are going to check each part of your body to see if there is any tightness. Think of your hands and arms if there is any tightness just let go of it. Now check your shoulders neck and face. If you find any tightness just let go. Check your back and shoulders, your legs and feet. If you find any tension just let go.

You should now be feeling wonderful and relaxed/floppy. Just enjoy that wonderful feeling and when you feel ready open your eyes.

The things that make me angry.

This game is inextricably linked with Brainstorming Responses and Predicting consequences and role-play. This element involves the facilitator asking the children to tell the group one or two things that make them angry. They can be things that teachers do or things that children do. Keep a note of these. I usually use a note pad on my knee, as this keeps me within the group physically and I think psychologically, but you may prefer to use a flip chart or board.

Brainstorm Responses and predicting consequences.

From the list of things that make the children angry, choose one to being with. Ask the children what could you do if for example, “Kids push in front in the dinner Que.”. Keep a note of the responses. Hopefully you will get some aggressive ideas such as push them out or hit them, some assertive ideas such as asking them to go to the back of the Que. or telling a teacher and some submissive ones such as just letting them in and feeling angry with them. If not encourage them to come up with a range of ideas. It is important that the children list real behaviours and not just tell you what they know should be their reaction. This is important because I have found that working with live behaviours/language is far more powerful than made up scenarios. The following role play will allow them to experience the good feeling associated with behaving assertively/appropriately and the feelings aroused when reacting aggressively or submissively bur most importantly it will have allowed them to model new behaviours.

Role-play:

I use three or four clearly defined roles in this type of work. The person who has been wronged, the naughty one, the intervening adult if required and watchers who play a very involved role. Start by assigning roles. Then review the incident so the participants know what to do. This is only an extension of the type of games children play anyway. For instance you be X and I’ll be Y and then you do so and so etc. Let the role-play begin. At the conclusion, ask each of the four participating parties, how did X feel how did Y feel.

In the Bin:

For this activity the children need to be seated in a circle. You can if you wish place a real bin in the middle, but I usually use an imaginary one. Drawing on your list of things that make the children angry select one belonging to one of the children and ask them to call you that name. If for instance being told, "Your Mum is a slag" particularly offends Jimmy then ask Jimmy to say it to you. You will find that the children find this very difficult. I have always felt this was because they quite liked me. It is very important that the children and the facilitator have bonded before playing this game as it does take the children very near to the edges of being very angry at first. So if you find the children are not in the least reticent about calling you names you might like to consider if the group is ready for this activity. Once you have persuaded Jimmy to tell you that your Mum is a slag respond by talking the phrase out. For instance: "You don't know my Mum so you can't know. My Mum is not a slag she is a very nice person and I love her. What you're saying is a load of rubbish, in the bin! (Delivered with hand gestures to symbolise screwing up rubbish and throwing it into the bin)."

You may need to model this a few times until you feel the children are ready for their go. Ask for a volunteer. Remind the child that this is to help them and everybody in the group really likes them. If you are sure that the child will just about hold in there then the facilitator says to Jimmy, "Your Mum is a slag". Gently encourage Jimmy to talk the insult out and toss it in the bin. Once he has, clap, shake hands and say well done, the child must be made to feel secure loved and happy.

You will need to get the children familiar with talking out insults from the facilitator before taking the next step, which is to allow the children to insult each other. Once you have got them to this level the children will have come a very long way. So well done.

I feel great when:

This is a wind down game and is there to encourage positive thinking. The children may start with saying they feel great when their favourite football team scores a goal for instance. If they do make your response a model to follow. For instance, "I feel great when someone is rude to me in a supermarket and I keep my temper." The essence is to get the children to say they feel great when they have done something rather than when something is done to them, such as someone else scoring a goal, or there is a good show on television.

Positive about someone I dislike:

This is a real tough one for the children. If they find it too difficult you could always use the same routine as the something nice game detailed in Social Skills. In essence I would suggest that the children in your group have become used to adding value to the offences against them. By this I mean that they have become used to actively disliking some people and when one of those people gives offence in some way they retaliate for the original offence with an additional element that is there because they dislike the offender. This to an outside observer would be seen as an overreaction on the part of our target child. Naturally, the target child feels they have responded fairly which they probably have on their scale of things, hence the disbelief at the consequences that follow and a feeling that they have been unfairly treated.

It is therefore very important to get this game off the ground. It may take some time to get each child to get to the point where they can do this, just be patient. The person who is disliked should not be mentioned by name, a model response would be, "The person I dislike has a good sense of humour".

I made a choice:

This game reinforces, Brain Storm Responses, Predict Consequences and Role Play. There has been some time since you engaged in the above activities and this game gives the children the opportunity to receive acclaim for being in a difficult situation and making a good choice. Try and get the children to detail the range of choices they had available to them. A typical interaction between the child, facilitator and group might go like this.

Child “The time I made a choice was last week when John came up to me in class and whispered your Mum raids bins for your dinner. I just sat there.”

Facilitator: “How did you feel?”

Child: “I felt angry and wanted to get up and hit him”

Facilitator: “What choices did you have?”

Child: “Tell the teacher or ignore him”

Facilitator: “Did (target child) have any other choices?”
(To group)

Member of group: “He could have hit him or shouted at him”

Facilitator: “Seems like (target child) made a great choice, lets all shake (to group) his/her hand and say well done?”

You can extend this activity by getting the children in the group or the target child to predict what the consequences would have been had they chosen any of the other options. This may seem a little long-winded, but as the pupils get into the swing of this they become very adept at it, which is what you are aiming at. The children should be able to think very quickly about what will happen if they make a choice and thus begin to make the choices that are in their best interests, which keep them out of trouble.

I Made a Bad Choice:

This is similar to I made a choice. The reason you play it after the positive version is that it is important to gain the children's trust first. I have found that once the group bonds with each other and you, the children don't want to disappoint you and so seek to put a gloss over their behaviour. The desire to please you is a vital part of the change process. But it is very important that the children recognise when they have made a mistake and are given the chance to reflect on it. So this game is more a celebration of the fact that we all make mistakes but what is important is to recognise that mistake and fix it. I often make an analogy with spelling by explaining that you don't get spellings right first time it is only by looking at the word spelt wrong and seeing where you went wrong and then fixing it that you learn.

Present the game as described above. Ask the children to identify an incident preferably recent or if they are reluctant from the past and say what choice they made and what would have been a better choice. Get the group or the child to explore the choice and see what happened versus what would have happened if they had made a better choice.

Ten things that other people can do to me.

This game is linked inextricably to Sort in Order and Ten things I can do to other people.

Have a note pad on your knee or use a flip chart. Ask the children to tell you some things that people do to them. You need a range from walk past innocently to attack physically. The key question to use here is "That's a good one can you tell me something worse/not so bad." In this way you will get a range. Write each one as a discreet unit with a line between it and the next offence on your pad or flip chart, you can't use a board for this one.

Sort in order (offences).

Tear each of the offences into a separate slip. Place the children around a table with the slips on the table and ask them to put the most offensive act at the top and the least offensive at the bottom so that the original page is reformed but with the offences in a hierarchy. The key question here would be something like, "Do you feel that being rude about your mum is worse than being kicked?" In this way by working down the hierarchy that the children have produced they will have given thought to offences against them and will begin to see that some are worse than others. I have found that at the onset of this activity many of the children I have worked with dealt with all offences as if they were all of equal magnitude. This process helps the children to become more complex cognitively.

Number the final list from one to ten where ten is the most offensive act and one the least offensive act. Put the list away somewhere safe.

Ten things that I can do to other people.

This is an identical process to that described in ten things that other people can do to me. Here the key question would be something along the lines of, "That's a good one now can you tell me something that would be worse/not so bad?"

Sort in Order (Responses)

Again this is simply a repeat of sort in order (offences). Again put the numbered strips away in a safe place. The central point to note is that the children should be encouraged with the key question, "Is that worse/not so bad as (the one above/below)."

A model set of offences and responses are provided in appendix 2. This can be useful if you are short of time, or you want to teach the process by a different approach to the one described.

What I would do if:

For this session you will need your carefully preserved slips with offences numbered one to ten and your slips similarly numbered with responses on them.

Seat the children around a table and lay out the two sets of slips not necessarily in order but in separate areas of the table. Select one at random. Let us say that this was say rude things about my family which has been numbered as six (usually this is the worse verbal offence). Ask the children to look at the slips with responses on and ask them to place a fair response next to it. If you get a violent response the chances are that it will be a higher number than six. You can point this out and see if the children want to reconsider. Simply repeat this until you feel the children have had enough.

Some very important cognitive reorganisation goes on during these sessions. Some very fundamental beliefs are also addressed and altered. For this reason these sessions can be quite demanding, so come back again rather than push too far.

Children's choice:

3. Form the children into two groups.
2. Allow them a couple of minutes to discuss and decide on a game that they would like to play that day.
3. Use the games decided upon as per the session outline.

Firm handshake and greeting:

Here you are seeking to develop a firm assertive handshake with eye contact. Remember many of the children in an anger management group will not have developed assertive skills. They may know how to be submissive when confronted with a much stronger adversary or how to give an aggressive hard stare. So don't be surprised if this comes a little difficult at first.

I do this by modelling it. I hold out my hand whilst making eye contact and say, "Thank you for all your hard work today". I expect the children to make eye contact with me which is maintained during the interaction and say quietly yet firmly, "Thank you". After a while the children get really good at this and you can do a round of hand shaking very quickly.

I shared:

This is simply a wind down game but it does require a degree of courage for a child that is quite self protective and self contained to admit to have been generous to another. Begin this game by modelling. "The last time I can remember sharing was on Sunday when I bought a bar of chocolate to share with my daughter". Pass to the left or right of the circle.

The last time I was kind:

Again another wind down game but similarly one that requires a degree of risk for a child that is used to keeping others at a distance. Begin by modelling. "The last time I was kind, I gave my neighbour a hand to change the tyre on his car when it had a puncture." Pass to left or right. You can extend this with two questions, "How did they feel" and "How did you feel" should you wish. You can also allow the group to ask questions.

Positive about school:

Another wind down game but important none the less, because we want the children to feel positively about school and being immersed if briefly in a sea of positive words about school can only help this process. Begin by modelling. "I like this school because it is a school that really cares about children who are having difficulties". Be strict here and insist upon positives and no silly comments.

Board Games:

It is important to be a good loser and a good winner. I have found that it is possible to develop these skills within a group context by the use of board games. I have ordinarily used three phases.

Phase one: I use a magnetic game of naught and crosses. This game is very quick thus there is little invested and so the disappointment of losing is not severe. I insist that the loser say's, "Congratulations" to the winner. The winner has to say to the loser, "Thank you for playing". Be very firm here as this sets the scene for the rest of the games.

Snakes and ladders: This game has more investment than noughts and crosses. It is very useful because it has lots of disappointments and moments of elation. It is important that the moments of disappointment are not jeered at by the others nor that the moments of elation are a chance to sneer at the opponents. I insist on the following behaviours. Upon having to go down a snake, the group say, "Hard luck" target child says, "Thank you". I often reinforce this by asking how they feel when people show sympathy and by asking the group how they feel when showing sympathy as compared to sneering. Again the winner says thank you for playing and the losers say congratulations.

Chess: You may need to spend some time teaching the children to play chess in a one to one. However this is a game that has a very great deal of investment and losing hurts. Again I insist upon thank you for playing and congratulations at the conclusion of play. If you get a child to lose at chess without presenting a display of anger, give yourself a pat on the back and take yourself out for a good meal. Well done you are doing a marvellous job.

I find that I enter into the board game stage near the end of my time with the children but you could introduce quick games like naught and crosses much earlier on.

Board games are also very useful for contact sessions.

Remember when:

The children absolutely love this game. It is rather like a parent telling their own children about the funny things that the children did when they were little. I usually say something like , “Mickey do you remember when I observed you in class and you were hiding under the table?” This is said with much mirth and fondness. This is not to say that one is condoning the behaviour what you are saying is that the behaviour is so far in the past that a repetition is unthinkable now and so it is OK to laugh about it. This in itself reinforces the extinguishing of the behaviour, because they would really let you down if it ever reappeared.

Appendix 1

SAD

HURT

ANGRY

BORED

HAPPY

SILLY

UPSET

STUPID

FRIGHTENED

CROSS

GUTTED

CLEVER

SCARED

KEEN

CONFUSED

EXCITED

Appendix 2

Offences

Hit Me

Kick me

Spit at me

Ignore me

Cuss my Mum

Tell tales about me

Tell lies about me

Steal from me

Responses

Hit him/her

Kick

Cuss

Tell Teacher

Ignore

Spit

Walk away

Warn