

Integrated Mental Health Care: Falloon IRH & OTP

COPING WITH ANGER & FRUSTRATION



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*Produced by Ballarat Health Services,
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COPING WITH ANGER AND FRUSTRATION:

***I: WHAT THINGS MAKE US
MORE LIKELY TO LOSE CONTROL OF
OUR FEELINGS***



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Introduction

Coping with strong unpleasant feelings is a problem for most of us. From childhood onwards we are encouraged to express feelings of anger, frustration or fear by discussing the situation that has triggered these feelings and to solve the problem in a calm way without shouting, cursing, threatening, or being violent towards people or things. However, very few of us manage to live or work with others without occasionally losing control of our emotions and behaving in an unpleasant way.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE THINGS WE HAVE DONE WHEN WE HAVE LOST CONTROL OF OUR EMOTIONS?

Some of us have a problem controlling our strong feelings on an everyday basis. This may make it difficult for our family and friends, and may lead to them giving us less help and support. Other people control their feelings much of the time, but have outbursts at times. Learning to express our strong feelings in ways that get the support of other people and help us to solve our problems is an important skill. If we are unable to cope with our feelings of anger, disappointment and frustration in this way we are likely to get into more and more trouble and suffer more and more stress in our lives.

What Causes Aggressive and Violent Behaviour?

There are a number of things that make it more likely that a person will lose control and act in an aggressive or violent way. These may be:

(i) Alcohol or Drugs: Aggressive and violent acts are much more likely to occur when a person has been drinking alcohol or taking drugs.

(ii) Gender and Hormones: Men are more likely to be ***physically*** violent than women. Testosterone and other steroid hormones may underlie some of these problems, but the way in which boys are encouraged to behave in an aggressive manner may also play a part. Women may have more difficulty controlling their negative feelings in the few days before their menstrual periods, when their female hormones are at their lowest levels.

(iii) Brain Damage: An injury to our brains may lead to us being less able to control our emotions and our reactions. Brain damage may occur as a result of a fall or an accident. It may also occur when a person has a very high fever or convulsions. Some people who have had a difficult birth may have some damage that may lead to them being less able to control their feelings and behaviour. If the brain damage is more severe they may also have some difficulties learning at school. There are other medical disorders of the brain, such as infections and tumours, that cause similar problems. Often these disorders can be treated successfully in the early stages, so it is very important to have a regular checkup from our doctor.

(iv) Poor Training: We learn to cope with our strong negative feelings from our experiences of growing up. If our parents, friends and teachers show us ways to cope successfully we may have less problems than when they do not help us, or even encourage us to behave aggressively, or without considering other people. If they act aggressively towards us, either by hurting us physically or sexually, we may have great difficulty learning the best ways to react to other people when we feel strong feelings of anger, frustration or sexual urges.

(v) Stress: High levels of stress tend to make us less able to cope with strong unpleasant feelings. We may become irritable, less tolerant of other people and more quickly frustrated when things do not go smoothly. If we are in a stressful personal relationship or having pressure in our work this may lead to emotional outbursts that make our stress even worse. High stress often causes sleep problems that make us less able to cope with everyday problems.

(vi) Mental Disorders: Mental disorders often lead us to have strong negative feelings towards certain people and situations. Some people become convinced that others are plotting to harm them, sometimes even trying to kill them. Others hear people making unpleasant comments about them, or voices threatening them or telling them that they must harm themselves or other people. These experiences are very difficult to cope with. Occasionally a person with these symptoms will lose control and become aggressive or violent. This is more likely when they have not been taking medication or participating in a comprehensive treatment programme. If they have been drinking alcohol or taking street drugs the risk of losing control and becoming aggressive or violent is extremely high.

People with very high spirits may think that they are able to do anything that pleases them, without any unpleasant consequences. Sometimes they will behave aggressively, especially if someone tries to stand in their way, at other times they may behave in a sexually aggressive way.

Very depressed people often think that the best solution to their problems is to kill themselves. Very occasionally they may decide that it is best to kill the people they love as well.

However, most people with serious mental disorders cope very well with their unpleasant feelings. They are able to understand that violence or sexual assaults are wrong, even when they are provoked, or can see no other solutions to their dilemmas. Of course they will cope well only if they have learned what kind of reactions are considered good and what are considered bad.

People with mental disorders are often confused with all those people who behave badly. There are some people who are aggressive and violent for no obvious reason. They do not have any mental illness, even though their behaviour seems to make little sense. This disorder is sometimes called a "psychopathic personality". In general people with serious mental disorders are less likely to be violent than other people in the community, particularly when they are getting good treatment that reduces those symptoms that provoke aggressive responses.

(vii) Medications: We have mentioned that taking medications according to the plan that we have worked out with our doctor is one of the best ways to help us cope with our problems. This is true even when the medicines do not make the unpleasant experiences go away

completely. The medicines help us feel less upset, and enable us to consider strategies that might help us to cope with our continuing symptoms.

However, some of the side effects of medicines make us feel on edge, unable to relax, feel sick, have blurred vision or feel tired and sleepy. Such problems may cause us to react badly to upsetting situations. It is very important that we work with our doctor to find ways to get rid of any unpleasant effects of our medicines.

A few medicines make people excited and more likely to lose control. Some of these medicines may be taken for medical disorders, such as asthma or arthritis, while others may be taken for depression or anxiety. Once again, it is very important for us to work closely with all our doctors so that we can find the best medicines and the best doses.

WHICH OF THESE THINGS MAKE US LESS ABLE TO COPE WITH OUR STRONG NEGATIVE FEELINGS?

What are the Advantages of Aggressive and Violent Behaviour?

Up till now we have discussed aggressive behaviour as a bad way to cope with our problems. But many people have found that there are some advantages as well as disadvantages to being aggressive (shouting and making threats) or being violent. Some of these advantages are:

- | |
|---|
| <p>ADVANTAGES OF AGGRESSION AND VIOLENCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• getting what we want, when we want it<ul style="list-style-type: none">• asserting our rights• feeling strong and better than others• overcoming shyness or feeling inadequate<ul style="list-style-type: none">• being a member of a gang• doing something exciting• easier than working on solving problems |
|---|

WHICH OF THESE ADVANTAGES HAVE WE NOTICED?

The Disadvantages of Being Aggressive and Violent

There are also disadvantages of using aggression and violence to solve our problems. These are:

DISADVANTAGES OF AGGRESSION AND VIOLENCE

- problems with the law
- losing respect and support of family and friends
 - victims getting even with us
 - losing jobs
- sex and relationship problems
- difficulty changing our way of coping with problems

WHAT DISADVANTAGES HAVE WE EXPERIENCED FROM BEING AGGRESSIVE OR VIOLENT?

Problem Analysis (Instructor)

In order to get a better idea about the particular things that make these problems better or worse our Instructor may need to ask _____ (*person with the problem*) some questions about the problems using the Problem Analysis Worksheet. This will take about 10-15 minutes.

Feedback to all group members

We have had a good discussion about the problems. Some of the points that we thought might be helpful in working out better ways to solve this problem were:

Are there any other points that anyone would like to add to this list?

Problem Solving

Now we will use the **Problem Solving and Goal Achievement Worksheet** to develop a plan to solve the problem _____.

To help us solve this problem as quickly as possible, our Instructor may join our discussion. But we will keep our usual arrangements for Resource Group Meetings, with our usual Chairperson and Secretary. Our Instructor will suggest only those solutions that have been shown to be very helpful in dealing with similar problems, especially when these ideas have been supported by good research projects.

Setting Limits (See PART IV)

Before we begin the problem solving discussion we need to make something clear. While there might be reasons why some of us are less able to control our strong feelings than others, that there is ***never*** a situation where a violent reaction can be considered acceptable. There are always better alternatives. A violent attack is a crime. We all must report crimes to the police authorities. It is important that we think about these points when we are having our Problem Solving discussion.

VIOLENCE IS A CRIME -- IT IS *NEVER* ACCEPTABLE

Keeping A Record Of How We Cope With Strong Unpleasant Feelings

One strategy that may help us see the progress we are making in learning to cope with situations where we are aggressive or violent is to keep a ***Daily Progress Record***. This record will help us all get a better understanding of the things that we are doing already to cope with this problem, so that we can find even better ways of solving the problem.

Every day for the next week we will note each time things happen that give us the urge to be aggressive. Let's all look at the ***Daily Progress Record*** below and follow the instructions.

1. In the first column write down the time that we feel the urge to be aggressive begin.
2. In the second column make a brief note of where we are, what we are doing and what was going on at that time.
3. In the third column write down how we are feeling. Are we angry, sad, worried, frightened, feeling put down or feeling we are being treated badly by someone.
4. The next column is for writing down what we are thinking of doing to cope with the problem. We might think that we should shout at a person who has annoyed us. More than one idea might go through our mind, such as "I wish he would drop dead" or "He's just another idiot" or "I should walk away, it's not worth arguing with such a stubborn person". Make a note of them all.
5. The next column is to note what we actually did or said to cope with the situation. Maybe we did not do anything at all. Maybe we followed the plan that we worked on this session.
6. In the last column we note how things worked out. Did we feel better or worse? Was the thing we did helpful?

LET US FILL IN ONE OF THESE EXAMPLES NOW FOR PRACTICE.

REMEMBER A TIME RECENTLY WHEN WE WERE IN A SITUATION AND WE BEGAN TO FEEL THAT WE MIGHT GET AGGRESSIVE?

DAILY PROGRESS RECORD

Name: _____

Date: _____

PROBLEM/GOAL: _____

TIME	SITUATION <i>Where was I? What was going on?</i>	FEELINGS <i>What sort of feelings did I have?</i>	THOUGHTS <i>What did I think I might do to cope with the situation?</i>	ACTIONS <i>What did I actually do or say?</i>	OUTCOME <i>How did things work out?</i>

ARE THERE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT MAKING A RECORD OF THESE PROBLEMS IN THE NEXT WEEK?

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***II: THINGS WE CAN DO TO KEEP
OUR STRONG FEELINGS UNDER
CONTROL***



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Strategies for Reducing the Risk of Aggressive or Violent Reactions

Review of Daily Progress Records

First let us look at the notes we have made about our problems on the ***Daily Progress Records***. In this session we can review those notes to see if they can help us find some better ways to cope with our bad feelings.

Let us look at the ***Daily Progress Record*** worksheets that we have completed.

**Q: CAN WE SEE ANY PATTERN IN THE TIMES OR PLACES
WHEN THE PROBLEM OFTEN STARTS?**

**Q: CAN WE THINK OF ANY WAYS THAT CHANGING THIS PATTERN
MIGHT LEAD TO BETTER COPING?**

**Q: CAN WE SEE ANY THINGS ABOUT THE SITUATIONS THAT MIGHT
MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR US TO CONTROL OUR FEELINGS?**

**Q: CAN ANYONE SUGGEST ANY POSSIBLE WAYS OF CHANGING THESE HIGH
RISK SITUATIONS THAT MIGHT HELP CONTROL OUR BAD FEELINGS?**

Before we complete a ***Problem Solving worksheet*** let's discuss a few things that help some people control their bad feelings.

Ways to Control our Reactions to Strong Unpleasant Feelings

Reduction of Alcohol and Drugs

We have seen that one of the situations when we are most likely to lose control and act in an aggressive or violent way is when we have been drinking alcohol or taking drugs. Some people are very sensitive to only small amounts of alcohol or drugs and may lose control long before they become intoxicated. For many of us even a few cups of tea or coffee can make us very irritable. If this happens to us, one way to improve our coping methods is to reduce our use of alcohol or drugs (see ***HOW TO FIND BETTER ALTERNATIVES TO USING DRUGS AND ALCOHOL TO SOLVE OUR PROBLEMS***).

Taking Medicines Prescribed by our Doctors in the Best Way

We have noted that the medicines that we are given for our health problems can help us to control our strong unpleasant feelings if we take them in the best possible way. If we feel that they may be making us more irritable or less able to control our actions we should discuss this with our doctor before taking less than he or she has recommended (see ***HOW TO GET THE BEST RESULTS FROM MEDICINES***).

Medical Checkups

Difficulty controlling our aggressive behaviour is very occasionally caused by medical problems. Many of these problems can be treated, so it is important to have a medical checkup, especially if anyone has noticed a change in our usual way of coping with our strong negative feelings, or we have had aggressive outbursts for no apparent reason.

Avoiding Places and Situations that Make us Feel Bad

Hot, crowded, noisy, smelly and scruffy places make most of us feel bad. If the people in these places are drunk or high on drugs there is a big risk that somebody will upset us. Some of us will find that other special places or people will make us feel anxious or depressed. Sometimes we cannot make sense of why this is so. Perhaps they remind us of some unpleasant experiences in the past. If we can avoid going to these places we may be able to reduce some of the bad feelings we have. Even if we cannot avoid them completely we may be able to choose a better time to go there.

For example, Jim became very annoyed when he had to stand in a line for an hour to get his benefit paid. He found that if he went in the middle of the afternoon on a Tuesday or Wednesday the line was much shorter, and sometimes he did not have to wait at all. He also noticed that the staff seemed more relaxed and answered his questions in a helpful way.

Problem Solving

Now we can complete a Problem Solving worksheet to develop a practical plan to try to find some ways to reduce our risk of losing control of our strong negative feelings. We will organise the discussion in the usual way and our Instructor will only contribute if he or she has any special ideas that have been based on good research.

Real Life Practice and Recording Progress

It is helpful to keep a record of the way that we apply the plan we have made over the next week. Use the ***Daily Progress Record*** again to note those times and situations where we have the bad feelings that have been difficult to control. We will be especially interested to see if the plan is helpful in reducing urges to become aggressive or violent.

We will make a special note of things that seem to trigger our aggressive urges. These are the things that happen just before we begin to feel really bad. We will discuss these triggers in the next session.

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***III: FINDING ALTERNATIVES TO
AGGRESSION OR VIOLENCE WHEN
SOMETHING TRIGGERS OUR
UNPLEASANT FEELINGS***



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Strategies for Reducing the Triggers of Aggressive or Violent Reactions

Review of Application of the Plan; Rewards for Efforts; Revise Plan if Necessary

We have made some notes about our problems on the *Daily Progress Records*. Let's see how our plan to reduce the risk of aggressive and violent reactions has been working. First, we can look at what efforts have been made to do the things that were planned.

WHAT DID WE LIKE MOST ABOUT THE WAY WE HAVE APPLIED THE STEPS OF THE PLAN

HOW COULD THE PLAN BE MADE TO WORK EVEN BETTER IN THE FUTURE?

Finding Triggers

In this session we will try to find any special things that seem to trigger our bad feelings, and then to see what we can do to cope with them.

Most of our bad feelings and aggressive outbursts are triggered by things that happen that make it difficult for us to keep control. Some of these triggers are:

TRIGGERS TO AGGRESSION AND VIOLENCE

- being called bad names
- people making threats to harm us
- being made to feel stupid or inferior
 - not getting what we ask for
 - rude comments or signs
- an unpleasant or unusual look from somebody
 - sarcasm
 - raised voices
- being pushed in a crowd
- somebody invading our personal space
- somebody challenging us to fight
 - being told to attack someone
 - feeling rejected

Let us look at our *Daily Progress Record* worksheets that we have completed to see if we can find any special things that seem to trigger our bad feelings and urges to be aggressive or violent.

CAN WE SEE ANY SPECIAL THINGS THAT HAPPEN JUST BEFORE WE GET THE URGE TO BE AGGRESSIVE OR VIOLENT?

CAN WE THINK OF ANY THINGS THAT WE COULD DO THAT WOULD HELP US COPE WITH THESE THINGS?

Coping With Triggers

When something triggers our aggressive urges it is important that we have a strategy that helps us get rid of the bad feelings quickly, and if possible to solve any important problems. Some suggestions are:

(i) Avoid Triggers: When we are able to clearly recognise the situations that trigger our aggressive urges we may be able to avoid those situations at least some of the time. These could be particular places or people.

(ii) Escape and Calm Down: Most of us have been taught that it is a good idea to stand up for our rights. When something triggers off our anger or frustration we may try to sort out the problem immediately. We may have learned that we have a right to be aggressive and seek revenge if somebody makes us feel bad. Research shows that being aggressive seldom solves any problems, although it may make us feel better for a few moments.

Most of us have found that the best way to react to something that triggers our strong bad feelings is to get out of the situation as soon as we can. This is especially true if we have been drinking or have taken drugs. Once we have made our escape we can then use strategies to calm ourselves down before planning on the best way to cope with the problem. It may seem that we are letting ourselves down by walking away from a person who calls us names, criticises us unfairly, or when we do not get what we have asked for. But it gives us the chance to think more clearly about the best strategies.

Once we have left the upsetting situation we will usually feel calmer, but we may also find that our bodies are tense and it may help to do some ***Slow Controlled Breathing or Muscle Relaxation*** (see ***DEVELOPING STRATEGIES TO COPE WITH ANXIETY I: REDUCING THE SENSITIVITY OF YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM***). Some people find exercise is a good calming strategy.

If we are unable to get away from the situation, stopping and trying to focus on relaxing ourselves may help give us a moment or two to get our feelings under control and prevent an uncontrolled outburst. The old idea of counting to 10 before doing or saying anything is another strategy for calming down for a moment or two.

WHAT CAN WE DO TO CALM DOWN?

(iii) Expressing Unpleasant Feelings Assertively:

Once we have calmed down enough to be able to think clearly, we can decide what the next step could be. One useful strategy may be to express our unpleasant feelings in the constructive way we have learned (***TELLING PEOPLE EXACTLY WHAT YOU ARE FEELING UNHAPPY ABOUT: see below***). First we must decide exactly what the problem is that we are trying to solve and whether it is worth our efforts to attempt to solve it. We may consider that even our best efforts will not change a rude, unpleasant, racist stranger in a bar, and that our best plan is to try to avoid such people in future. But on other occasions it may help us to express our unpleasant feelings to the boss who seems to be criticising us unfairly, to people who push in front of us at the ticket counter or the supermarket, or to the friend who is always late. It is important to remember that the reason we are expressing our unpleasant feelings is not to pay them back, but to try to solve the problem that triggers our bad feelings.

GETTING A PERSON TO HELP YOU SOLVE A STRESSFUL PROBLEM

- 1. Look at the person. Speak and look in a serious way that matches the way we feel.**
- 2. Say exactly what happened to trigger our unpleasant feeling.**
- 3. Tell the person how we felt about it.**
- 4. Make a suggestion about how this problem might be resolved. By making a Positive Request, or arranging further Problem Solving discussions.**

(iii) Clarify What the Person Was Communicating to Us:

Many things that trigger our aggressive outbursts are unspoken signals that people give us. The meaning of an obscene gesture may be obvious to everyone. However, often the signals are less clear. We pick up messages that people are against us or are putting us down from the way they look at us, the way they get up and go when we enter the room, the way they look away when we ask them something, their tone of voice when they speak to us, or the way they nod their heads and glance at us when they are speaking with another person.

It is certainly true that these kinds of things may communicate a lack of interest in us, but it is not always clear what exactly the person trying to communicate to us with their body language. Sometimes it is merely a habit for them or a sign of ***their own*** poor communication skills. The only way we can find out is to ask them to clarify the message they are trying to give us. To do this is very difficult and requires some skilful ***Active Listening (DECIDING EXACTLY WHAT THE PROBLEM OR GOAL IS WITH ACTIVE LISTENING)***.

For example:

Jerry and Cathy were in a restaurant. The waitress gave them some menus and said she would come back soon. They waited for some time and saw that she was serving other people, but seemed to be ignoring them. Jerry tried to attract her attention, but she always turned away when she saw him. He became very angry and told Cathy that he wanted to leave the restaurant. He said that he was sure that the waitress was one of the gang that had been sending him special messages. Cathy reminded him not to jump to conclusions and to consider other possible explanations for her actions. When the waitress finally came to take their orders Jerry told her that he was angry that she had kept them waiting, and asked her to explain. She apologised and said that she had thought she had taken their orders already. She promised to bring them their food as soon as she could. Jerry was pleased with her friendly response and enjoyed his meal.

Another example

Susan was shopping when the shop assistant seemed to whisper under her breath "Oh, no!" She was convinced that this meant that the assistant thought she looked a mess. She asked the assistant what she meant by saying "Oh, no!" the assistant laughed and told her that she had realised that she had forgotten to tell a friend that she was working late tonight.

Problem Solving Ways to Cope with Triggers

Now we can complete a *Problem Solving worksheet* to develop a practical plan to cope with the special things that seem to trigger our urges to be aggressive. We will organise the discussion in our usual way, and our Instructor will only contribute if he or she has any special ideas that have been based on good research.

Role-Played Practice of Strategies for Coping with Triggers

It may help us to practice our plan for coping with the special things that trigger our urges to be aggressive. Let's set up the situation so that it is as close to real life as possible. We will try to follow the steps we decided were best in our problem solving.

Reviewing the practice:

WHAT PARTICULAR THINGS DID WE LIKE ABOUT
THE WAY(PERSON) COPEd WITH THAT SITUATION?

CAN WE SUGGEST ANY WAYS THE(PERSON) COULD HAVE COPEd
WITH THAT SITUATION EVEN BETTER?

Real-Life Practice and Recording Progress

In the next week we will continue to keep a record of the way that we apply the plan in real life situations. We will use the *Daily Progress Record* again to note those times and situations where we have the bad feelings that have been difficult to control. We will be especially interested to see if the plan is helpful in reducing urges to become aggressive or violent.

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IV: STRATEGIES FOR FRIENDS AND FAMILIES TO COPE WITH AGGRESSION OR VIOLENCE *

NOTE: If violence is occurring at present
this session should be completed at the beginning
of the course.



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Strategies for Carers to Cope with Aggressive or Violent Reactions

Review of Application of the Plan; Rewards for Efforts; Revise Plan if Necessary

Let's look at the notes we made on the *Daily Progress Records*. We can see how our plan to reduce the risk of aggressive and violent reactions has been working. First, let us look at what efforts have been made to do the things that were planned.

WHAT DO WE LIKE MOST ABOUT THE WAY WE HAVE APPLIED THE STEPS OF THE PLAN

CAN WE SUGGEST ANY CHANGES TO THE PLAN THAT WE THINK MIGHT HELP US COPE EVEN BETTER IN THE FUTURE?

In this session we will focus our problem solving on helping those who are caring for people who have aggressive or violent outbursts. Research tells us that people in our Resource Groups are the most common targets of this behaviour, which is often life-threatening.

Setting Limits

Our society considers all acts of physical aggression are unacceptable. Violence towards people (pushing, slapping, punching, use of weapons), or damage to property (deliberately breaking things), or forcing people to engage in any sexual acts that they do not want to do at that time (touching, hugging, kissing, fondling or intercourse) are all crimes for which we may go to prison. However, many of us make excuses for this behaviour, especially when it is a friend or family member doing it to us.

It is important to make it quite clear to all the people in our Resource Group exactly what we consider is unacceptable behaviour and what we will do whenever an unacceptable act occurs.

LIST ALL THE THINGS THAT WE CONSIDER UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR FOR ANY MEMBER OF OUR RESOURCE GROUP

Later in this session we will plan the exact actions that we will take when a person does any of these things

Recognising the Warning Signals of Aggressive or Violent Acts

Most people do not have aggressive outbursts without warning. If we can recognise the warning signals in time we may be able to help the person calm down and solve his or her problem in a more constructive way. Some of the warning signals that people notice are:

WARNING SIGNALS OF AGGRESSION OR VIOLENCE

- being drunk or under influence of drugs
- carrying a weapon -- stick, knife, gun, heavy object
 - being restless and agitated
 - poor concentration
 - looking tense and unhappy
 - speaking loudly and cursing
- clenching fists or making aggressive gestures
 - staring at us
- not wanting to speak to anyone

WHAT ARE THE SPECIAL WARNING SIGNALS THAT WE HAVE NOTICED?

In the last session we practised strategies for coping with the triggers of aggressive urges. One method I suggested was to encourage the person to leave the situation and to calm down before attempting to find ways to deal with the problem that produced the bad feelings. However, we may have other ideas on what to do when we notice Warning Signals.

WHAT CAN WE DO WHEN WE NOTICE A PERSON'S WARNING SIGNALS?

Time Out

A variation of the strategy of leaving the stressful situation and calming down before working out how to proceed is called ***Time Out***. In this case either the person who is experiencing Warning Signs or a friend may suggest taking ***Time Out***. The person can then go to a quiet place on their own and practice the calming strategies they find most helpful until they feel able to begin a problem solving discussion about the situation. This usually takes 5-10 minutes. Sometimes after calming down we may decide that it is better to delay our problem solving discussion and plan of action rather than to try to sort out the problem immediately.

Everybody involved needs to agree how the ***Time Out*** will be suggested to the person who is showing clear Warning Signals. Of course it is even better if the person can recognize the Warning Signals themselves and to initiate this without our having to suggest it. It may be

preferable to prompt a **Time Out** by giving a clearly agreed hand signal, rather than speaking. This may reduce embarrassment in public.

Coping with a Person When they are Acting in an Aggressive Way

If it is clear that a person is acting in an aggressive way we need to try to minimise any harm to ourselves or to property. At this stage we may still want to try to help the person regain control, but it is better that we find ways to escape successfully from the situation and seek the assistance of professionals who are skilled in dealing with this behaviour. Sometimes we may be unable to escape immediately and safely so we may have to use strategies that will prevent the crisis from worsening. Some suggestions are:

STRATEGIES FOR COPING WITH AGGRESSION

- stay a safe distance from the person
 - try to appear calm and friendly
- watch the person, do not turn your back on them
 - try and find a safe escape route & leave
 - do not challenge or make threats to person
 - request that they put down any weapons
- let the person talk about their bad feelings
 - call for help from others

Working with the Justice System

Most of us become anxious about involving ourselves or our friends and families with the justice system of police and lawyers. However, it is very important to find ways to work together with them to cope with aggressive or violent behaviour. As we discussed earlier, all violent acts are crimes. We have an important duty to report any crimes to the police and to protect ourselves and others from criminal behaviour.

People with mental disorders may experience many situations that are likely to trigger their bad feelings. That may make the risk that they are aggressive or violent higher. However, having a mental disorder does not mean that the person has **no responsibility** for their criminal acts. In very rare cases a severely disturbed mentally ill person may be so confused that their awareness that they are doing something wrong is reduced. It may be impossible and possibly harmful for them to go through a legal trial. But even for these people it is important that their criminal acts are dealt with by the **legal authorities**, who are the professional experts at sorting out such problems.

Judges realise that long prison sentences may not be as helpful in dealing with problems of aggression and violence as good treatment of a person's mental disorder. It is always best to report the crime and let the authorities have the responsibility to decide what is best. Usually they will make contracts for the person to participate in a comprehensive treatment programme. But they may also be able to decide where the person will live in a way that may reduce the risk of harm to any people who are likely targets of future aggression. In this way families and friends can obtain the protection of the police in a planned and organised way.

- ALL VIOLENT ACTS ARE CRIMES
- ALL CRIMES ARE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE JUSTICE SYSTEM AND SHOULD BE REPORTED TO THEM AS SOON AS POSSIBLE
- A MENTAL DISORDER IS NO EXCUSE FOR CRIMINAL BEHAVIOUR

HOW COULD OUR RESOURCE GROUP DEVELOP STRATEGIES TO WORK TOGETHER WITH THE JUSTICE SYSTEM?

Problem Solving Ways to Cope with Aggression and Violence

Let's complete a *Problem Solving worksheet* to develop a practical plan to cope with aggressive and violent behaviour. This may include recognising Warning Signals, Time Out, Setting Limits and Working with the Justice System. We will organise the discussion as usual, and our Instructor will only contribute if he or she has special ideas that have been based on good research.

Role-Played Practice of Strategies for Coping with Triggers

Now we can practice any parts of our plan that might be difficult. Let's set up the situations so that it is as close to real life as possible.

Reviewing the practice:

WHAT DID WE LIKE ABOUT THE WAY(PERSON) COPE
WITH THAT SITUATION?

CAN WE SUGGEST ANY WAYS THE(PERSON) COULD HAVE COPE
WITH THAT SITUATION EVEN BETTER?

WE MAY NEED TO REPEAT THIS PRACTICE SEVERAL TIMES UNTIL WE ARE SATISFIED THAT WE HAVE LEARNED A GOOD APPROACH TO COPING THAT WILL WORK WELL IN REAL LIFE SITUATIONS.

Real-Life Practice and Recording Progress

In the next week we can make a record of the way that we apply the plan in real life situations. We will use the ***Daily Progress Record*** again to note those times and situations where we have the bad feelings that have been difficult to control. We will be especially interested to see if the plan is helpful in reducing our urges to become aggressive or violent.

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V: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER



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Psychiatric Services*

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A Plan to Cope with Aggression or Violence

Review of Application of the Plan; Rewards for Efforts; Revise Plan if Necessary

Let's look at our *Daily Progress Records*. How have our plans to reduce the risk of aggressive and violent reactions been working. First, let us look at what efforts have been made to do the things that were planned.

WHAT DO WE LIKE MOST ABOUT THE WAY WE HAVE APPLIED THE STEPS OF THE PLAN

CAN WE SUGGEST ANY CHANGES TO THE PLAN THAT MIGHT HELP US COPE BETTER?

In this session we will work on devising a plan to deal with all aspects of coping with aggressive or violent outbursts. This means putting together all the plans and ideas we have had in previous sessions. These included:

STRATEGIES FOR COPING WITH AGGRESSION AND VIOLENCE

- reducing things that increase the risks
 - drugs and alcohol, adhering to treatment, medical problems
- coping with triggers
 - escape, calm down, problem solving, planned actions
- strategies for carers
 - early warning signs & time out strategies
 - setting limits for unacceptable behaviour
 - working with the justice system

Completing the PLAN TO COPE WITH AGGRESSION AND VIOLENCE worksheet

We can fill out the worksheet on the next page with our complete plan for coping with aggression and violence.

PLAN TO COPE WITH AGGRESSION AND VIOLENCE

PROBLEM/

GOAL _____

STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING RISK OF AGGRESSION

STRATEGIES FOR COPING WITH TRIGGERS

WARNING SIGNALS

WHAT TO DO WHEN WARNING SIGNALS APPEAR (Time Out, etc)

WHAT TO DO IF A PERSON BECOMES AGGRESSIVE

Contacts in Justice System _____

***MEMBERS OF OUR RESOURCE GROUP ARE NEVER PERMITTED
TO DO THESE THINGS:***

Practice in Session

It may be helpful for us to practice any parts of the plan that may be difficult. Let's set up the situation so that it is as close to real life as possible.

Reviewing the practice:

**WHAT PARTICULAR THINGS DID WE LIKE ABOUT THE WAY
.....(PERSON) COPEd WITH THAT SITUATION?**

**CAN WE SUGGEST ANY WAYS THAT.....(PERSON) COULD HAVE
COPEd WITH THAT SITUATION EVEN BETTER?**

Real-Life Practice and Recording Progress

In the next week we can record of the way that we apply the plan in real life situations. We will use the *Daily Progress Record* again to note those times and situations where bad feelings have been difficult to control. We will be especially interested to see if the plan is helpful in reducing the urges to become aggressive or violent.

PROBLEM ANALYSIS

PROBLEM: *What is the problem? How often does it happen? How long does it last? How distressing? (Use chart)*

BRIEF BACKGROUND:

ANTECEDENTS: *What happens in the moments just before the problem occurs? Do you find yourself in certain places, situations, or with certain types of people? Do you have any special thoughts or feelings? What exactly are you doing at that moment?* _____

CONSEQUENCES: *What happens immediately after the problem starts? What thoughts and feelings do you have? What things do you do? What do other people do? How do other people react?*

MODIFYING FACTORS:

a) *What seems to make the problem better? What makes it less likely to occur? (List all without discussion)*

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____
4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____

b) *What seems to make the problem worse? What makes it more likely to occur?*

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____
4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____

BENEFITS AND DIFFICULTIES WHEN THIS PROBLEM IS SOLVED:

a) *What benefits will you get when this problem is solved?*

b) *What possible disadvantages might there be for you when the problem is solved? e.g. loss of attention, pressure to work or to become more active, and to be expected to immediately do all those things you used to do?*

CURRENT PROBLEM SOLVING STRATEGIES:

List all efforts to solve the problem, both effective and ineffective, including self, friends, professional treatment, etc

SUPPORTIVE PEOPLE: *Who could help you to work on this problem?* _____

SOLVING PROBLEMS AND ACHIEVING GOALS

Step 1. What exactly is the problem or goal?

Talk about the problem or goal until we can write down exactly what it is. Ask questions to make the issue clearer. Break a big problem or goal into smaller parts.

Step 2. List all possible solutions -- brain storming

Make a list of all ideas, even "bad" or "silly" suggestions. Get everyone to suggest something. Do NOT talk about whether ideas are good or bad at this stage.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Step 3. Briefly highlight the main advantages & disadvantages

Get our group to say quickly what we think are the main advantages and disadvantages of each suggestion. Do NOT write anything. Do NOT compare the possible solutions at this point.

Step 4. Choose the most practical suggestion

Choose the solution that can be carried out most easily with the resources (time, skills, materials, money) that we have at present.

Step 5. Plan exactly how to carry out the solution
Organise the resources we need. Consider how to cope with likely hitches. Practise all difficult steps -- rehearse or role play.

Date and time to review progress with plan _____

Step 6. Review progress in carrying out plan

Praise all the efforts we have made. Review progress on each step. Change the plan. Try another solution. Continue problem solving until our problem is resolved or our goal is achieved.

DAILY PROGRESS RECORD: COPING WITH STRONG UNPLEASANT FEELINGS

TIME	SITUATION <i>Where was I? What was going on?</i>	FEELINGS <i>What sort of feelings did I have?</i>	THOUGHTS <i>What did I think I might do to cope with the situation?</i>	ACTIONS <i>What did I actually do or say?</i>	OUTCOME <i>How did things work out?</i>