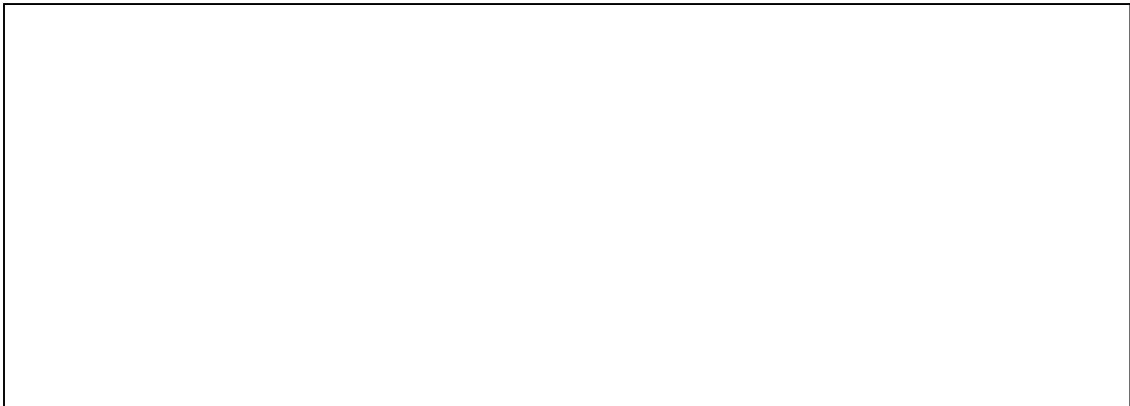
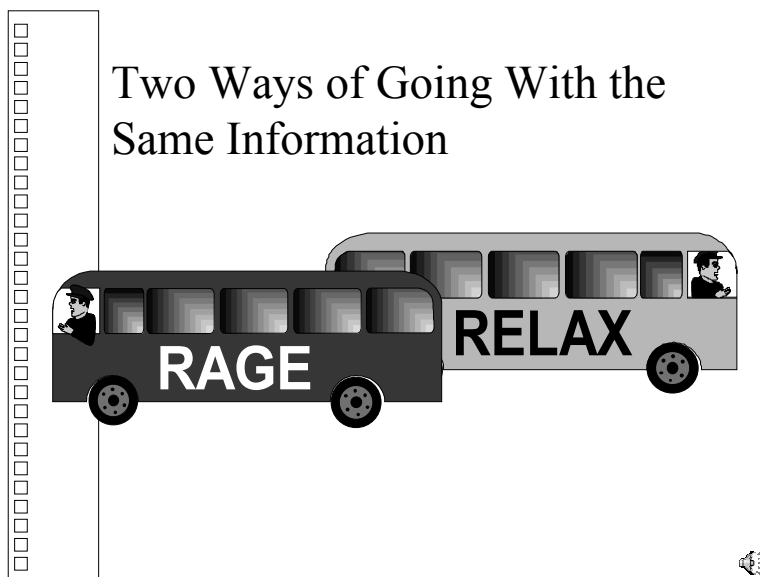




Overview of the Anger Record, with screen shot

PROPERTIES Allow user to leave interaction: Show 'Next Slide' Button: Completion Button Label:	After viewing all the steps Show upon completion Next Slide	 Properties...	 Edit in Engage
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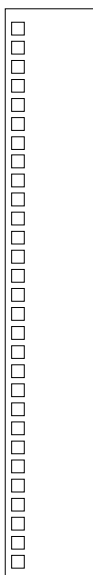


Two Ways of Going With the Same Information

If it were just external events which caused anger, everyone would react in the same angry way whenever these events happened. Instead, there is wide variation in reaction to stressful events. Some people respond to stress by happily taking up the challenge, some react by becoming anxious, some are overtaken by an almost eerie sense of calm, and some get angry.

Let's take the situation of two bus drivers, driving the same bus route,. At each end of the route there is a turn-around, and each driver gets caught in traffic several times a day on the narrow cross-streets, stuck behind double-parked delivery trucks. One driver responds by getting stressed—shouting out the window, beeping the horn, slamming the steering wheel and cursing. At the end of the day this driver is frustrated and angry, having spent valuable time stuck in traffic, fuming about the thoughtless delivery drivers. The other driver takes these turn-arounds as an opportunities for breaks in his busy day. While he is stopped behind a delivery truck, he pulls out the newspaper and reads the sports page or the comics. When the delivery truck driver returns, he is refreshed from his break, and he quietly puts the paper away and proceeds with his route.

The external factors for the two drivers are identical—same route, same turn-arounds, same thoughtless delivery drivers. The only difference is their interpretations of the events. One interprets in the stress-direction, the other chooses the relaxation-direction.

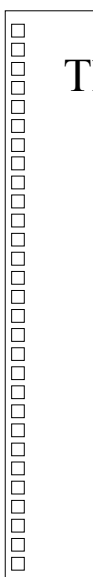


Inverse Relationship between Anger and Freedom

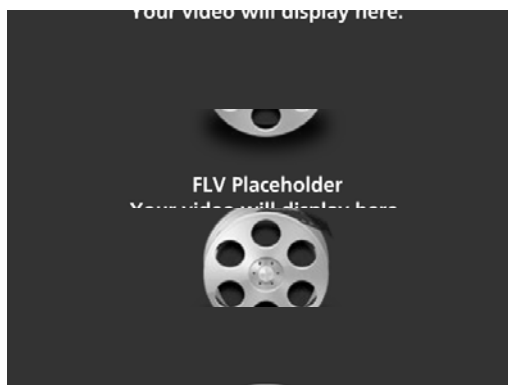


This graph shows an inverse relationship between the level of one's anger and the level of freedom a person feels. Lets look at this relationship a piece at a time.

- When anger is low, we have lots of choices—we can take a walk, breathe deeply, sing a calming tune, and so on. But when anger is high—when I'm enraged or furious—I feel very little freedom. It often feels as if I had no choice: “He was laughing at me—of course I got mad. What else could I do.” At the extreme of anger, there are well-documented cases of “red-outs” during which a person has no awareness of what he is doing. In these states of mind, there is virtually no freedom. A person is on automatic pilot.*
- The graph also suggests that when freedom is high, one's susceptibility to anger is low. High-level anger seems to emerge from a feeling of being trapped, frustrated, powerless. Anger emerges as an attempt to create power swiftly. And it often seems to work, at least temporarily. The 2000-pound gorilla sits anywhere he wants, at least until the zookeepers arrive with their nets and tranquilizer guns.*



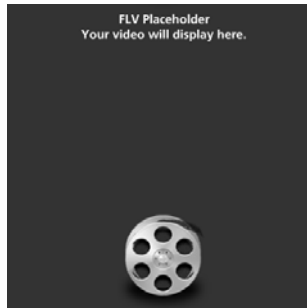
The Amygdala



According to recent research on the brain, the center of anger, anxiety, and many other powerful emotions is a small, almond-shaped part of the brain, one on each side, in a primitive portion of the brain called the limbic system. The amygdala might be compared to a primitive computer which boots up very fast, but is not capable of carrying out complex programming. It makes a simple decision in regard to stress: do I kill it or do I run away? When it becomes active, the amygdala takes over brain functioning for a while, performing what Daniel Goleman calls a “neural hijacking.” During a neural hijacking, the attention is focused powerfully on the external world, and the things of the world are sorted quickly into categories of threat and not-threat. There is a rush of energy caused by an influx of adrenaline.

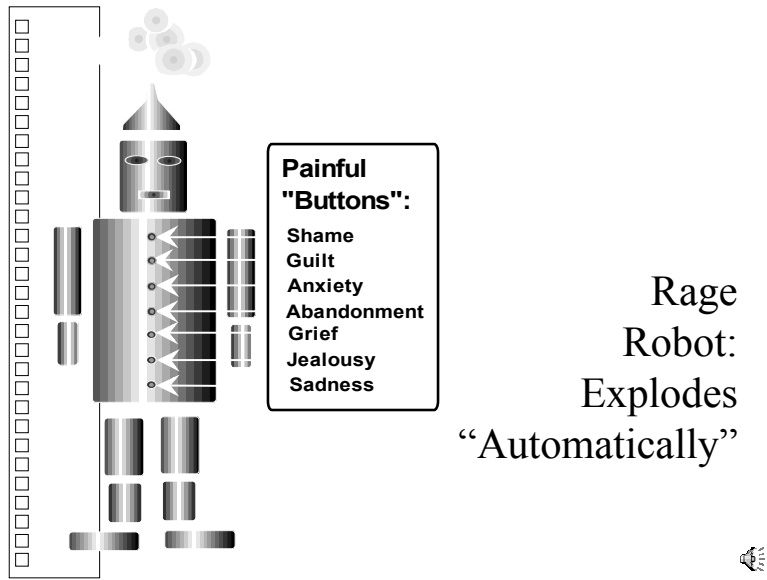
Q: Any ideas why this part is important for humans? Any ideas how this part of the brain could present problems?

During the neural hijacking, the neo-cortex—the more evolved, complex part of the brain—recedes to the background, and has a very limited role in decision-making. This part of the brain is a more complex computer, booting up slowly, but capable of seeing gray areas, capable of introspection and meditation. During a neural hijacking by the amygdala make fast, primitive, powerful decisions without seeing the more complex picture of things, without experiencing any free choice about possible options for my response.

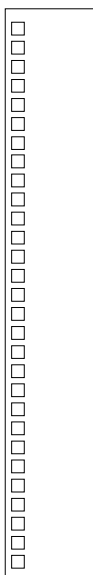


We have rare footage of an actual neural hijacking in progress...

When a person has been exposed to traumatic situations—war, intense family conflict, street violence—his susceptibility to this neural hijacking is increased. We can see how this could develop—due to previous experiences of extreme danger, a person learns to keep the “weapon” of his anger constantly available.



We often talk about our anger as if its source were entirely external, as if my angry reaction were a necessary, automatic response to what just happened. When we talk about our anger this way, we are viewing ourselves as robots, beings with no free will, programmed to respond to certain events in angry ways. The way we speak about our anger often suggests this robot-view of ourselves:



Characteristics of the Rage-Robot

- The escalation process seems automatic
- Anger seems dependent on outer events rather than inner experiences
- One uses language like
 - ◆ “I had no choice”
 - ◆ “He made me mad”
 - ◆ “She knows better than to say that to me at that time of day”

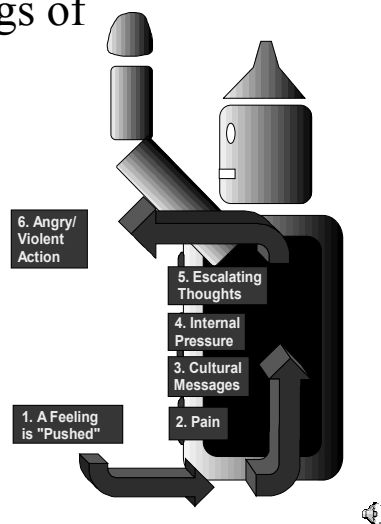


When I see myself as a Rage-Robot, I

- *See the escalation process as automatic*
- *See anger as dependent entirely on external events rather than inner experiences*
- *Use language that denies personal responsibility for the anger:*
 - *“Don’t get me started.”*
 - *“That was the straw that broke the camel’s back.”*
 - *“You know better than to talk to me right when I get home from work.”*
 - *“Of course I hit him. He said something about my mother.”*
 - *“You’re making me mad.”*
 - *“I had no choice. She goaded me into it.”*
 - *“That pushed me over the edge.”*
 - *“He started it, I finished it.”*
 - *“She was manipulating me.”*
 - *“I was only reacting to what you said.”*
 - *“What was I supposed to do?”*

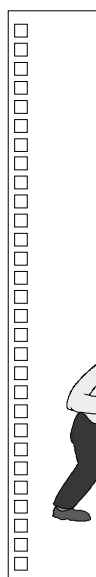
The Inner Workings of Rage Robot

1. A feeling is “pushed”
2. Pain
3. Cultural Messages:
“How am I supposed
to react to pain?”
4. Internal Pressure
5. Escalating Thoughts
6. Angry or Violent
Action

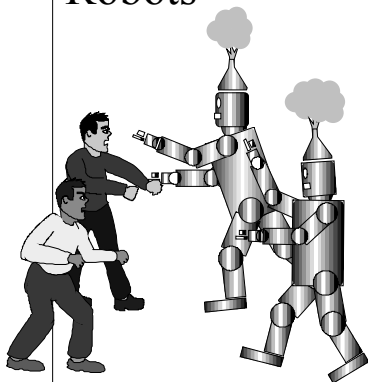


The process of an angry escalation is actually a complex event, with at least six distinct “decision points.”

1. *An event happens which “pushes” a feeling. Although this is not always possible, it might be possible to avoid the event.*
2. *One feels pain or discomfort. If one has developed an ability to endure pain or discomfort without reacting angrily, the anger might not emerge.*
3. *One checks the “library” of cultural messages which tell me how I should react to the pain. If I select the Rambo or Clint Eastwood cultural message, my emotions will go in a different direction than they would if I selected the Ghandi or Jesus Christ cultural message.*
4. *There is a level of internal stress unrelated the the current event which will influence whether I respond angrily. If I have developed abilities to acknowledge and manage my pre-existing stress, the likelihood of an angry escalation is diminished.*
5. *There are certain types of thoughts which are inflammatory, which make an angry explosion more likely. If I can choose quieter, extinguishing thoughts, I reduce the likelihood of an angry outcome.*
6. *The final stage is the angry act itself. There are several ways of expressing anger, ranging from calm, firm discussion to swearing, threats, or violence. I have choices about how I express my anger.*



War Between Humans and Robots



- The war is not in the future, on distant planets. It takes place within ourselves: Am I on automatic pilot, or am I in control?



*There is a common motif in science fiction film and literature about a war in the distant future between humans and robots. Frequently, humans and robots are almost indistinguishable. For example, in the film *Blade Runner*, the robots look and act like humans, and it is only with great effort that they can be distinguished.*

I suggest that the war between humans and robots is not something that occurs on faraway planets in the distant future. It happens in ourselves, in our inner struggles between robot-thinking and human-thinking about anger. Robot-thinking says, "It wasn't my fault—I'm programmed to be angry if someone does x, and someone did x, so of course I got angry." Human thinking sounds very different. It says, for example,

- *"When you said that, I felt angry. I wish I would have handled it better, but I made some bad choices when I reacted the way I did. I'm going to work to react differently."*
- *"You didn't make me mad, I made myself mad. I can do better."*
- *"I've got to be more clear about what I need and when. There are times when I feel I've got a short fuse, and I've got to let you know so we can deal with it later."*

Human-thinking emphasizes choice and responsibility, the key elements which distinguish us from machines. We need to recognize the types of thinking we do, then make a decision: Am I a robot, or am I a human?

Hercules and the Lion



We can learn something about our anger by looking at Hercules, the greatest hero of the Greek and Roman worlds. One of Hercules' first heroic deeds was killing a lion (as shown in the picture on the left). After that deed, he wore a lion skin for the rest of his life (see picture on the right). This was common for ancient heroes—a close relationship with the animal. It was thought that Hercules could call on the power of the lion during his heroic deeds, so this lion-amygdala was certainly helpful.

Hercules was not often allowed into the city of Tiryns—his brother-in-law Eurystheus usually sent him out again immediately after he returned from his heroic quest. Hercules was dangerous in the city, because his wild amygdala-energy could cause extraordinary destruction. Once when Hercules did come into the city after his trip to Hades, he was relaxing in his house and his children were playing. He was suddenly overcome by a powerful spirit, thought his children were giants, and killed his children and his wife. Although he had killed the Nemean lion that was terrorizing his city, at this stage of his career he was helpless in his struggle against the lion within which was terrorizing those he loved.

Each of us has a primitive, powerful animal-energy within us, sometimes very beneficial, but sometimes capable of profound misinterpretation of verbal and visual cues.

The New Hercules: The Struggle Against the Lion Within



We are embarking on a new adventure together. The struggle will be different from the usual heroic adventure, which struggled against forces in the external world. We are going to begin struggling against the Lion Within—the destructive anger we carry within us which may endanger our lives and the lives of those we love.

- *I am accountable for my anger.*
- *My anger is not evil, not good. It just is—and can be both.*
- *I will begin this struggle with my wild animal power right here, right now.*
- *The first step in the struggle is my commitment to be aware.*

End Session 2

- Continue with the Anger Record, aiming at least one entry per day. Pay particular attention to the feelings column.



Read pp. 5-11 and 41-47 in the Vicious Circles Manual. Do Worksheet 1. Make sure to keep working on the Anger Record, aiming for at least one entry per day. If you have difficulty with the Feelings column, use the list of feelings on Worksheet 1 as a prompt.