

REACH Program: Session 3

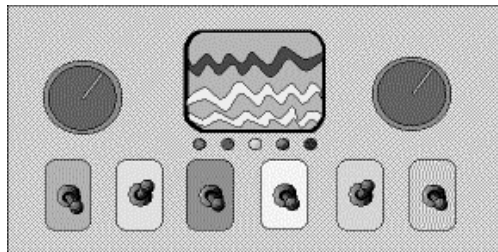
Enduring Painful Feelings



The purpose of this session is to help men with their alexithymia, the disease of “no language for feelings.” The importance of developing a language for feelings is not readily apparent to many men. It is crucial, however, for anger management. Anger is the main surfacing place for the emotional life for many men.

A vertical column of 25 empty square checkboxes, intended for a self-assessment or tracking tool.


Sitting at the Emotional Control Panel




Last group session we issued a challenge: Am I a robot, or am I human? Do I continue to blame my anger on other people (You pissed me off!), or on the way society has programmed me (It's natural to get mad if that happens), or on the expectations of my peer group (They'd think I was weird if I didn't punch him back)?

These are examples of robot-thinking. If I make the decision to be a human—with freedom and responsibility—the next question is, “How can I start to take charge of these decisions?”

This is a big decision—no need to make it all at once. This means an acknowledgment that we are on a plane that has been on auto-pilot, but it is dangerously out of control. We need to kick open the door to the cabin, sit at the controls with all the strange dials and levers, and start to figure how to bring this baby in for a landing. If we were on a plane, the control tower could give us advice about the various levers and dials to make the landing easier. But they could not fly it for us—we would need to do the work ourselves. In the same way, we need to sit at our emotional control panel and do the work of learning what these things mean and how to maneuver it. We can get pointers from others, but no one—not our wives, partners, girl friends, mothers—can manage our emotions for us.



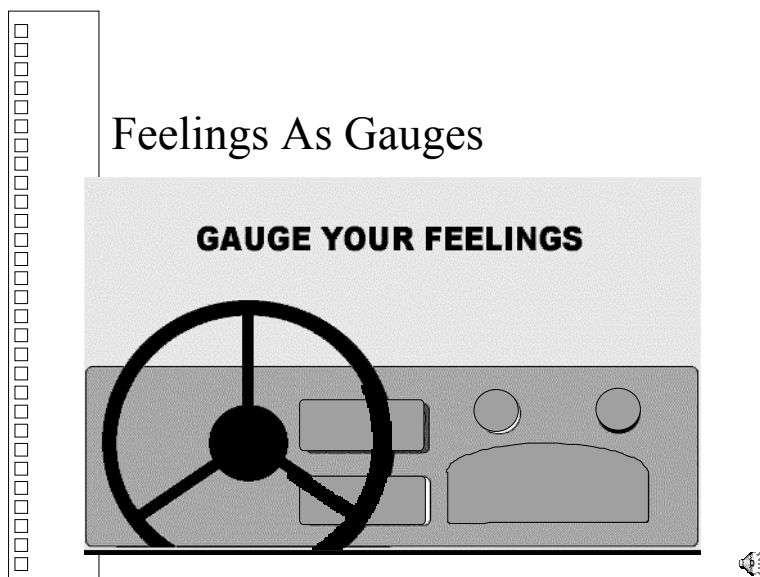
R	ELAX
E	NDURE PAINFUL FEELINGS
A	SSERT ONESELF APPROPRIATELY
C	HANGE BLAMING THINKING
H	EAR THE NEEDS OF OTHERS



Let's start exploring the emotional control panel. As we mentioned previously, there are five key skills we will discuss in this group, with the first letters spelling out the word REACH.

E NDURE PAINFUL FEELINGS

The first we will discuss is the skill of enduring painful or uncomfortable feelings.

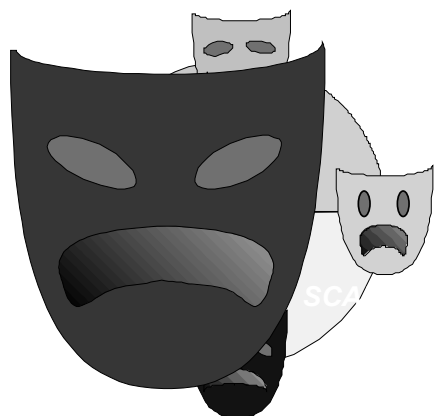


Frequently, a person might tell a story about his anger which leaves the discomfort out of the picture altogether: "He said something about my mother and I got pissed off." If we asked, "Were you aware of any discomfort first, like feeling shamed or disrespected?" he might answer, "I'm not sure." This man's situation is like that of a person driving a car with the gauges taped over. The gauges in a car give us valuable information about possible mechanical problems. If the oil pressure is down, this may warn me of engine problems, but if the gauges are taped over, the first sign I might have of engine problems is the smoke pouring from under the hood.

In terms of emotions, if shame frequently triggers anger, it would help if I had a shame-gauge, help if I were aware how intensely I am feeling disrespected, humiliated, embarrassed, or ashamed. If I had a shame-gauge, I would have options: I could do something, re-adjust the emotional machinery.

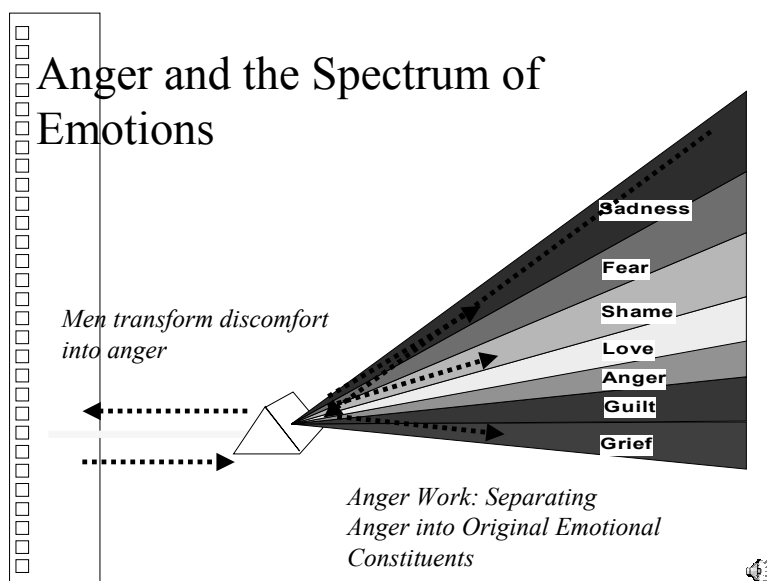


Four Cardinal Feelings



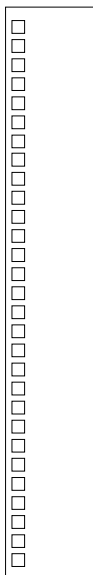
There are four cardinal feelings—glad, sad, mad and scared. These are similar to cardinal points on the compass, and just as there are many other directions—north by northwest, southeast, etc.—there are many other feelings. But let's start with these.

In a well-balanced emotional life, there would be a roughly equal distribution of the feelings. The proportions of happiness, sadness, anger, and fear would be approximately the same. This of course might vary according to life circumstances, but over the long haul, the cards would get dealt to each of the feeling-groups in roughly equal shares. There would also be some congruence between the event and the feeling.

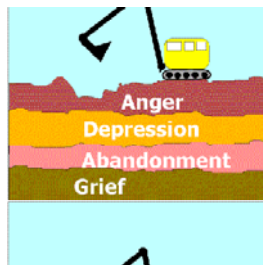


Men, however, do not typically have well-balanced emotional lives. When something sad happens, instead of experiencing sadness, men frequently become angry. When something terrifying happens, instead of feeling fear, men get angry. Instead of experiencing shame, men get angry. Men often don't know they love someone until they experience jealousy—and jealousy is love transformed into anger: "I must love her, because she ticks me off."

There seems to be an unnamed transformer in men's emotional minds—the product of training, biology, or both—which changes all feelings of discomfort into anger. This is the result of countless generations of warrior training. If a person wallowed in the feeling of fear or sadness when under attack, he would not survive long in battle. If he is able to transform his grief into anger, this emotion might be used in battle

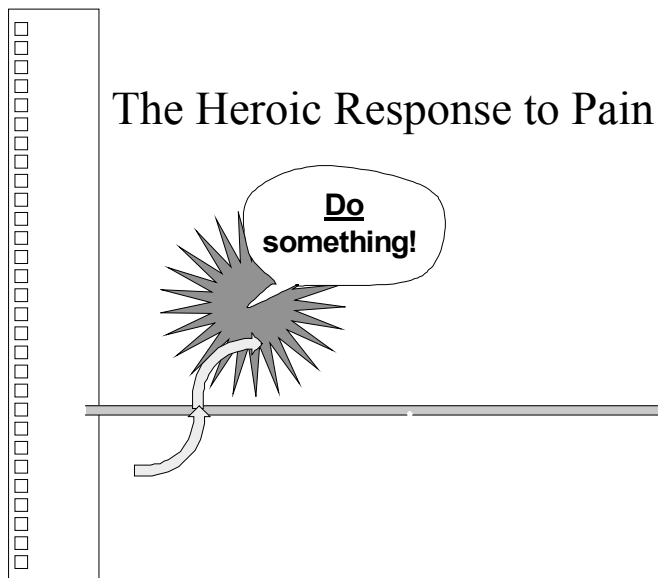


Archaeology of Emotions



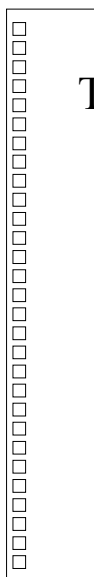
Another way of talking about our work here is in terms of an Archaeology of Emotions. For men, anger is the emotion which lies nearest the surface. But there are other emotions which form the basis for anger, which lie hidden from view. We need to become explorers, digging below the surface of our anger to discover what lies beneath. In the example in the picture, this man might discover that his anger is frequently founded on depression, or a sense of abandonment by his father, or grief for his father's absence. But each person is different, and must embark on his own expedition.

Notice that the man in the picture is not making a lot of progress. This is slow, tedious work!

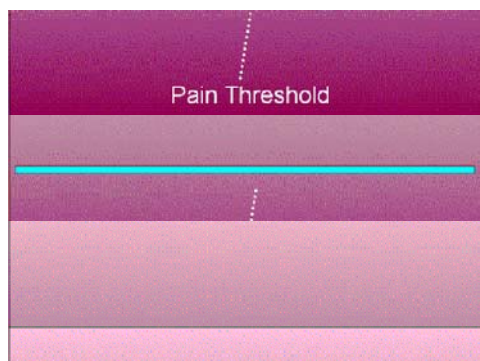


When discomfort starts, the heroic response is to do something. This is the beginning of anger—the need to respond to pain with action. Men are trained in this response from their earliest years. When the discomfort crosses the pain threshold and becomes apparent, men start to strap on the armor, load the weapons, and gird for battle. Men make the assumption that if they didn't become action heroes, the discomfort would continue to rise indefinitely, and only some sort of action can make a difference.

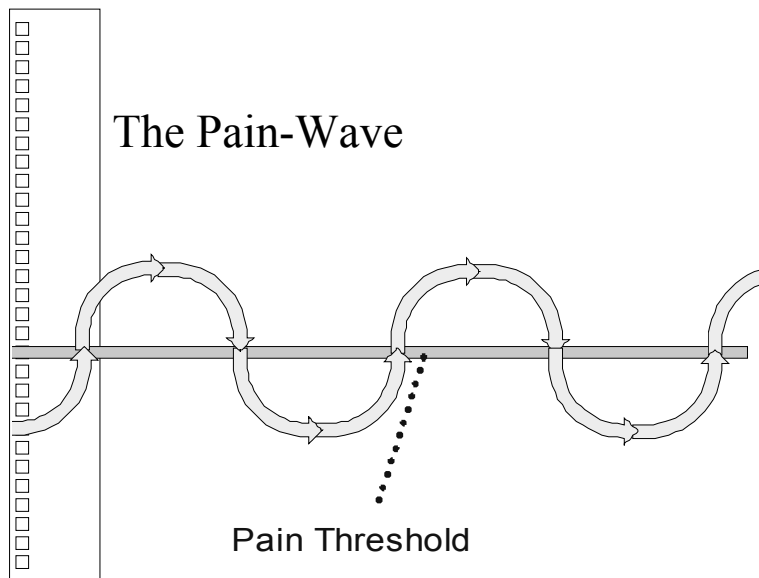
This response is so ingrained by biology and cultural training that men often can't imagine an alternative. "What else could I do?"



The Pain-Wave



Pain researchers report that pain is not a straight line. It increases, levels out all by itself, then decreases, then swells again later. It is a wave, rising and falling like the waves of the ocean, first roiling and churning in with lots of hubbub and noise, flattening out as it rises on the beach, then receding again into the sea. This occurs without our intervention. If we do nothing, discomfort will go away. We have been trained to be action heroes, but a second way of responding to discomfort is to simply rise and fall with the waves, like a duck floating on the surface of the ocean.



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Let's try an exercise. (Depending on the time available and your assessment of the group, select one of these exercises)

Exercise III-a

Think of an upsetting experience that has happened to you, involving some other person. Make note of the discomfort which happened before the anger emerged—feeling disrespected, shame, unfairness, ignored, or anxious, or whatever feeling you noted in the anger record.

Take a relaxed position in your chair. Close your eyes, take a deep breath, let it out. . . Take another, and as you let it out, notice yourself becoming more relaxed, all tension draining from your body. The more you relax, the more you feel your body becoming just like that breath, a fresh breath and nothing more. As you take another breath, you relax into the certainty that your body is no longer solid. Even if it still is shaped as your body and looks like your body, feel as you breathe that it is made of air, air that can go wherever it wants. Take yourself back to the upsetting event. See the event happening again. . . If another person was involved, see their face, hear their words. Loop the most difficult part of the event, so it is happening over and over.

As the angering event happens, imagine that the words or actions of the other person are like scalding water that they are throwing at you from a bucket, so that their words or actions are coming towards you as something fiery hot and passing through your air-body, and landing on the ground or floor behind you, and you are untouched, because scalding water doesn't stick to air. You stand quietly observing the scalding droplets flying through the air, now much slower, passing slowly through your air-body. And as the scalding droplets pass through you, notice that the air swirls and heats a little for a moment, and we call this swirling and heating "discomfort"—shame, anxiety, unfairness—notice whatever you feel. Notice, everything moving very slowly, how your air-body returns to its original form after the scalding droplets pass through.

Now let's return from this event, feel your air-body coming back through time to the present, to this room. And as I count backwards from five to zero, you will find yourself entering this room, and you may open your eyes.

Exercise III-b

Make sure your position is comfortable in your chair. Simply sit and let your eyes close if they want to. And as you sit, you may find your attention turning towards your breath, as it comes in, then goes out. Do not try to do anything special with your breath—no need to breathe deeper or faster—just watch the breath come in and out on its own. . .

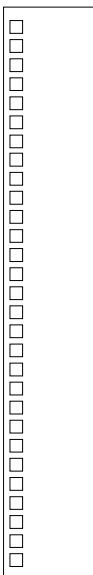
And while you are sitting there, your attention on your breath, you may find your attention drifting on its own now and then towards other things in your life. You may let this happen, as your mind drifts in this relaxed state. You may find your mind at times drifting back to a time you were upset, when someone did something to slight you or shame you or hurt you in some way. And if your mind should drift back to this, simply notice the feelings of discomfort and tension, notice the places where your body gets tense when the thoughts of the hurt arise. . . Notice how strong the tension of the feeling is. . . It may be stronger now than before, or perhaps it is weaker now, or perhaps it is the same. . . You may notice the strength of the feeling by saying a number to yourself as the tension of the feeling comes in and gets stronger, then weakens as you mind passes to other things, perhaps to simply watching your breath again, going in and out. As the tension of the feelings come and go, you may simply say to yourself, 2 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 5 . . . 4 . . . , any number between one and ten as the tension of the feeling comes and goes, like your breath comes and goes, like waves in the ocean come and go on the shore. . .

And if there is any tension in your body or mind as we sit . . . No need to do anything about it, no need to move around . . . Just notice the tension, notice its strength, 1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 2 . . . , as it comes and goes.

Now I'm going to count backwards from 5 to 0, and as I count you may find your eyelids start to flutter as they get ready to open, then slowly open your eyes as you find yourself becoming more present in the room, more and more awake. . . (count slowly down from five)

PROPERTIES On passing, 'Finish' buttons: On failing, 'Finish' buttons: Allow user to leave quiz: User may view slides after quiz: User may attempt quiz:	Go to Next Slide Go to Next Slide After user has completed quiz At any time Unlimited times	 Properties...	 Edit in Quizmaker
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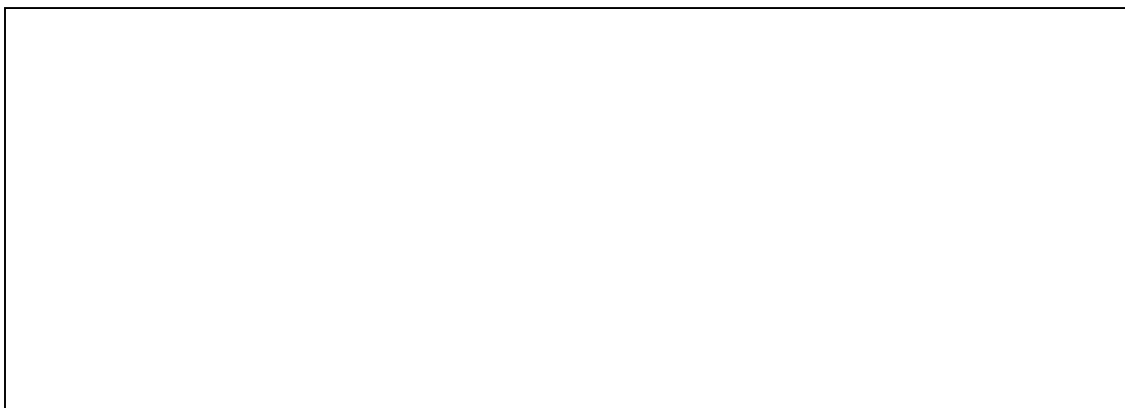


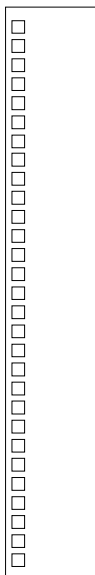


Rule #1 of Anger Management:

The better we endure our pain,
the better we manage our anger

Click mouse to start
exercises III-a & III-b





End of Session 3

- Keep working on Anger Record
- Pay special attention to the Feelings column, noticing what type of feelings tend to trigger anger



Take the I-Rate exam, Appendix I in the Manual.