



# REACH Program: Session 7

## Extinguishing Thoughts



*Last week we went over seven types of Inflammatory Thoughts which tend to drive our anger. Let's review these.*

## Types of Inflammatory Thoughts

- Targeting
- Personifying
- Mind-Reading
- Extremity
  - ◆ Blaming
  - ◆ Catastrophizing
  - ◆ Labeling
- Should-ing
- Avenging
- Empowerment



Review the types of thoughts from last week.



## Extinguishing Anger



An Approach  
Deal With It  
small  
alarms: Self-  
Extinguishing Thoughts  
after a Blaze



*Anger management is similar to fighting fires—we are Emotional Firemen. Just as firemen learn techniques for putting out blazes, we’ll learn some techniques for reducing the intensity of anger.*

*But firemen do more than simply put fires out. They administer the installation of smoke detectors, fire alarms, sprinkler systems, and fire extinguishers. They help establish evacuation procedures which can be used in case there is a blaze. They learn to work as a team. And if there is a fire, they investigate afterwards to determine how it started and how it grew.*

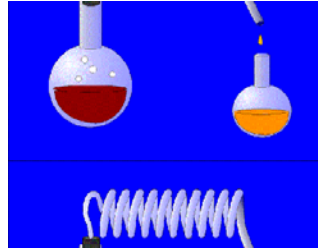
*Similarly, to be effective anger managers, we must*

- Use a team approach—groups can pool their skills and respond more effectively than can individuals*
- Develop a rapid response to emerging anger*
- Establish the emotional equivalent of a smoke-detector: we will work on self-monitoring so that we can respond when the anger is small.*
- Use extinguishing thoughts that reduce the intensity of the anger*
- Develop an evacuation protocol: Time-Out*
- Investigate after an angry event, with the purpose of preventing similar “fires” from happening again*



## Three Steps of Mad Science

- Monitoring:  
observing what goes into making me mad
- Assessing the data:  
What kinds of thing happen a lot?
- Doing something different



*Mad science is made up of three basic steps. These three steps spell out M-A-D.*  
:

1. *Monitoring what goes into making us angry. We have been working on this in the Anger Record*
2. *Assessing the data and making an hypothesis: What basic patterns do I see in myself? What discomfort-buttons get the rage-robot going? What thoughts tend to fan the flames? In the last row on the Anger Record, we have been encouraging you to group the data, to come up with some working hypotheses about what makes the anger tick.*
3. *Do something different. Doing something different means getting myself untracked, intervening in the usual way I think and act. This is very difficult to do, but coming up with a plan for changing means deciding*
  - *What I will do differently*
  - *When I will do it*

*Both factors are of critical importance. Let's look at these one at a time, beginning with the issue of what I can do differently.*



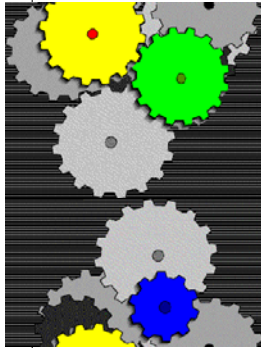
## Thoughts as Switches

- Thoughts are switches



*In a railway station, the pushing of a small switch can change the direction of a train hundreds of cars long. Pressing a button in the control room of a dam can release millions of gallons of water from a reservoir. From these examples, it seems that massive change can be started with a fairly small effort. But there are countless actions around the dam or in the rail yard which would have fairly little effect. For instance, opening the door to the depot requires about as much effort as pushing the track switch, but this would not change the direction of the train. To make the huge train switch tracks, we need to know what to push, how to push it, and when it should be done.*

## Gears



- Men frequently have a single emotional gear, one frame of mind in their response to discomfort
- We need to gain adaptability, to allow us to shift frames of mind just as we shift gears of a truck in response to road conditions



*During a previous session, we mentioned the idea that men frequently use just one emotional gear, one frame of mind in their response to discomfort. We need to strive for adaptability, so that we are adjusting to changing circumstances by adopting different frames of mind as needed. Using extinguishing thoughts is an attempt to shift gears emotionally, to try a different door, to become more adaptable by adopting a different frame of mind.*





## Time-Travel

Imagine being able to go back in time, but you are limited to whispering something into your own ear at a particular time in the past.

- What would you say?
- When would you say it?
- How would you say it?



### Exercise I: Time-Travel

*Let's try an exercise. Think of a time when you got angry and the consequences were negative. Maybe your anger damaged a relationship, got you in trouble somehow, or caused you to do something that was damaging to yourself. Review the event in your mind, then review the other events which set the stage for this one.*


*Imagine now that you are able to go back in time, not as a physical being, but invisibly, as a little voice on your own shoulder. You can travel to any point in the past, sit on your shoulder and whisper something in your own ear, something which might change the way things unfolded. What you can say needs to be brief—fewer than ten words.*

*Pick out a moment in time when there was a time of possible decision, where things might have unfolded in a different way. What brief statement would you whisper in your own ear at that moment? How would you say this to yourself? Remember, your entire future hinges on your ability to persuade yourself to consider a different course of action. You are trying to lead this person—your old self—to change directions and develop a wider and better life. Spend some time with this, because the stakes are high. Write down the message you would like to whisper in your own ear which could change the course of things.*




## Linear and Spiral Time

**Past                      Present                      Future**

**LINEAR** 

**TIME:**

- Time unfolds in straight line
- Past is gone, unchangeable. “History is bunk”:  
Henry Ford
- Senseless to work on past--we can only work  
towards a different future



*What’s the point in trying to recall the past and bring it to life, as we have done? What’s to be gained from thinking of decisions we might have made, of thoughts we could have had? If it seems senseless to you, you are not alone. We often see time as a straight line leading from the past and moving towards the future, and from that standpoint it is senseless to look carefully at the past, because it can’t be changed. “History is bunk,” as Henry Ford says (though, since Henry Ford is history now, he, too is bunk). [click mouse to show arrow animation]*

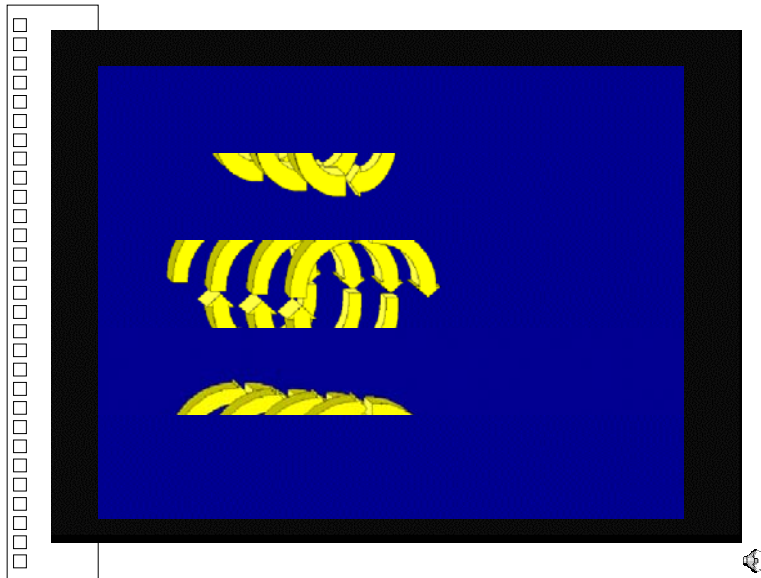


## Spiral Time

- Endless repetition of similar life-themes:  
Vicious Circles become Vicious Spirals
- *Déjà vu*: I have been here before, and before
- Future echoes past, with minor variations
- Working on past choices equals working on the future

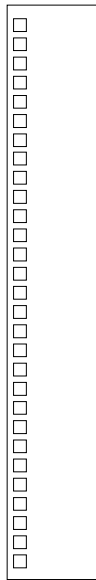


*An alternate idea of time is that it's not a line, but a spiral. I might notice, for instance, that there is an endless repetition of similar life-themes which unfolds in my life. I'm always feeling betrayed, or lost, or I'm always being accused of being arrogant. Things keep coming back around, and I experience them again, as if I'm on some ride which won't stop. I'm often feeling déjà vu—I've been here before.*

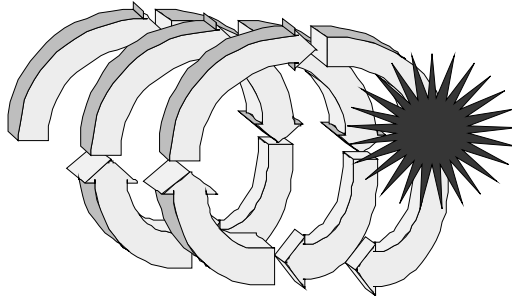


*Here's a picture of Spiral Time. My vicious circle is really a vicious spiral, unfolding in slightly different, but basically similar ways, again and again.*

*If time is a spiral in this way, working on the past is working on the future. Concentrating careful attention on the thoughts and decisions of the past is focusing on things which may unfold when I get to a similar place in the future. This is a little like a batter in a slump, watching video tapes of his swing in slow motion, trying to pick out small errors he has made in the past. I can do this better.*



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## Firing the Old Coach

- Identifying the “old voice” in the head which is pushy, demanding, angry, responsible for our anger
- Re-assessing goals: Asking whether this “coach” is helping us perform at peak capacity
- Writing job-description for new coach
- Asking, “What would the new coach say then?”



### **Exercise II: Firing the Old Coach**

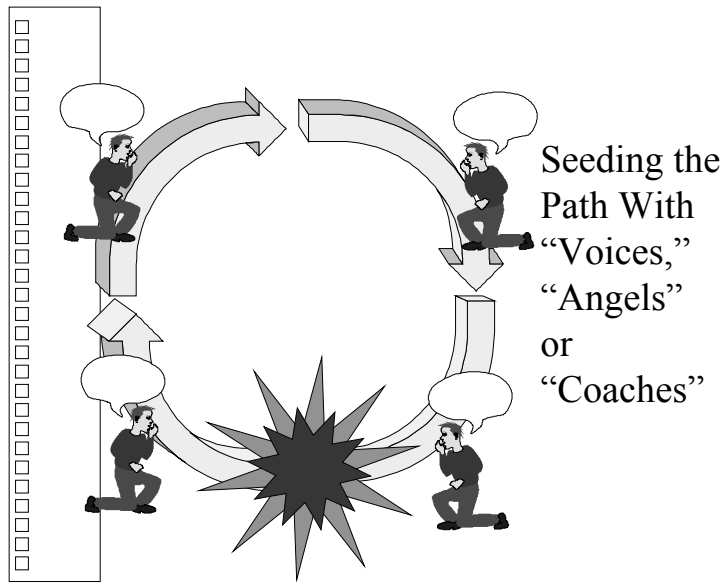
*As we look over the thoughts that tend to drive our anger—thoughts where we tend to mind-read, label, catastrophize, etc.—think of this as representative of the coaching style of your “inner coach.” This coach may have been on the job for many years, even to the previous generation.*

*Let’s imagine a meeting to evaluate the performance of this old coach. In a college or university, they would gather deans, important alumni, trustees, academic leaders, and members of the college community. They would ask, “What are the overall objectives of our program in the next ten years? Is this coach meeting those overall objectives?” Let’s ask similar questions about your “inner coach”: what are your overall goals in the next few years? Is this inner coach bringing you closer to meeting those goals?*

*It’s possible you would conclude that the “inner coach” should stay on the job, that there is an overall accord between the coach’s style and demeanor and your overall emotional goals.*

*On the other hand, you might decide that the coach’s performance and demeanor are inconsistent with your overall emotional goals.*

*Take the worksheet called Calling the Old Coach on the Carpet, and spend some time filling it out. Pair up with another group member, and report the results to him, then switch off and he will report to you.*



*The exercise we tried today is not a one-time exercise. If we are planning to run a marathon, it is not enough to simply pull on the sneakers one time and run around the block.*

*But when done consistently and patiently, the gradual effect can be the awakening of "voices" that can gradually shift the rigid pattern of the vicious circle which snares us. We are "seeding the path" with gentle, coaxing voices that make the circle less vicious, may eventually transform it into a spiral dance.*



## End of Session 7

- Next time: Communication Skills
- Continue with Anger Record, focusing attention on the Action column



*Next time we will start talking about communication skills—talking about anger as it happens between two persons. Continue with the Anger Record.*