

Understanding, Controlling  
&  
Preventing  
**ANGER**  
Part I

Teacher's Guide

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# Understanding, Controlling & Preventing

# **ANGER**

## Part I

Time: 15 minutes

### PROGRAM OVERVIEW

#### Intended Audience and Uses

This video and its companion program, *Understanding, Controlling & Preventing Anger, Part II*, are intended to be used with youngsters, ages 12-17. The videos also can be used in adult settings, especially for parents of preteens and teens. It is important to note that the program has been designed to be used with a classroom teacher, facilitator, leader or adult counselor. The first program helps viewers understand what anger is and how it is generated. Its purpose is to provide the necessary information to foster self-recognition of an anger problem. The second program

provides more detailed information for self-diagnosis, and gives control and prevention strategies. The programs have been designed to be used in the following settings:

- **Classroom:** *Health curriculum* -- Interpersonal Relations, Conflict Resolution; *Home Economics curriculum* -- Parenting and Family Living
- **At-Risk Programs:** Counseling and therapy
- **Small Group:** Counseling and therapy
- **Youth Group:** Religious youth programs
- **PTA-PTO:** Parenting programs
- **Community Outreach:** Counseling, Parenting, Conflict Resolution, Family Living programs
- **Family Counseling:** Counseling and therapy
- **Detention Centers and Alternative Schools**
- **Individual:** Counseling and Therapy

## Program Synopsis

A young woman is chased by a stalker. At first, she is overcome with fear. Then she becomes angry as the stalker attacks her. The young woman disables the stalker with several karate blows. The narrator explains that in some instances anger is justified, and that throughout history, whenever people have faced tyranny, justifiable anger has resulted. The program then gives a brief overview of where anger is generated, and how it can overwhelm rational thought. The next part of the video shows a young woman arguing about a curfew with her mother. As the narrator explains, the young woman uses anger to dispel or block stress that has come from frustration. Through a

series of short vignettes, viewers learn that anger also is used to dispel stress that comes from hurt and threats. Some people may use anger to dispel stress because they have an inborn tendency to do so. Others may use it because they have learned anger responses from the people around them. Still others may become angry because anger responses were rewarded when they were young. People use anger to dispel stress because stress can be extremely unpleasant. Signs of stress include headaches, tight muscles, nausea, shallow breathing, and perspiring. Yet, stress alone is not enough to cause anger. A "trigger thought" is needed, also. "Trigger thoughts" generally fall into one of two categories. The first is known as the "blamer." "Blamers" say that you've been intentionally harmed or slighted by the unfair, wrong-headed or ill-willed behavior of another person. The second category is the "should." "Shoulds" tell you that someone *should* have done one thing, but instead, has done *another*. Both "blamers" and "shoulds" restrict a person's ability to see beyond his or her own thoughts and ideas. During the next section of the program, several vignettes show how anger can feed upon itself, cycling downward through a series of increasingly emotional and highly-charged trigger thoughts and stressful reactions, until it explodes. Finally, the program explains that anger can seriously impact an individual's ability to have healthy relationships with others, and can negatively affect a person's physical health.

## STUDENT OBJECTIVES

After viewing this video and participating in the suggested activities, students should be able to do the following:

- (1) Tell when anger is warranted.

- (2) Describe where anger is generated.
- (3) Explain how anger dispels or blocks stress.
- (4) Name five signs of stress.
- (5) Define "trigger thoughts," and give several examples of "blamers" and "shoulds."
- (6) Name three reasons why people may use anger to dispel stress.
- (7) Tell why anger often has a negative impact a person's ability to have healthy relationships with others.

## **SUGGESTED LESSON PLAN**

### **1. Instructional Strategies**

#### **a. Single-View Strategy**

If you would like to use this program as a single lesson, it is suggested you pass out the preliminary written material ("Vocabulary List" and "Viewer's Concept Guide") before showing the program. The vocabulary exercise may be assigned as seat work or done as a class exercise. The concept guide may be completed as the video is shown, or immediately afterwards. In either case, the questions should be read before showing the program. The remaining worksheets should be passed out and completed after the program has been screened.

#### **b. Interactive Strategy**

The video has been designed to facilitate stopping at various places for the completion of written

exercises and class discussion. The written exercises have been developed to expand, deepen and apply the concepts contained in each section of the video. (For specifics, please refer to "Purposes of Handout Material, below). In the transcript of the video, pages 12-20, stop points are indicated by the "📄" symbol, followed by the name of the written exercise(s) to be distributed. If you elect to use the interactive strategy, you should hand out the "Vocabulary List" and "Viewer's Concept Guide" before viewing the program.

### c. Combined Strategy

If time allows, it is recommended that you show the video in its entirety in one screening, then show it again as an interactive lesson, using the stop points to hand out the exercises and discuss the various concepts presented in each section of the program. The video may be shown a third time as part of a review.

## 2. Introduction

Ask the members of your group what things make them angry. Discuss the specifics of family and social situations in which they may become angry. After each participant has told what makes him or her angry, ask if anyone sees any underlying similarities. Guide the discussion toward the factors of stress and trigger thoughts, although at this point, you need not use these terms. Help your students see that anger is generated in situations in which frustrations often occur -- that they are either being prevented from doing something, or that they feel slighted or hurt. Have them describe the uncomfortable feelings (stress and hurt) that generally precede anger. Help your students understand that anger is not an emotion that stands alone. Rather, it is part of a larger *psychological process*



that includes things that happen before and after it manifests itself.

### 3. Previewing Activities

Tell the class that they are now going to see a video that will help them understand how and why people become angry. Then pass out the "Vocabulary List" and "Viewer's Concept Guide." Have the class complete the vocabulary list exercise as a small group activity or as individual seat work. Then go over the Viewer's Concept Guide. Have the students complete this exercise as they watch the program or immediately afterwards. If you are presenting the video as an interactive activity, please consult the transcript of the video (see below) to determine stop points and handout material.

### 4. Post-viewing Activities

Replay the opening of the program. Ask the students, "At what point does the young woman's emotion change from fear to anger? Is it just before she attacks the stalker or immediately afterward, when she turns to yell at him?" The exact instant is, of course, moot. The point is that the anger is part of a psychological process. It is very possible that the fear generated stress, which, in turn, rapidly provoked the trigger thought, "He's an evil person and wants to hurt me." *Emphasize the differences between warranted anger (when the young woman is attacked and when the soldiers on horseback flog civilians), and unwarranted anger that is destructive (the examples in the rest of the program).*

If you have used the single view strategy, distribute the remaining handouts. (See Purposes of Handout Material, below). Go over each worksheet, using it as a basis for discussion. If appropriate, have each group

member share his or her personal responsibility statement, stressors, "blamers" and "shoulds," and "When I Became Angry," descriptions. Be sure to have each member of the group save these worksheets; they will be used during the second part of this two-part series.

Discuss the statement, "The media portrays anger as an acceptable way to solve problems." Ask your students if their behavior is influenced by the media.

Have your students write and present role-play situations in which they have become angry. The role playing should include stressful events and the two types of trigger thoughts mentioned in the video. Save the scripts for these presentations. They will be used in the second part of this series.

## PURPOSES OF HANDOUT MATERIAL

***Vocabulary List, Part I:*** To familiarize students with possibly unfamiliar terms used in the program.

***Viewer's Concept Guide, Part I:*** To focus the viewer's attention on key concepts.

***Stress:*** To review the concept of stress; to help viewers identify stressful situations in their lives.

***Taking Personal Responsibility:*** To help viewers take personal responsibility for their emotions and actions; to help viewers formulate a personal responsibility statement.

***Trigger Thoughts:*** To review the concept of trigger thoughts; to help viewers identify their own "blamers" and "shoulds."

***A Combustible Mix:*** To help viewers identify and analyze how their personal stressors and trigger thoughts result in anger.

**Anger & Physical Health:** To provide more detailed information on how anger impacts physical health.

## ANSWER KEY

**Viewer's Concept Guide:** 1. When a person is in danger, when people face tyranny or injustice. 2. The primitive inner part. 3. Stress. 4. When we're frustrated, hurt or threatened. 5. Inborn tendency to be angry, being around people who respond with anger, being rewarded for anger responses. 6. Headache, shallow breathing, perspiring, upset stomach, tense muscles. 7. Trigger thought. 8. "Blamers" and "shoulds." 9. Because it generates negative feelings in the people on the receiving end.

**Taking Personal Responsibility:** Example of a Personal Responsibility Statement might be "I am no longer a child and therefore take personal responsibility for my feelings and actions. I choose to not to respond with anger when I am hurt, frustrated or threatened."

**Stress:** Examples might include, "When I fall behind in my work, when I have a test, when I don't do well on a test, when a teacher disapproves of something I do, when I'm late for class, when I don't understand something, when a teacher can't find the time to help me, when I feel stupid, when I don't have enough time for an assignment, when I put things off to the last minute, when my parents argue, when my parents have money problems, when my brother or sister borrows my clothes without asking, when I have to do a chore and don't want to, when my mother nags me about something, when someone tells me to turn down my CD player, when I can't watch a show on TV, when I'm not included in an activity, when my girlfriend or boyfriend disapproves of something I've done, when a friend doesn't include me in his or her plans."

## TRANSCRIPT OF THE VIDEO

### Vocabulary List, Part I Viewer's Concept Guide, Part I

*Stalker attacks victim. She delivers several karate blows to him.*

**VICTIM:** Scum!

**NARRATOR:** It is anger, and it can tell us when something is wrong and we need to do something about it.

Throughout history, whenever people have faced tyranny, danger or injustice, outrage and anger have been the results -- results that are understandable and sometimes warranted. Anger can result in actions that destroy evil.

Anger is an emotion that has been with us for a very long time, for as long as we humans have walked, and in some cases run, on earth.

As with other deeply felt emotions, such as love, anger comes from one of the oldest parts of our brain, a portion that neither thinks nor evaluates.

This area of the brain sees things only in a shadowy, emotional world of either "bad" or "good;" "pleasurable" or "painful;" "dangerous" or "friendly." There are no in-betweens.

Over millions of years, the human brain evolved. While its primitive "emotional" area remained much the same, it slowly developed another area, one capable of thinking -- able to understand that things are not always as they seem, and that it's only very seldom, if ever, that people or events are all good or all bad.

In other words, the thinking part of our brain sees people and events more realistically, more as they truly are.

Unfortunately, the brain's emotional inner portion, the part responsible for anger, can and sometimes does, overwhelm the

outer thinking part.

And that's when we can get into trouble.

**FELICIA:** I'm not a baby any more! When will you realize that I'm not a child? Are you even listening to me? I cannot believe you!

**NARRATOR:** For the most part, anger is used to dispel or block stress, that uncomfortable feeling we may experience when things don't go the way we want them to. In other words, when we're frustrated.

**FELICIA:** Out of all my friends, I'm the only one who has to be home by 10:30!

**MOM:** I know you want to stay later. But your father and I have discussed it, and we're not comfortable with you staying out so late on a school night.

**FELICIA:** I can't believe you! You don't understand anything! I hate you!

**NARRATOR:** Anger is also used to dispel the stress that comes from painful emotions, such as hurt.

**SEAN:** Naw, you'll never be a starter.

**MIKE:** What did you say?

**SEAN:** Hey, chill out, man. I just said you'd never be a starter. You're not tall enough, that's all.

**MIKE:** Yeah? Well, listen to this!

**NARRATOR:** Besides coming from frustration and hurt, anger can come from a threat, too.

**SEAN:** Do it again, tough guy, and I'll flatten you!

**NARRATOR:** When anger is released, or "vented," the level of stress goes down. And so do the uncomfortable feelings caused by stress -- at least for the moment.

Yet, regardless of the cause – either threats, hurts or frustrations – the stress may become so great, that it eventually explodes.

**FELICIA:** I can't believe this! You don't understand anything! I hate you!

**MOM:** Come back here, young lady!

**NARRATOR:** Of course, there are ways other than anger, to handle stress. So why is it, then, that anger is such a common response to stressful situations?

Well, some people simply may have an inborn tendency to become angry. But it's important to remember that it's only a tendency.

**FELICIA:** I hate her! I hate her!

**NARRATOR:** That means angry responses are not cast in cement. They can be changed. Another reason that individuals may respond with anger is that the people around them...

**MOM:** Listen to me young lady!

**NARRATOR:** ...react in a similar way – an extremely important factor.

**MOM:** I will not be talked to in that manner! Do you understand me? Who do you think you are talking to you mother like that?

I can tell you right now that when your father comes home, he and I will have a serious discussion about this outburst of yours, and you will be severely punished! You can count on it!

**NARRATOR:** Still another reason people respond with anger is that, as babies, they were trained unknowingly to respond to stress in that manner.

For example, Felicia, as an infant, may have been rewarded for throwing temper tantrums. Her parents may have given in to her whenever she raged. A pattern may have been established when she was very young, and then continued throughout her life, to

the present.

**MOM:** Oh, well. I suppose one time won't hurt. Just stop that wailing!

**NARRATOR:** And old habits can be very hard to break.

**MOM:** Okay?

**NARRATOR:** The effects of stress can be extremely unpleasant. That's one reason why we often attempt to block it or dispel it.

**ANGRY GUY:** Listen, man. Do you know what you did? Do you understand what you did to me, man? You stole my girl!

**NARRATOR:** One effect, or sign, of stress is a headache, certainly an unpleasant experience.

Many people get headaches when things aren't going their way. Tight muscles may be another sign.

Perspiring is still another.

**ANGRY GUY:** Just imagine that right now! How embarrassing, huh?

**NARRATOR:** Some people become sick to their stomach, and their breathing becomes shallow when they become stressed.

## Stress

### Taking Personal Responsibility

Yet, stress alone is not enough to cause anger.

Stress is somewhat like a pile of tinder. It's a condition ready to burst into flames. But a spark -- a way to ignite that tinder -- is needed before anger is generated.

The spark is called a "trigger thought."

There is an endless variety of trigger thoughts. But they generally fall into one of two categories.

The first category is known as the "blamer." "Blamers" tell you

that you've been intentionally harmed by the unfair, wrong-headed or ill-willed behavior of another person.

**TEEN #4:** He brushed me back to make me look like a jerk! He did it on purpose!

**FRIEND:** There's not going to be any room in our car. You'll have to find your own ride.

**TEEN #5:** They lead me on, make me think that they like me, and then they shoot me down! They are so two-faced!

**INQUISITOR:** Did you finish your history report yet?

**TEEN #6:** Whenever I'm stressed out, she starts picking on me. I'm so fed up with it!

**NARRATOR:** The second group of trigger thoughts are known as "shoulds."

"Shoulds" say that the offending person knows (or should know) how to act correctly, but out of fear, ill-will or lack of resolve, has broken the rules of reasonable conduct.

**TEEN #7:** He shouldn't have backed down like that, the little jerk!

**TEEN #8:** Hey, guys! Watch this!

**TEACHER:** All right, who did it?

**CLASS:** Jason! Jason did it!

**TEEN #8:** Kids should stick together. But no! As soon as Miss Norland asks who did it, they say I'm the one! They shouldn't do that!

**FRIEND:** You mean you weren't there?

**TEEN #9:** No, my mom was really sick. I had to stay home. (To himself) He should be more understanding; he shouldn't make me feel worse!

**NARRATOR:** Up to this point, we've said that anger is, for the



most part, a non-thinking reaction found in one of the oldest parts of the brain, and that people may react with anger because they have a natural inclination to get angry, or they've learned anger responses from the people around them, or they've been conditioned from an early age to react with anger because their angry responses have been rewarded.

We've also mentioned that stress is the tinder of anger, and that trigger thoughts are the sparks that ignite the stress.

But what happens then? Does that fire of outrage eventually burn itself out? Well, it can; but often, does not.

### Trigger Thoughts

As anger continues, it often feeds upon itself; and as it does, it can last for increasingly longer periods and become more emotional -- and more out of control.

Sometimes the cycle begins with a trigger thought.

**TEEN #10:** There they go again, making fun of me. They're probably saying how fat I am and, "Why can't she lose some weight?" I hate them! They think they're so great and I'm nothing.

**NARRATOR:** Trigger thoughts then lead to stress.

**TEEN #10:** I've been trying to lose weight, but I can't do it! People are going to make fun of me for the rest of my life! Oh, now look what they've done! They've given me a headache!

**NARRATOR:** The trigger thought, "There they go again, making fun of me," leads to a stressful reaction, "Why can't I lose some weight?" The headache is another stressful reaction. All this stress provokes another trigger thought, "I hate them. They think they're so great and I'm nothing." And the cycle begins again, but now with increased stress and angrier trigger thoughts, until...

**TEEN #10:** Why don't you leave me alone? What have I ever done to you to deserve this? What? Don't even look at me any more! Get of my face!

**WHISPERER #1:** What was that all about?

**WHISPERER #2:** I don't know!

**NARRATOR:** So trigger thoughts may start the cycle, and so might stress. Derrick, the batter here, has learned that his mother is being laid off, and that his family will have less money to pay the bills -- and he's stressing about it.

**DERRICK:** ... probably won't get any money for movies, either.

**FRIEND:** Hiya, champ. Getting that swing down?

**DERRICK:** Tryin' hard. (To himself) Here we go again!

**FRIEND:** Try choking up about an inch. When I do it, I get more snap.

**DERRICK:** (To himself) What does he know? He's probably hitting 150. What a joke! Oh, great! Now he's got coach on my case! Just what I need.

**NARRATOR:** In this case, the tinder -- the stress -- is already present: Derrick's mom is about to lose her job. All that's needed is a trigger thought, "Here we go again," which his teammate's suggestion provoked. More stress is added when Derrick thinks that the coach is, in his words, "on my case."

Regardless of how the cycle of anger starts, either with stress or with a trigger thought, it can have major consequences for the individual's personal well-being and his ability to have healthy relationships with other people.

**DERRICK:** Hey, man! I don't appreciate your getting the coach on my case!

**FRIEND:** What are you talking about?

**DERRICK:** Hey, I saw you talking to him about my swing.

**FRIEND:** What? You're crazy, man! I wasn't talking about you or your swing.

**DERRICK:** Sure, you liar.

**FRIEND:** What? What did you say?

**DERRICK:** I said you're a liar!

**FRIEND:** That does it!

**NARRATOR:** Anger destroys relationships because it usually generates negative feelings in the people on the receiving end.

### A Combustible Mix

Friendships dissolve when both parties become angry with each other. They may physically clash or end the relationship by simply walking out of it.

**TEEN #12:** I don't want to talk to you about it.

**TEEN #13:** Come on. Don't clam up on me like that. I don't like it.

**TEEN #12:** I don't want to talk about it! Okay?

**TEEN #13:** Listen. I'm not going to beg. I'm tired of you shutting me out. I'm out of here!

**NARRATOR:** Anger is a painful emotion, and healthy relationships are not built on pain.

Furthermore, anger doesn't solve relationship problems. People who receive the brunt of the anger often become resentful, and then pull away.

In addition, anger prevents individuals from being balanced emotionally.

It can push out more pleasant emotions such as love, contentment and happiness. And it can take over a person's life so completely that there's little joy left in it.

Moreover, scientists have discovered that it can be harmful to a person's physical well-being. Their research shows that anger can have a direct relationship to health problems.

## Anger & Physical Health

In short, then, anger is an emotion that has been with us for millions of years.

It's generated in a non-thinking part of our brain and has two components – stress and trigger thoughts.

Anger can feed on itself, becoming more emotional, and more out of control, until it completely overwhelms the portion of the brain that controls our behavior with rational thought.

Anger can destroy relationships and, as scientists have discovered, can negatively affect our physical health.

It is in our best interest, then, to learn how to control and prevent anger. And that will be the focus of our next program.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Viewer's Concept Guide, Part I

Instructions: Answer the questions in the provided spaces.

1. **Anger may be warranted under what conditions?**
2. **From what part of the brain does anger come?**
3. **Anger is used to dispel and block what psychological condition?**
4. **What three things mentioned in the video cause stress?**
5. **What three things mentioned in the video contribute to anger responses?**
6. **Name the five signs of stress mentioned in the program.**
7. **What is the "spark" that ignites the "tinder" of stress?**
8. **What are the two categories of "trigger thoughts?"**
9. **Why might anger destroy a relationship?**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Stress

As you've seen, anger is used to block or dispel stress. Stress is that uncomfortable feeling we get when things aren't going right, or when we feel frustrated, hurt or threatened. Common signs of stress include headaches, shallow breathing, perspiring, an upset stomach and tense muscles. Some people are very easily stressed; others become stressed only when a situation becomes truly desperate. Most people fall somewhere in between. In the spaces below, tell when you become stressed. Give at least five or six examples.

I become stressed in school when

I become stressed at home when

I become stressed with my friends when

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Taking Personal Responsibility

The video mentions three reasons why people use anger to block or dispel stress.

- It's an inborn tendency.
- People around them react with anger.
- They've been trained to respond to stress with anger.

For some people, it might be easy to say, "I react with anger. That's just the way I am. I was born that way." Others might say, "I've been taught to respond with anger, so it's not my fault that I get angry."

But neither of these reactions addresses the problem. They merely shift responsibility.

When we were infants, adults were responsible for much of our behavior. Because we were too young to know any better, we had to be told not to do things that were harmful to ourselves and others. We had to be told not to put small objects in our mouth, not to run into the street, not to hit our brother or sister.

As we become older, however, we are expected to take more responsibility for our behavior. That's simply part of the growth process. When people blame others for their behavior, they're stuck in childhood. When an individual takes responsibility for his or her own behavior, that person is no longer a child.

Nobody "makes" you respond with anger. You have a choice. You may have never thought you have a choice. But you do. You can choose to be angry, which is a destructive emotion, or you can choose to deflect or avoid anger. But first, you must take personal responsibility for your choices. In the box below, write your personal responsibility statement. Cut it out and read it at least three times a day for the next month, or until you truly believe that you -- and no one else -- are responsible for your emotions.

### My Personal Responsibility Statement

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Trigger Thoughts

As you've seen, anger needs both stress and a trigger thought. If you recall, trigger thoughts can be broadly categorized into "blamers," and "shoulds." "Blamers" are self-defeating. They make it easy to justify your anger. They shift responsibility for your emotions to someone else (as you've seen, a childish thing to do), and they prevent problems from being solved. "Shoulds" do the same thing, and, in addition, ignore the fact that people differ in their views of what should or should not be done.

Think back to the times you've gotten angry during the past month or so. In the boxes, explain your trigger thoughts.

### "Blamers" I've Used

### "Shoulds" I've Used

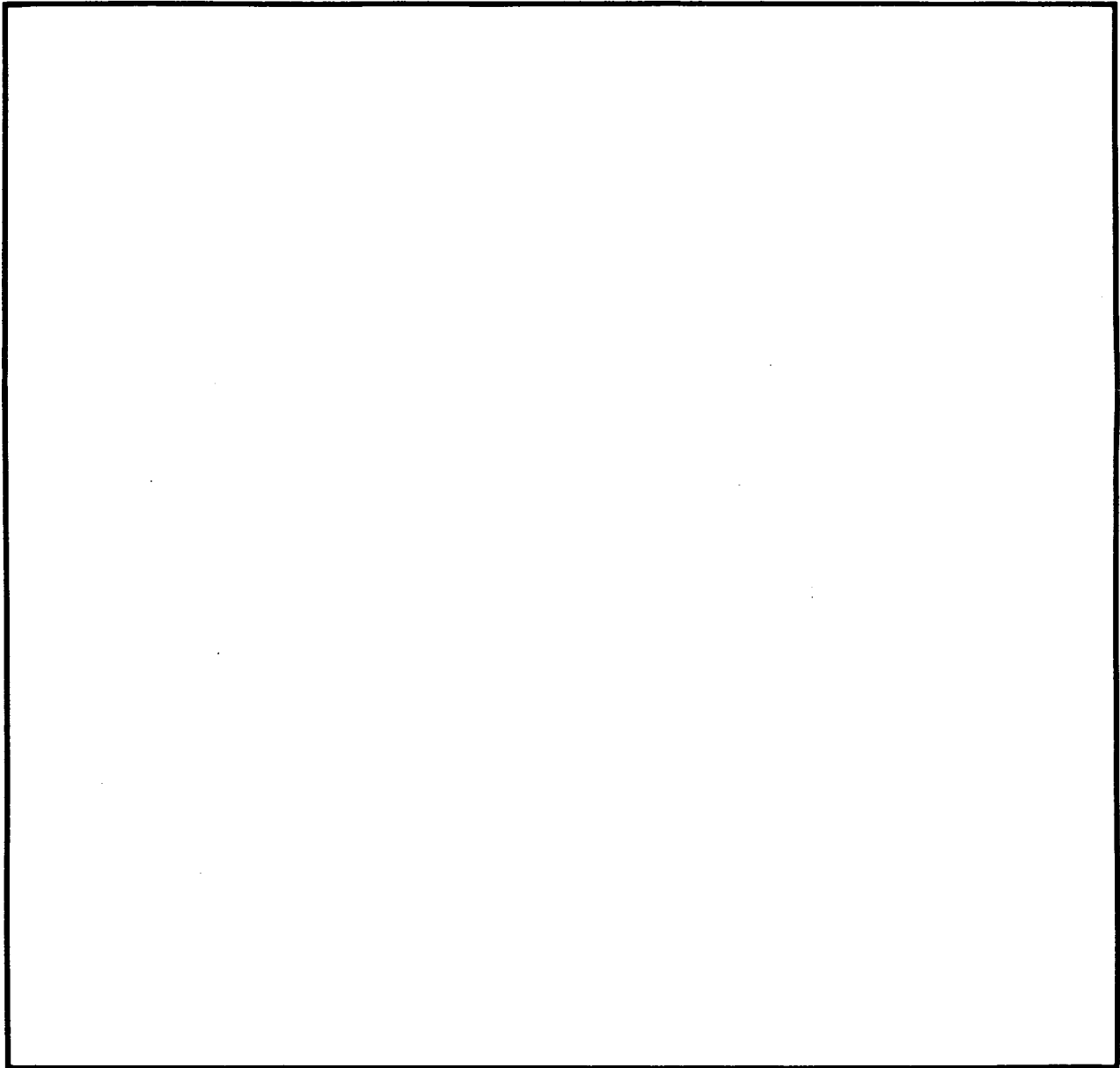


Name \_\_\_\_\_

## A Combustible Mix

As you've seen, stress and trigger thoughts are the combustible mix that results in anger. Think about the last time you became angry. In the box, write a detailed description of what happened. Tell why you were stressed and recount the trigger thoughts that ignited the anger.

### When I Became Angry

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for the student to write their response to the prompt above.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Anger & Physical Health

As you've seen, anger can prevent us from being emotionally healthy. It also can have an adverse impact on a person's physical health. When males become angry, unusually high levels of *testosterone* and *cortisol potentiate*, two powerful body chemicals, are released into the bloodstream. Elevated levels of these chemicals are a major cause of artery and heart disease in males.

*Cortisol* also depresses the immune system. So people who tend to be angry a lot are unable to fight infections as well as people who do not get angry. Several other chemicals released during anger help increase the buildup of fatty deposits on arteries and contribute to a medical condition known as hypertension. Hypertension and fatty deposits contribute to heart disease.

Anger is bad for your digestive system, too. Angry people are more likely than others to have problems with their stomachs. They have more stomach spasms, inflamed stomach linings and increased levels of acids. Some researchers believe that anger plays a key role in the development of a serious stomach condition called *ulcerated colitis*.

When people are chronically angry, that is, when they are angry all the time, both their physical and mental health deteriorate.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Vocabulary List, Part I

Instructions: On the lines, write the definition of the terms listed below.

Stress \_\_\_\_\_

Inborn tendency \_\_\_\_\_

Tantrum \_\_\_\_\_

Dispel \_\_\_\_\_

Tinder \_\_\_\_\_

Evolve \_\_\_\_\_

Overwhelm \_\_\_\_\_

Response \_\_\_\_\_

Outburst \_\_\_\_\_

Wail \_\_\_\_\_

Offending \_\_\_\_\_

Natural Inclination \_\_\_\_\_

Cycle \_\_\_\_\_

Consequence \_\_\_\_\_

Brunt \_\_\_\_\_

Resentful \_\_\_\_\_