



RECOVERY IN FOCUS · GROUP CURRICULUM · FACILITATOR GUIDE

Anger & Communication

An emotional-regulation and communication-skills session. Four parts, two group classes.

Topic category (billing anchor)	Emotional Regulation / Communication Skills, with Relapse Prevention (resentment and shame as relapse drivers)
Clinical focus	Anger patterns and communication deficits as direct drivers of resentment, shame, and return to use; assertiveness and repair skills as relapse prevention
Evidence base	CBT · assertiveness training · Relapse Prevention (Marlatt) · MI stance throughout
Format	One participant packet · two group classes of about 2 hours each · Class 1 = Parts 1–2 · Class 2 = Parts 3–4
Group rules	2 to 12 clients, same time · at least 1 active Medi-Cal beneficiary · no minors mixed with adults

This file: facilitator guide

class agendas, linking moves, guardrails, FIRP

Companion file: participant packet (print one per member)

4 parts · 10 exercises · 2 vignettes · role play · anger plan

FACILITATOR GUIDE

How to run this session

- **HOOK:** open each part with the fact, hand it to the group, let them react to each other first.
- **LINK:** the gold in this topic is members recognizing each other's exits. "Dan stuffs then blows; who else runs that pattern?" Family-of-origin links ("whose exit was it before it was yours?") build the deepest cohesion of the series.
- **TEACH LIGHT, PRACTICE THE SENTENCES:** "I feel" statements and exit lines get said out loud in the room, not just written. A sentence rehearsed in group is available at Sunday dinner.
- **LAND IT CLINICALLY:** every segment ties to relapse: anger numbed by use, anger returning in sobriety, resentment as fuel, shame after blowups as the classic trigger. Dan's chain (stuff, blow, shame, using thought) is the session's spine; return to it.

Mixed-functioning group adjustments

- Read everything aloud; writing optional; a peer or you can scribe.
- The iceberg is the key concept; draw it on the board and keep it up both classes. Lower-functioning rooms can do the whole session on body signs + iceberg + exit line and get full value.
- Role play: facilitator-led demo first; pairing optional; never force a reluctant member to perform.

SAFETY GUARDRAILS

Domestic violence and legal history live inside this topic. Keep the room at the pattern level, not the incident level. If a member starts describing violence they committed or received, contain and redirect: *"That's important, and it needs more care than group can give it. Let's talk after. For now: what's your earliest body sign?"* Follow facility protocol on any disclosure requiring report or safety planning. Never run the role play on a live domestic conflict; use work or friendship examples for practice.

No couples therapy by proxy. Members will want the group to referee a home conflict. Redirect to the skill: "the group can't settle it, but it can help you build the sentence."

HOOK SOURCE NOTE: the punching-bag finding is real (classic catharsis research: venting while ruminating increased anger and aggression rather than draining it). "Resentment as the number one threat" is recovery-program tradition, not a study; present it as "recovery programs have said for decades." Conversation starters, not testimony.

CLASS 1

Parts 1 and 2 (about 2 hours)

Opening (10 min)

Frame: *"This session is about anger: what it's protecting, where your pattern came from, and what it has to do with staying sober."* Icebreaker go-around: "When anger shows up in your body, where does it land first?" Board the answers.

Part 1: What Anger Is (40 to 50 min)

Teach (5 min or less): anger as signal; the body goes first; the iceberg (draw it). Land it: for some, using kept anger numb and sobriety turned the volume back up; for others, anger was the only permitted feeling. Both patterns are in this room.

PLAIN "What kinds of things make you angry fastest?"

DEEPER "When you got sober, did your anger get louder or quieter? What do you make of that?"

- **Exercise 1** (body signs): go around on the earliest sign; it anchors the Part 4 plan.
- **Exercise 2** (the iceberg): volunteers share the under-feeling only, not the story. When one member says "shame," watch the room nod; link it out loud.
- **Hook debrief:** after the punching-bag fact, ask: "who was taught to vent it out? How's that worked?" Rehearsing anger trains anger; that lands the whole part.

Part 2: The Four Bad Exits (50 to 60 min)

Teach (5 min or less): stuffing, blowing, leaking, aiming inward. Name the inward exit plainly: the oldest self-punishment in this room is using.

- **Exercise 3** (yes/no): item 3 (family patterns) is the linking moment of Class 1; most exits were inherited. No blaming families; just tracing the hand-me-down.
- **Exercise 4** (my exit, where learned, what it costs): go around on the exit only; the "where learned" line is share-if-you-want.
- **Dan vignette + Exercise 5:** read aloud. Question 3 is the clinical core of Class 1: blowup, shame, using thought. Shame after anger is one of the most reliable relapse triggers there is; say it plainly.

Close Class 1: talk-it-out questions. Assign: notice your exit once this week without judging it. Preview: "Class 2 is the fix: how to say it straight, and how to clean it up when you don't."

CLASS 2**Parts 3 and 4 (about 2 hours)**

Opening (10 min)

Check in: who caught their exit in the wild this week? What was under it? Billable reinforcement, and it warms the room for practice.

Part 3: Saying It Straight (55 to 65 min)

Teach (5 min or less): assertiveness and the basic rights; the two-part "I feel" statement; the 24-hour rule for screens (notes app, not the thread).

- **Exercise 6** (convert the attacks): do the first conversion together on the board. Watch for disguised attacks ("I feel like you're an idiot" is not a feeling); coach to real feeling words.
- **Exercise 7** (role play): demo first with a volunteer, you playing the listener. Keep scenarios work/friend level, not live home conflicts. Debrief the one-word feelings; "fake" and "scary" are both normal and both worth discussing.
- **Exercise 8** (yes/no): item 1 (the unsendable text) gets a show of hands and a laugh; land the 24-hour rule on it.

Part 4: Repair and the Plan (40 to 50 min)

Teach (5 min or less): repair in three parts (own it specifically, no "but," ask what would help); the anger plan (earliest sign, exit line, burn-off, under-feeling, come back). The coming-back is what separates the exit line from the silent treatment.

- **Reina vignette + Exercise 9:** read aloud. "It isn't fixed. It's different" sets honest expectations; repair changes the pattern, not the person overnight.
- **Exercise 10** (anger plan): every member writes all five lines and says the exit line out loud, word for word, twice. A rehearsed line survives adrenaline; an idea doesn't. The "one repair I owe" line is share-if-you-want but write-it-always.
- **Skill of the day:** catch one iceberg daily. Promise the check-in.

Close with the take-it-to-the-group questions and the summary, read aloud.

FIRP scaffold (one note per member, per class)

Class 1. Focus: member's emotional-regulation / relapse-prevention objective, plus today's topic: anger patterns and their connection to resentment, shame, and relapse risk. **Intervention:** *Educated group on anger as a secondary emotion, physiological anger signs, and the venting/catharsis myth; facilitated body-sign and anger-iceberg self-inventories identifying underlying emotions; guided identification of maladaptive anger exits (suppression, explosion, passive expression, self-directed anger) and their learned origins; facilitated vignette analysis of the blowup-shame-craving chain; linked members' patterns and processed responses.* **Response:** individualize. **Plan:** observe personal exit pattern without judgment; return for Class 2.

Class 2. Focus: same objective, plus today's topic: assertive communication and repair skills. **Intervention:** *Reviewed observation homework; educated group on assertiveness rights, two-part "I feel" statements, and delayed responding for electronic communication; facilitated written conversion of attacking statements and paired role-play rehearsal of assertive statements; guided each member through a written anger plan (early sign, rehearsed exit line, physical discharge, underlying-emotion identification, return and repair) and identification of one owed repair; assigned daily iceberg self-monitoring.* **Response:** individualize, including skill demonstrated in role play. **Plan:** daily under-feeling naming with report-back; carry out anger plan and one repair; individual follow-up if DV or safety content surfaced.

COMPLIANCE NOTES: 2 to 12 clients, same time; at least one active Medi-Cal beneficiary; no one 17 or under mixed with adults (outside a certified school site). Facilitator: licensed/registered clinician or certified/registered AOD counselor, in scope. Participant list each class; one note per member per class with attendance plus that member's specific response, provider-signed, finalized within 3 business days (service day counts as day 0), tied to that member's problem list or objective. Land every segment on the substance-use and relapse link.