

## 13. Managing your anger

The following The Indian Model School tips will help staff to control your feelings of anger and use other ore effective ways

### The impact of anger on our bodies

While it is natural to feel angry when facing situations we believe are unfair, anger is seldom helpful. It can also become a bad habit and appear to others to be a way of trying to control a situation.

When you feel angry, your body releases adrenalin. Blood rushes to your legs, arms and head. You may begin to sweat and breathe quickly. Your heartbeat speeds up and you get urges to yell, scream, lash out or run. This is the 'fight or flight' reaction.

We tend to suppress anger at work because we are afraid of damaging relationships or hurting someone. This can quickly result in muscular tension in the shoulders, neck, back or any part of the body. Unreleased tension can build up until we can no longer suppress it and fly off the handle, perhaps at someone who had nothing to do with the original cause of the anger. Or, if it slowly builds and is unreleased over many years, tension can become chronic and possibly damage your immune system.

### Releasing tension

While most of us cannot just tell our anger to go away and have it obey, you can do the following exercises when you feel tension and anger arising.

- If you can, excuse yourself from the situation as soon as you recognise that your emotions are beginning to overtake you. For example, take a brisk walk around the school oval.
- Go to the bathroom and splash your face with water.
- Slow down, don't speed up as a natural response to anger.
- Do the breathing and other calming exercises described in guides 12 and 14.

### Principles of anger management

- Identify situations and types of behaviours that can make you angry.
- Learn to recognise your first signs of anger. Then watch out for them when they arise.
- Use these first signs of anger as a signal to focus on solving the problem and not on attacking the person.
- Anger can stem from doubt about your ability to face and solve problems. Use the first signs of anger to remind yourself that you are a worthy person with many strengths and good qualities.
- Ask yourself whether the other person's criticism is valid or justified. For example, ask yourself:
  - 'Have I made a mistake?'
  - 'Are the other person's standards known and reasonable?'
  - 'Do other people agree with the criticism of me?'
  - 'Is the criticism more about me or the other person?'
  - 'Am I being side tracked by personalising the situation?'
- Identify and anticipate situations where conflict can arise. For example, it is likely that complaints will arise after school reports are issued. Use past experiences to identify areas of concern and be prepared to respond to common concerns.

## Responding when angry

Generally speaking, there are three forms of interaction with others — assertive, aggressive and passive. Assertive responses are usually best when resolving a complaint.

With assertive responses, you:

- clarify your own needs directly, openly and appropriately
- are aware of your own rights and the rights of others
- ask confidently and without undue anxiety (often expressing yourself with an 'I' statement, as explained below).

With aggressive responses, you:

- try to get what you want in any way possible
- often give rise to uncomfortable feelings in others
- threaten, cajole, manipulate or use sarcasm
- say: 'you should ...', 'you must ...', 'you'd better ...', 'never', 'always', 'impossible', 'won't' or 'can't'.

With passive responses, you:

- hope that you get what you want
- sit on your feelings
- rely on others to guess what you want. Expressed as: 'maybe', 'I guess ...', 'I can't ...', 'you know ...', 'they don't listen' or 'they're obnoxious'.

## 'I' statements

By using an 'I' statement, you tell other people how you feel about something while clarifying your needs. An 'I' statement:

- does not blame someone or require them to change
- helps to identify a concern and open a discussion (but does not resolve the situation)
- addresses 'I' and 'we', rather than 'you'
- is informal and simply states how you feel and what your concerns are.

An 'I' statement has three parts:

- a statement of your feelings (such as, 'I feel attacked ...')
- a description of the behaviour that brings forward the feelings (such as, '... when people raise their voice to make a point ...')
- a statement of the consequences of the behaviour (such as '... because it invariably makes others angry and leads to more aggression').

You might like to add a fourth component — what you would like to see happen (such as, 'I suggest we try to remain calm so that we can discuss the concerns you want to raise and develop a timeline to try to resolve them').