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Anger management counselling: the way I see it

My approach uses relational psychology and is informed by three core ideas:

1. **Anger is a healthy, useful emotional process that some people sometimes use in unhealthy or useless ways.** Except in cases where there is a pattern of domestic violence or abuse, it is for you to judge what is useful or useless for you and the people around you.
2. **For most people, the mismanagement of their anger is a sign that some important ordinary human needs are not being met.** Many individuals fail to satisfy some of their own basic needs while striving to meet the needs of others.
3. **Anger always has a social purpose for the angering individual, but troublesome anger usually indicates the individual's goal is based on a mistaken belief or faulty perception.** This is hard to bring to self-awareness when angry, as the high level of emotional arousal reduces logical thinking and commonsense. Well-managed anger involves feeling and thought working together to bring about a desired change.

Starting-points: where you stand

- Anger management is about your choice to make one change in your life: *to use anger differently from now on*. No-one else makes this change happen. My task is to map it out with you and provide the right tools for the job, with problem-solving support as necessary.
- I do not adopt a 'one-size-fits-all' method: what I provide is tailored to suit you personally in your particular circumstances. Between us we will work out what 'makes your anger tick', and then aim to set it to tick in a helpful way.
- I believe there is nothing 'deficient' or 'weak' in a woman or a man seeking help with their anger. On the contrary, it is both intelligent and courageous to ask for skilled assistance in dealing with such a powerful emotion.

The process: what will happen

- The initial session is conversational and informal. I use a set of simple questions to assess how your everyday needs are being met and to ascertain the nature of the problem as you see it.

- I will enquire about your general health and well-being, and ask about any recent bereavements or other stressful events in your life.
- We will talk practically about relaxation, exercise, diet and sleep, as well as drug use.
- I will ask you to tell me about your current household situation or accommodation arrangements, also about your work/occupation, and a little bit about your family of origin and social/cultural background.
- A few people find that one session of anger management is enough to put them on the right track. Others come for 3 to 6 sessions or sometimes more. I will guide you on making a choice about how many times to attend, but the final decision is always yours.
- Immediate and lasting benefits can be obtained by learning about the basic psychology of anger, doing focused breathing exercises, increasing body awareness (very important!) and using cognitive and behavioural therapeutic techniques aimed at creating new habits for your mind and body. All this takes practice. **Managing anger is practical not magical.**
- Only in extreme cases is anger management a deadly serious business! While acknowledging that you are taking deliberate measures to solve a problem which may have had hurtful or damaging consequences, it helps to have a sense of humour about yourself. Laughter is therapy too, and is definitely helpful in managing angry feelings.
- The primary therapeutic advantage of anger management counselling is an increased sense of ownership of your feelings – you use your anger instead of being used up by anger – which leads to increased emotional confidence in your relationships of all kinds.