



Exercise: Challenging Angry Thoughts

Anger can become an all-consuming emotion with a destructive impact on your emotional and physical well-being, and on those with whom you come into contact while angry. With the exception of situations in which you are truly threatened (e.g., where your physical or emotional integrity or security, or the security of someone you care about is in jeopardy and anger is necessary to prompt appropriate responses), anger can often be out of proportion to the actual circumstances. Our thoughts can be a significant factor that feeds the emotional experience of anger. Often, we start to feel angry when we think about things like the following:

- someone is trying to harm us (e.g., take our job)
- we are being treated unfairly or with disrespect (e.g., underpaid or overworked)
- we feel that an injustice has been done to others (e.g., fired for no reason)
- we have made a mistake (e.g., deleted a critical document)

When we have thoughts like these, we may tend to use much harsher language in evaluating or interpreting someone’s intent or in judging ourselves, and we tend to overly personalize the situation.

It is important to practice putting your anger into perspective by challenging your angry thoughts, asking whether they are appropriate for the situation and beneficial to your effectiveness as a manager.

Think about a situation at work that created an intense anger reaction for you.

Describe the situation: _____

Think now about the thoughts that were going through your mind at the time (about the situation, other worker(s), about yourself). Be as precise as you can. Then, rephrase the thoughts, making them more appropriate for the situation and less harsh/judgmental.

Angry Thoughts (about situation, other(s), self)	More Accurate and Appropriate Thoughts

Next time you’re in a situation that creates anger for you, be mindful of the automatic, harsh thoughts that arise. Try to actively rephrase the thoughts, making them more accurate and appropriate and less harsh/judgmental/personal.