Responding to Anger

I. What is Anger?
   a. A normal emotion with a range of feelings, from mild irritation and frustration to rage
   b. A reaction to a perceived threat to ourselves, our friends and family, our things, or the way we feel about ourselves
   c. A warning bell that tells us something is wrong

II. Where Does Anger Come From?
   a. Anger is a learned behavior, which means it can be unlearned
   b. Families and culture
      i. Teach us how to express anger; we learn what is appropriate and what is not
      ii. Some express anger openly; others may hide their anger
   c. Gender
      i. Gender stereotypes
      ii. Anger is seen as a manly emotion, and boys and men are encouraged to act it out. Men tend to be more aggressive in response to anger.
      iii. Girls and women are discouraged from appearing angry. Women tend to talk more about their feelings of anger.
      iv. Both men and women benefit from communicating their feeling clearly and respectfully and using problem-solving approaches when angry.
   d. Response to situations
      i. Depends on situation you are involved in
   e. Our families and culture, gender and situation play a role in:
      i. When we get angry
      ii. How angry we get
      iii. How long we stay angry

III. What Influences Anger Response?
   a. How serious the threat or harm is
   b. The relationship we have with someone who makes us angry
   c. How we interpret what happened
   d. How stressed we feel
   e. Genetics
   f. Overall mental health
   g. Drugs and alcohol

IV. Reasons to Control Anger
   a. Health problems
      i. Increased risk for heart disease, heart attack and stroke
      ii. Headaches and trouble sleeping
      iii. Digestive problems
b. Negative consequences
   i. Arrested or jailed
   ii. Physical injury
   iii. Retaliation
   iv. Feelings of guilt, shame, or regret

V. Responding to Anger: 3 Basic Approaches to Responding to Anger
a. Expression: can range from having a calm discussion about your feelings to blowing up
b. Suppression: involves holding anger in, letting it go, or changing your focus to something else
   i. Can lead to a sense of something “eating away” at a person
c. Management: about recognizing that anger is a normal emotion, paying attention to it, and making choices that help us to improve our situations.
   i. neither extreme (blowing up or holding it in) is healthy

VI. How to Cool Anger Down?
   a. The 4 D’s
      i. Delay, such as counting to 10 to allow the anger to go away
      ii. Deep breaths, or listen to calming music
      iii. Distract yourself, do something to get your mind off the situation like taking a walk or reading
      iv. Do something to reverse anger and aggression, like watching a comedy or helping someone in need
   b. Re-wire personal hot buttons
      i. “Hot buttons” are sore spots/sensitivities/vulnerabilities/hang-ups/weaknesses and are best known by the people closest to you.
      ii. Identify personal hot buttons
      iii. Next time someone pushes “hot” buttons, think before you speak or react and come up with a new way to respond.

VII. Take Responsibility for Feelings
   a. When you’re not doing what you need to do, it’s on you.
   b. Avoid blaming others
      i. Notice when you try to shift blame on to others
      ii. Reframe feelings

VIII. Treat People with Respect When Angry or Frustrated
   a. Don’t be on the defense
   b. If you speak respectfully, people will feel comfortable and respected
   c. You’ll be heard
   d. When you get angry and lash out, people write you off
   e. If you speak with decency, people won’t feel the need to put up barriers. When you get angry, you alienate yourself.

IX. When You feel Threatened by what Someone is Saying, take a Minute
   a. Be open minded
   b. Listen and try to understand the situation and what’s on the other person’s mind
   c. Let the other person be heard
   d. Don’t respond defensively
   e. Identify solutions or walk away