

Three Anger Management Programs

Tiers 2 & 3

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Several anger management programs have been developed and implemented by researchers. The descriptions of the three anger management programs described below are intended to be a supplementary resource to the *Anger Management Strategy Brief* (March 2013) created by the Student Engagement Project. These three programs are representative of these types of programs. School personnel can use these descriptions to better understand the content of these programs and some of the requirements for implementation.



Teen Anger Management Education (TAME)

TAME targets aggression in 10-sessions, and is built upon a social information processing view of anger and aggression. It has three main components: arousal management (identifying how anger is triggered), cognitive restructuring (changing thinking & analysis strategies), and pro-social skills training (teaching alternative responses). Each of these three components has accompanying specific strategies and skills that are taught during the 10-sessions in role plays and weekly homework. During the sessions youth are gradually exposed to more intense anger triggers. A general focus on interpersonal problem solving and assertive communication is expected to replace aggressive behaviors with pro-social behaviors and to prevent automatic aggressive responses. Participants are asked to keep a log of conflicts that occur from day to day. These real life conflicts are then used for role-plays and session exercises.

Writing in the *Handbook of School Violence and School Safety*, Feindler and Gerber (2012) summarized that during the 10-sessions of TAME youth are taught about (a) the interaction between cognitive, physiological, and behavioral aspects of their anger experience, (b) both the adaptive and maladaptive purposes of their anger, (c) contextual triggers to their anger, (d) the concept of choice and taking responsibility for responses, (e) and, the importance of appropriate verbal expression and affect.

Summary of TAME Sessions from Feindler and Gerber (2012):

- Session 1: Introduction to TAME format and the program rationale. Begin identifying emotions, with emphasis on anger. Deep breathing exercise.
- Session 2: Present sequential analysis of behavioral incidents (activating event or trigger; behavioral responses; consequences). Practice identification triggers, behaviors, responses, and consequences in idiosyncratic aggressive episodes.
- Session 3: Conversation about aggressive beliefs and interpretations. Identify various cognitive distortions and proactive reattribution exercises.

- Session 4: Introduce relationship strategies and interpersonal techniques. Describe and practice interpersonal effectiveness skills adapted from dialectical behavior therapy (Linehan, 1993b).
- Session 5: Introduce self-instruction training. Practice in-the-moment self-coaching for nonaggressive responses.
- Session 6: Review anticipation of consequences. Practice thinking ahead—prediction and evaluation of possible consequences of aggressive behaviors.
- Session 7: Describe role of problem solving. Introduce multistep problem solving process including self-evaluation, reinforcement, and feedback.
- Session 8: Present strategies to decrease relational aggression. Build awareness of types of teasing, use of rumors, and methods to evaluate friendships. Practice confrontation, apologizing and self-respect skills.
- Session 9: Review program skills and techniques. Present exercises designed to utilize all skills and concepts introduced over previous 8 sessions. Individualize feedback to students and administer final assessment instruments.
- Session 10: Follow-up booster session. Review all skills including definitions; demonstrate examples, and discuss appropriate situations in which skills can be used. Check in with students regarding changes and progress since completing the program, including successful and unsuccessful attempts to use skills. Provide feedback and reinforcement to encourage skill maintenance and generalization.



TAME aims to change negative patterns of expressing anger through emotional regulation and cognitive restructuring exercises and by emphasizing the development of new prosocial skills. For further information see Feindler and Gerber (2008), Feindler and Guttman (1994), and Feindler and Scalley (1998).

Aggression Replacement Training

Aggression Replacement Training (ART; Goldstein, Glick, & Gibbs; 1998) is a three-module program created to help youth develop new skills, control their anger, and increase perspective taking. The first module is *Skillstreaming: Social Skills Training*. In this module prosocial skills are taught to groups in six different categories: (1) beginners, (basic conversations); (2) advanced, (apologizing and asking for help); (3) skills for dealing with feelings; (4) alternatives to aggression; (5) skills for handling stress; and (6) planning skills.

The second module is *Anger Control Training*. In this module, participants learn to identify their anger triggers and to identify physiological cues that signal the feeling of anger. Self-talk and deep breathing exercises and imagery are taught to help youth remain in control of their emotions. Youth are taught to evaluate their own performance and reward themselves for successfully remaining in control.

The third module is *Moral Reasoning Training*. In this final stage youth learn about fairness, justice, and concern for the needs and rights of others. Based on Kohlberg's research, group members discuss scenarios of moral dilemmas in an effort to advance moral reasoning.

ART is implemented over 10-weeks in small groups that meet three times a week for a total of 30 sessions. The ART treatment manual (Goldstein et al., 1998) has detailed lesson plans, handouts, and homework. Group leaders can be mental health professionals, educators, or corrections staff. Groups should not exceed 12 participants, 8-10 may be most appropriate,

but groups smaller than 7-8 compromise the needed group dynamic. It is recommended that two co-facilitators lead each group.

Data from research demonstrates that ART has been effective in reducing acting out behaviors, recidivism rates, and improving pro-social skill acquisition and self-control in juvenile detention centers (Leeman, Gibb, & Fuller, 1993), in residential treatment settings (Nugent, Bruley, & Allen, 1998) and in school settings in Norway (Gundersen & Svartdal, 2006, 2010). Research has indicated that when ART program is not delivered with fidelity to the treatment protocol, behavior of the participants may in fact deteriorate rather than improve (Barnoski, 2004; Latessa, 2006). Further research on how to implement ART in school settings is needed.

Think First

Larson (2005) also advocates a cognitive-behavioral intervention to address aggression in schools, however he advocates for a more systematic approach. Larson has written, “simplistic solutions such as ‘get-tough,’ zero-tolerance disciplinary policies” are not effective in reducing aggressive behavior, and “therapist-led small-group skills training in anger and aggression management” are insufficient (p. 23). Instead Larson proposes, “an ecological approach that reaches into multiple domains of school life,” including: administrative policy and decision-making, classroom education, and school mental health service delivery. The *Think First* program is a systematic approach that focuses on prevention and teaching nonviolent interpersonal skills in school settings.

Think First is a tertiary intervention curriculum designed for middle school and high school age students. *Think First* is designed to be used in the classroom taught by two trained facilitators. Role-playing, skill modeling, and

a reward system are major elements of this program. It has been empirically tested, and is considered a culturally sensitive anger management program (designated by the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence; Botvin, Milhalic & Grotspeter, 1998).

Larson’s *Think First* book briefly explains the contextual factors, including pertinent legislation, building structure, and the interaction of internal and external setting events that contribute to aggressive behavior in schools. Citing Kazdin (2001), Larson explained how setting events lead to an increase or decreased in the probability that aggressive behaviors will occur. Larson advocates for the implementation of positive behavioral supports (PBS) to address negative setting events. The *Think First* book then dedicates chapters to the following subjects:

- The crucial role school leaders play in the process of creating and selecting effective, whole-school environmental strategies.
- The rationale and best practices for anger and aggression management skills training.
- How to screen for, identify, and assess for anger and aggression skills training
- Beginning training

The remainder of the *Think First* book is the 5 modules of the intervention with the accompanying handouts. These modules are as follows: (1) Introduction, Choices, and Consequences, (2) Hassle Log and Anger Reducers,



(3) Anger Triggers and Attribution Restraining, (4) Self-Instruction and Consequential Thinking, (5) Social Problem-Solving. Each model has suggested number of meetings to cover the content however, Larson stresses that these are advisory only. These modules should not follow an arbitrary schedule and should be adjusted to account for absenteeism. Modules should take as long as necessary to teach the skills and more time can be dedicated to particularly important skills for the students in the group. It is recommended that facilitators begin the meetings at the beginning of Fall semester, meeting

at least once a week, with booster sessions held in the following semester.

Think First was implemented for study in the fall of 1989 at middle school in Milwaukee (Larson, 1991, 1992). In this study a small but diverse sample comprised of nine male and six female students. Since that time at least two other larger studies have offered support for *Think First* (Massey, Armstrong, & Boroughs, 2003; Nickerson, 2003). These studies found positive outcomes for participants however continuing research is needed.

**Recommended Reference:**

Parnell, K., Peterson, R., & Fluke, S. (2013, May). *Three Anger Management Programs. Program Description*. Lincoln, NE: Student Engagement Project, University of Nebraska-Lincoln. <http://k12engagement.unl.edu/anger-management>

Note: A related strategy brief, *Anger Management* is also available:

Parnell, K., Skiba, R., Peterson, R., Fluke, S., & Strawhun, J. (2013, October). *Anger management. Strategy brief*. Lincoln, NE: Student Engagement Project, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 202 Barkley Center, UNL. <http://k12engagement.unl.edu/anger-management>

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