

Black and White Thinking: Handout

Anger can have a strong influence on how we think about, and make sense of situations. When a particular individual or set of events makes us angry, we may be tempted to think unfavourably of individuals we think are the cause of our anger, seek opportunities to lay the blame on another individual, and even respond aggressively. One key aspect to understanding how and why anger elicits such a reaction is to reflect on how anger makes us think.

Instructions: Think of a situation that made you very angry. Try recalling this situation in as much detail as possible, from the individuals involved, what specific events triggered your anger, to how you reacted towards the situation. Complete Section A below providing as much detail as possible about this anger-causing event.

Section A

The situation made me feel angry because person was definitely trying to _____.

Thinking back, this person is definitely a _____.

When I think of this person, it makes me feel completely _____.

I absolutely cannot understand why this person is _____.

Looking back, I would certainly have responded to this person by _____.

Take a short 30-second break and try calming down a bit. When you are ready, complete Section B below:

Section B

The situation made me feel angry because person was perhaps trying to _____.

Thinking back, maybe this person is/was _____.

When I think of this person, it makes me feel somewhat _____.

I may not be able to understand why this person is _____.

Looking back, I would could have responded to this person by _____.