

Recovery Testimonial

The following is a testimonial of a man who has made the journey from the insanity of anger to a better way of living and relating to others. As you read this account, know there is hope, help and healing for you in your journey to recovery!

S*o, do you think I have an anger problem?* That was the question I asked at the end of my first session. The counselor said it did not matter whether he thought I had a problem or not; my wife said I had a problem and that was the end of that. If I didn't have an anger problem before, I sure had one now. I kept thinking that I was going to be in a class with a bunch of pissed-off people. My assignment is to write about my "journey" as the counselor put it. So here it is.

First, I think it is important to tell you a little about myself. I am 37, married for 14 years and have two children. The "boy" as we refer to him, is in middle school and our daughter is in the fifth grade. Good kids...well, sometimes the "boy" is a pain in the behind and our daughter is starting to think boys are cute. I love my family. My wife and I have been arguing more, which led to me starting the anger classes.

We had an argument that was only the tip of the iceberg. It started off as one of those issues that did not get resolved and it stuck with both of us. I saw things one way and she saw things the other way. I am not sure who was right and who was wrong, but it ended with us calling each other names, pushing led to shoving and she said she had had it. "You either get some help or we are through." She went off to the bedroom crying and my life seemed to flash before my eyes. I didn't want to lose fourteen years of marriage. It just so happened that our pastor mentioned Coastal Counseling Center in his sermon and I made a call a few days later.

When I started anger management it was different from what I expected. I thought there would be a bunch of angry people in there ready for a fight. Actually, most of the folks were in the same boat as me, getting caught-up in the anger of the moment and having to attend this class thing together. Right off the bat I learned it was not anger "management," but anger resolution class.

I will never forget that anger thermometer assignment. I thought, "Now how's this thermometer going to help me?" When I took my folder home, my wife wanted to look at it. I felt like she was trying to get in my business and I made a comment like, "*Fine. You probably need this more than I do,*" and that went over like a lead balloon. After a few days I got over my temper tantrum and she and I actually had a decent conversation about the homework. She pulled out a piece of paper where she had traced the thermometer and put her own words down. Her words and mine were fairly close. Now they are on the refrigerator.

I did not get a lot out of the talk about the brain in that second class. What I do remember was the strategy called "Chopping Wood." The counselor hit the nail on the head when he said that men withdraw and women pursue when they argue. He was right, at least for the two of us: I walk outside and my wife comes after me. Once again, we had a pretty good talk about chopping wood. Now she tells me, "*It looks like you are about to be a seven on that thermometer. Think you ought to chop some wood?*"

First time she said that I got irritated; now I say it to her. We've had laugh or two about it and one of us will go outside and "chop wood." Her version of chopping wood is running the

vacuum cleaner like a wild woman through the house and mine is pushing the lawn mower. Hey, whatever works.

I am looking at my notes on that third session about the match and dynamite. I can understand what ticks me off and those warning signals that let me know I am about to lose it. The other thing that has worked is the self control card. I am not perfect, so I have had to lose it and get it back (asking for forgiveness is a humbling thing for a man). I made my own cards – one is on the sun-visor in the car and the other I keep in my billfold. I'm not supposed to know that my wife has one in her purse, but I found it when I went to sneak a few bucks out of her "secret stash."

By the time the last group rolled around, I was feeling a little disappointed that there would not be any more anger classes. I was starting to like coming to group; but then I am relieved that I don't have to miss TV on Tuesday nights (just kidding). What I learned most from this group session was that "trip to Wal-mart" example. It was an easy to understand example: All A-B-C-D-E. When we talked about the ANTS (distortions), I saw myself in several of the examples. If I had to say which group session was the most helpful, I would have to say this one. I do think about that A-B-C-D-E thing every time I go into Wal-mart and see the greeter standing there. I kind of smile as I go by. I am starting to see that what I think does affect what I do.

One thing that I forgot to mention was what we had to do in the first session. I signed my name that I would practice the strategies and that I would teach at least one person a strategy or two. I have to supervise guys under me at work and sometimes I have to teach them how to use certain tools to get the job done and done right. It did not dawn to me that I taught a couple of my guys what I had learned in anger management when they were arguing with each other. It just came out of my mouth: *"Gentlemen! Let's keep it clean around here. And keep it clear and keep it current."* They just looked at me and said, *"Sounds like stuff you learned in anger management"* (okay, they didn't actually say the word, "stuff"). After I walked away, it hit me that I just taught somebody something I learned in class and I could go check that requirement off my homework.

Now I am done with anger "resolution" class. I still get angry, but it doesn't come out like it did before. It has helped our marriage and my wife has done some of the homework on her own. It has been about a month since my last class and I have to email this last assignment to the counselor. All in all, I have learned that anger doesn't have to be a bad thing and I can control it. Maybe it did take our arguing to come to a head for me to admit I had a problem. I don't think I have as much of a problem anymore as I now have a plan and the plan works when I work the plan.