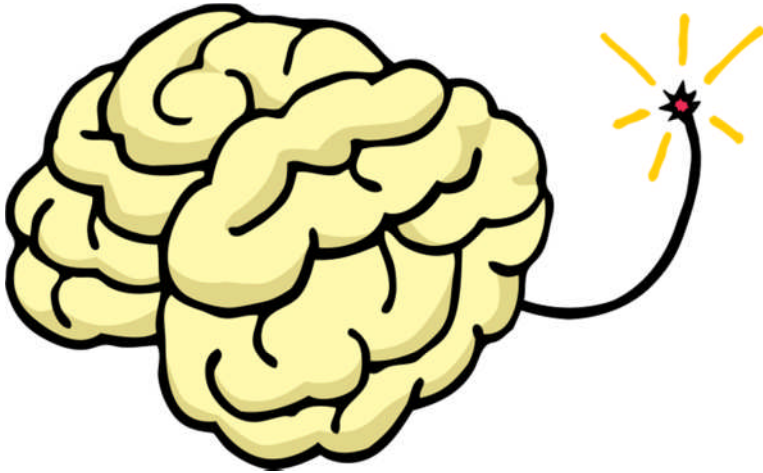


Anger Management Worksheet #3: Clearly Identify the Main Angry Thought (Skill 3)



1. Tally your angry thoughts here: _____
2. Identify your driving thought by asking yourself these questions below. Write out your answer for each.

WHAT ARE THE THOUGHTS THAT MAKE MY ANGER FUSE BURN FASTER?

WHICH OF MY ANGRY THOUGHTS DO I THINK ABOUT THE MOST?

Anger Management Worksheet #3: Clearly Identify the Main Angry Thought (Skill 3)

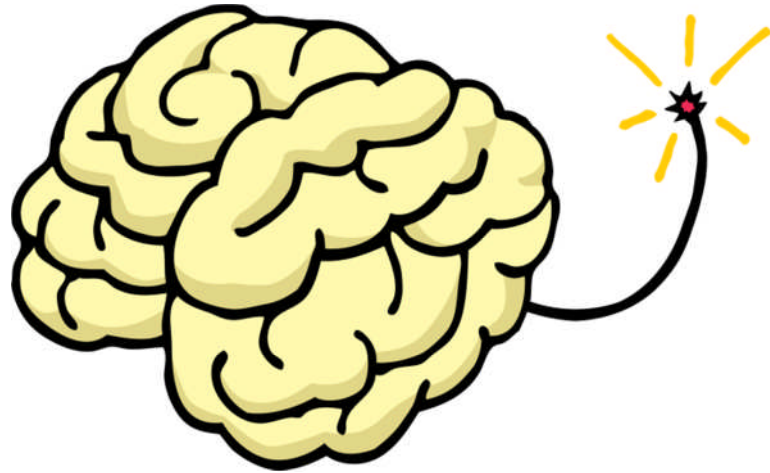
WHICH OF MY ANGRY THOUGHTS DO I CATCH MYSELF ARGUING IN MY MIND?

WHICH OF MY ANGRY THOUGHTS IS THE MOST DIFFICULT TO STOP THINKING ABOUT?

WHICH OF MY THOUGHTS DRIVES THE BIGGEST ADRENALINE RUSH (OF ANGER) WHEN EVER I THINK ABOUT IT?

3. Write out your one driving thought in the box below:

 **DRIVING THOUGHT**



Worksheet Skills and Concepts

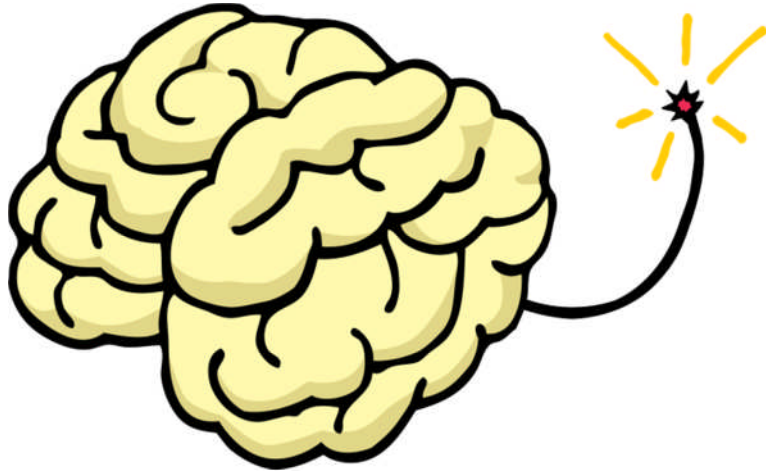
Continuing the series of anger management worksheets, you are only beginning to learn to ride the bucking bull of your own anger. The **purpose** of this worksheet is similar to the previous worksheet in this series, but with a twist. In the last worksheet you practiced skill 2, distinguishing thoughts from feelings. If you know how to do this then you will know where to concentrate your efforts. Working with your thoughts is nearly always more productive for anger management than trying to change your feelings directly.

This worksheet walks you step-by-step through a thought process to identify your angry thoughts and to compare them. How are you comparing them? You are thinking about each angry thought in order to determine which one is the driving thought. That is, which of your angry thoughts is the **most** responsible for that rush of intense anger? Developing the skill to answer this question accurately is what this worksheet is about. You may complete the worksheet in one of two ways: (1) remembering how you thought and felt in a recent situation; or (2) looking at how you think and feel right now as you remember the recent situation.

In this worksheet the main metaphor is an angry brain with a fuse. When you are angry your brain is full of emotion. Your body is feeling the tension and rush of being tightly wound and ready to pounce. The fuse represents the woven strands of angry thoughts that control your swirling emotions. The burning flame on that fuse is your main, driving thought. Once you see it clearly, you can pinch the flame, stop the fuse from burning and diffuse the anger bomb in your brain.

This one, driving thought is the one that you must get a handle on if you are going to control your anger effectively. But you can't get a handle on it if you don't know which thought is the primary one driving your angry feelings. Once you grab that handle, you pull on it and your anger usually subsides. Instead of futile efforts to "stop being angry," you concentrate your effort on something that is within your control: your thoughts. Trying to change your thoughts is much less frustrating than trying to change your feelings directly. Furthermore, you don't even need to get rid of your anger. All you need to do is to reduce the intensity enough to ride the bucking bull to safety.

Anger Management Worksheet #3: Clearly Identify the Main Angry Thought (Skill 3)



Angry thoughts usually come in groups. But there is usually one angry thought that is the bully and the leader. We call this your **driving thought**. This is the one thought that is most likely to derail productive communication or to push you into explosive anger. You may be saying, "But my angry thought is actually true!" Perhaps. Most likely, it has a grain of truth that makes you feel very self-righteous. On top of the truth of it are layers of distortions and barnacles that your mind has added. Either way, this worksheet is a tool designed to help you think more clearly about your angry thoughts. It is not about defending or judging the truth of your angry thought. It's about strategy to control your anger, to stop that fuse from burning down to an explosion in your

brain and in your behavior. The **main skill** for you to learn here is the ability to pinpoint which thoughts are fueling your angry emotions and ***which one in particular is energizing your anger more than the others.***

Instructions

Steps 1: Count your angry thoughts and put the total number in the box. There's nothing particularly important about this number. Rather it is the act of counting your automatic, angry thoughts that helps you be more clear and specific: Is this a feeling or this a thought? Is it a thought that is related to my anger? Step 2: Look at the list of angry thoughts you made in the last worksheet (Skill 2 Distinguishing Thoughts from Feelings). Add to this list if necessary. Step 3: In the box write a sentence representing your best guess at your driving thought.

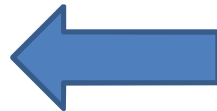
Example

A list of sample angry thoughts is given below. Now you can see that the person who made the list has identified which particular thought is his driving thought. Remember that feelings are usually named with **one word**, but thoughts are best identified by **a sentence**. Here you are concerned mainly with your thoughts. You can also keep in mind the intensity of your angry feelings as you ask yourself the questions on this worksheet. In short, the directions for using this worksheet are fairly simple: ask yourself the questions and answer them. Then pick the one thought that you think is driving your anger more than the other thoughts.

Your own list will be different from the one below. Also, people with similar angry thoughts may not have the same driving thought.

Examples of Angry Thoughts (and Words):

- She always turns the blame back on me!
- He never listens!
- She said that just to hurt me!
- He never considers anyone else!
- I can't stand this anymore!
- This is SO frustrating.
- She can never mind her own business!
- Here he goes again.
- All she does is criticize me.
- This is your fault!
- You do it too!
- I can never count on you.



DRIVING THOUGHT