

SWORD workbook:

KFP 1 Secure Base

Quick Wins



Quick Win 1.1: Managing anger

Do I need to get angry about this?

Trying to avoid being angry doesn't mean suppressing your feelings, which can lead to feelings of shame, depression and (possibly) more anger. Instead, try to change your outlook and ask yourself whether what's just happened is something you need to be angry about.

How does anger affect you?

Think back to previous situations when you have been angry at work and ask yourself how it affects aspects of your life, both good and bad. Identify the impact on you, your relationships with colleagues, your job performance, your wellbeing and energy, how you feel outside work, and your relationships with family and friends.

Was anger an appropriate response?

Did your anger arise from an accurate or logical reading of the situation, or your own interpretation? Talk the situation through with somebody you trust who is neutral to the situation.

Is your anger out of proportion?

Minor things can trigger significant anger. Acknowledging that anger is actually a response to something else (e.g. being tired, hungry or angry with someone else) can help you contain your feelings.

Am I taking this personally?

We often become stressed and angry in situations that tap into deep-seated feelings of not being good enough or having failed in some way. Be aware of your emotional triggers and challenge your initial reactions. Setting boundaries will also help you take things less personally.

How can I frame the problem more clearly?

Jot down the relevant details, including the points you and the other person/people made during the encounter, and any misunderstandings you think might have occurred. Read it out loud to try to see the situation more objectively.

How did I feel and what did I want?

How were you feeling before and during the situation? Was your anger triggered by unmet needs? Did you project your anger onto other people because they misinterpreted what it was you wanted?

Identify your objective

What do you want from this situation? Define your goal in a way that other people can understand. Do you wish to resolve it directly, or to tackle an underlying problem?

Quick Win 1.1: Managing anger

Be realistic

Having unrealistic expectations of others can set them up to fail and disregard who they are. Having unrealistic expectations of yourself can lead to self-blame and self-punishment.

How can I move on?

Shift your focus from what was done to you, to what you can do to fix it. Sometimes the best response is just to chalk it up to experience and let it go. This doesn't mean you have 'lost' a battle.

Acknowledge and respect differences

Trying to take another person's perspective enables you to see issues in a different light.

Get moving

Physical activity can help deal with anger – go for a brisk walk outside, away from the working environment.

Quick win 1.2: A breathing exercise for reducing feelings of stress

Paying attention to your breathing is an effective way of calming yourself at times of stress. It only takes a few minutes and can be done anywhere, without other people noticing. Practising this technique regularly will help you get the most out of it, so try to build it into your daily routine.

As you're likely to be doing this at work, it's best to practise by just sitting in a chair that supports your back. Make yourself as comfortable as you can with your feet flat and roughly a hip-width apart so that you feel grounded.

Let your breath flow as deep down into your belly as is comfortable without forcing it. Try breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth. Breathe in gently. Some people find it helpful to count steadily from one to five. You may not be able to reach five at first.

Then, without pausing or holding your breath, let it flow out gently, counting from one to five again, if you find this helpful.

Keep doing this for three to five minutes.

Based on NHS advice; full details can be found [here](#).

Quick Win 1.3: Making open-door policies work

'Open-door policy' implies that managers encourage workers to come into their office at any time to discuss any issues or concerns. This can be effective, as the manager will be seen as accessible and an open flow of communication will be encouraged. Managers will also be more aware of day-to-day problems and able to resolve minor issues before they escalate. Nonetheless, an open-door policy must be well defined, otherwise managers may spend a lot of their time listening to concerns without practitioners reaching solutions autonomously. Without boundaries and guidelines, you may unwittingly develop a culture of dependency, in which practitioners are reluctant to solve problems independently. Alternatively, they may be reluctant to bother you with their problems, especially if they think you are busy. These steps should help you reap the benefits of open communication, and minimise the disadvantages:

Set boundaries for the 'open door' by managing expectations of your availability

For example, an open door means people are free to drop in, a closed door means you're unavailable. And before they come to you with a problem, you could ask people to work through some preliminary issues. For example: a) How would they express the problem in a few sentences? b) Does it affect only them, or others also? c) Can they think of two or three options that might solve the problem?

Listen carefully

Let people speak without being interrupted by phones, email or others dropping in. Use mindful listening techniques (see KFP2 Sense of Appreciation). To make sure you have fully understood the problem, summarise what you think the worker has said. Drive the conversation from a problem focus to a solution that is generated by the employee themselves (see c above); if necessary, schedule a follow-up meeting, rather than ask them to 'stop by at any time'.

Be aware of time:

If possible, try to solve any issue the first time to avoid reducing your own productivity. More complex problems, and those involving other people, will probably need you to schedule a meeting.

Quick win 1.4: Using technology to 'check in'

'Checking in' is a challenge when social workers don't have a physical base, so using technology to create opportunities to interact online can be helpful. For example, 'virtual coffee breaks' using Skype or similar applications can work well. The 'Fika' approach (see below) can also be adapted for online use to help people feel connected.

It's important to schedule the break, as colleagues aren't going to bump into each other accidentally. A strong internet connection and a quiet background (or a headset) will help you hear each other. Bringing your own coffee is essential. And consider the creative use of icebreakers to help get conversations started.

But remember, the use of virtual technology for communication is most effective if people have previously met face-to-face.

Quick Win 1.5: How to make hot-desking work in your organisation

Planning:

Consider carefully how long it will take to move to hot-desking, what resources you need and the budget you have. Identify your desired outcome, and how you will measure its success or failure.

Enhance buy-in:

Co-produce the hot-desking policy by involving workers at each stage. Asking for feedback and ideas will increase acceptability and minimise resistance. A steering group can provide creative ideas to inform hot-desking policy and help you monitor progress over time.

Manage the change:

Explain the reasons for introducing hot-desking. Highlight the benefits but acknowledge potential disadvantages. Listen to concerns – e.g. about how hot-desking might impact on working relationships, and practitioners' wellbeing and job performance. Consider how it may impact on belonging and commitment.

Expect disruption:

Hot-desking will be a major change for people, and it will take a while to bed in. Policies may need to be revisited and adapted.

Confidentiality:

Emphasise the need for privacy of data by never leaving computers unattended when email or confidential documents are open.

Hot-desking in practice:

Ensure you have the appropriate technology and sufficient workspaces. People can waste precious time searching for a work-station or getting to grips with unfamiliar or unreliable technology (this can also be a source of anxiety). Decide whether desks will be allocated on a 'first come, first served' basis, informal desk-sharing system, or via apps to formally book desks and rooms.

Quick Win 1.5: How to make hot-desking work in your organisation

Try zoning:

Consider providing larger office space where team members can hot-desk alongside their managers (rather than in undesignated areas). This will enable them to discuss cases, provide updates and offer support.

Inclusivity:

Chairs and computer monitors need to be easily adjustable to accommodate people's individual needs and preferences. Consider the needs of those who require specialised equipment, such as adapted keyboards and chairs.

Create a variety of spaces:

Wherever possible, offer workspaces for different types of task, such as breakout rooms, cubicles for one-to-one meetings or private phone calls, and quiet areas to facilitate deep concentration.

Personalising space:

Studies show that an inability to personalise our working areas with things that define our identity can be stressful. Think of ways to provide people with a sense of ownership by encouraging them to add personal touches to their workspace. They could bring personal items that are small and portable, vote on a choice of pictures for the walls, or put personal photographs on a noticeboard. Policies should be co-produced with workers.

Clean desk policy:

Workspaces and computers should be kept free of personal or confidential material. People are often less inclined to keep shared desks clean and tidy than their own personal workspaces. Provide wipes for people to clean up at the end of the day and a shared space where they can eat lunch away from their desk.

Accept that hot-desking may not work:

People often gravitate to the same spaces and some people may stake out their territory by 'adopting' a desk as 'theirs'. As well as causing resentment, a hot-desking space can easily revert to the traditional arrangement of employees having permanent desks.

Some guidance on introducing flexible working practices is provided [here](#).

Quick Win 1.6: Building social connectedness using Fika

Fika, or sharing coffee and sweet treat with colleagues, is an important everyday activity in Sweden that encourages peer-to-peer support and develops the capacities that underpin emotional resilience. It's a retreat from the stress of the day and an opportunity to bond with colleagues. Fika helps build team spirit and motivate employees.

Evidence suggests that developing a working culture that acknowledges the importance of regular breaks away from the desk can make a real difference to wellbeing and performance (Troughakos & Hideg, 2009). So, think about how groups can be brought together for a Fika break. If coffee and cake aren't right, a group walk would also embody the spirit of Fika. The important thing is to create opportunities for people to get together and refrain from talking about work. All you need is a space where people feel comfortable to gather and chat.

Remember work, is not just what we do behind our desks: problem-solving, reflective conversations and peer-to-peer learning can all emerge from informal conversations about something completely different. This is likely to happen during a Fika break.