



What Happens When We're Angry?

Module Reader # 1

You are on your way to math class when your friend Cherise stops you.

"Why weren't you at the soccer team party on Friday night?" she asks.

"What soccer party?" you reply.

"The one at Erica's house. Her mom made chicken and barbequed ribs and two kinds of dessert! We hung out, practiced some drills, and watched a movie. Everybody else on the team was there. Were you sick?"

"No," you say. You feel your face get hot. "I didn't know about the party. I guess Erica didn't invite me."

Your social studies class is studying the colonial period. Everyone had to learn about colonial jobs and trades and make a project. You read about bakers and made a model of an outdoor colonial oven. As you are setting up your model in the classroom, the class bully Edward looks at it.

"What's that? An igloo?" he sneers.

"No, it's a colonial oven. They looked different back then," you say.

"Did you make it with your eyes closed? It looks like something a five-year-old would make with mud and sticks!" he taunts. "But I guess that's the best we can expect from someone like *you*," he adds, making a sour face.

How would you feel if these events happened to you? Hurt? Angry? Would you want to strike back, either with words or by physically fighting? That might make you feel better—for a short time—but it would make your problems worse!

Powerful emotions, such as anger and fear, cause our bodies to automatically respond in a certain way. This is called our "fight or flight" reflex. Your body wants to defend itself or run away. It is helpful to recognize these symptoms so that we can stop and *think* before we respond. When you are angry, you actually have less ability to think clearly or solve problems. You might experience the following physical symptoms:

- Faster breathing or shortness of breath. Your body wants more oxygen to respond to the threat.
- Faster heart rate
- Clenched fists or teeth
- Headaches
- Stomach pain
- Sweating, shaking or trembling
- A red or pale face



Some people don't want to admit that they are angry. Maybe they think it's wrong. Maybe they try to tell themselves they don't care. But this is not wise, because anger that is pushed down inside can lead to depression.

Our bodies use a lot of energy to respond to anger or fear. This repeated stress can eventually lead to serious health problems. This is one of the reasons why it is so important to learn to deal with anger correctly.

Angry? Don't Make A Wrong Turn!

Module Worksheet #1



People often respond in harmful ways when they are angry—sometimes without even realizing what they are doing! For example, have you ever caught yourself yelling at a younger brother or sister because you were mad about something that happened at school?

Here are some of the “wrong turns” people can make when they are angry.

- Stuff it and pretend nothing is wrong.
- Do something dangerous or risky, such as using drugs.
- Yell at the person you're mad at.
- Give someone the “evil eye” (dirty looks).
- Get depressed because you don't feel you can do anything about the situation.
- Call someone names, threaten, or use sarcasm.
- Strike back physically – hitting, punching, or kicking.
- Eat because you are mad (for comfort).
- Pick a fight with someone else.

Answer the following questions.

1. Do any of these responses surprise you? Complete the following sentence: “I didn't realize that when people are angry, they might _____.”

2. When I feel angry, my “wrong turn” tendency is to _____

3. This is not a good idea because _____

Keeping Calm: Who's Driving the Car?

Module Reader # 2

Imagine that your emotions are like a car. You're just driving along, minding your own business, when someone "crashes" into you—emotionally or physically. Maybe they snatch a paper off your desk. Or call you a name. Or make fun of your clothes.



What do you do?

If you "crash" right back into them, it will probably make things worse. A fight might break out, or more name-calling and gossip. You could both end up in the principal's office—or worse, in a police station. So that doesn't work. But what can you do?

Think about a stoplight: red light, yellow light, green light.

Red light: Stop!

- First, tell yourself to stop. Don't react right away. Perhaps your heart is racing, your fist is itching to throw a punch, or your mouth wants to say something rude. But stop first. Stay at that stoplight for a minute or two to calm down.

Yellow light: Slow!

- Tell yourself to keep calm. Your body's "fight or flight" reflex wants to strike back or run away to safety. But your brain *can* take control over your body.
- Take two or three deep breaths. If you slow your breathing, your body will relax and you can think more clearly.
- Recognize that you are angry. Try to understand what is beneath your anger—"Why do I feel angry about this? How does the other person's action make me feel?"

Green light: Go!

- Once you've calmed down, think about the best way to respond. How do you usually respond when this kind of event occurs? Is that the best way to respond? What are the consequences, positive and negative? Should you talk the situation over or get advice from a friend?
- Congratulate yourself for keeping control!

Remember the red light—yellow light—green light steps. Remember that you are driving the car. You are in control, not someone else. You can choose how to respond. Nobody "makes" you respond in a certain way.

Keeping Calm T-Chart
Module Worksheet # 2

Looks Like	Sounds Like