

LISTEN TO YOUR ANGER



MAIN FEATURES

Reinforced skills (TASC Cluster)	SUPPORT
Suitable for	Teachers, Students
Difficulty level	Middle
Setting	Group
Minimum number of participants	2
Average time length	90 minutes
Specific materials	Yes
Online version	Yes



1. DESCRIPTION

This activity is based on the “absent but implicit” idea from the Narrative Approach (Carey et al., 2009).

Simply put, in the context of this exercise it means that if something makes us angry it is because it hurts some personal values, principles and/or beliefs that are important to us.

That means that when we talk about our anger we implicitly talk about our important values, principles and beliefs.

The activity is divided into two parts: in the first part (part 1), each participant is asked to answer some questions, helping him/her explore his/her personal system of values, by telling the story of an episode where they got angry at the classroom; in the second part (part 2), the participants work in pairs and run a simulated conversation when one person takes the role of the Facilitator, the other the role of the Student, impersonating a student that showed anger in the classroom.

2. AIM / BENEFITS

This exercise helps participants reflect upon their idea and experience of anger, be it their personal anger or the anger of the students sometimes they have to deal with, by exploring the system of personal values that are implied in the manifestation of anger. This helps enrich the narrative of what anger is, also deconstructing the common, oversimplifying idea that anger is just a negative attitude.

More specifically, this activity:

- Allows teachers and/or students to reflect upon the episodes of anger they experience in the classroom and go beyond the practices of personal judgement and personal blaming towards students and/or teachers (and towards themselves).
- Helps teachers think on how to deal with anger episodes within the classroom (e.g., in case of a fight between two students), supporting students exploring the hurt and frustrated values underneath the anger manifestation

3. COMPETENCIES CLUSTER(s) related

N. 4 - SUPPORTING, which in this case refers to the idea that exploring the values implied in the manifestation of anger helps teachers feel supported and less judged and/or blamed for their reactions. Also, it helps them to lower the levels of self judgement and self blaming.

On the level of their relationships with the classroom, the cluster of SUPPORT is elicited in the sense that teachers have the occasion to enrich the narratives they have of the students, deconstructing the oversimplifying personal judgement they can have of the students either because of their anger towards them, or because of the students’ anger they deal with.

- The skills trained in this cluster are **Avoiding Blame, Suspending Judgement** and **Curiosity**.

- **Avoiding Blame** is trained because the exploration of the values implied in the manifestation of anger takes the teachers to the opposite direction of blaming. In fact, while blaming is characterised by an oversimplification of the persons (McGee et al., 2001), this activity gives teachers the opportunity to enrich the narrative they have of the persons showing anger (that is, themselves or the students) and consequently see them as more complex individuals, with their own motivations and stories.
- **Suspending Judgement** is trained because the exploration of values implied in the anger behaviours gives teacher the opportunity see themselves and/or the students as complex human beings, with an ever changing baggage of ideas, thoughts, values and stories, while personal judgement can be understood as a way for objectifying people, generalising their characteristics and fixing them in time (Winslade, 2013).
- The type of **Curiosity** elicited in this activity can be defined as the “narrative curiosity” (White, 2000), that is the practise of asking questions aimed at the development of thick descriptions related to the anger behaviours, in order to help themselves and the others to express the meanings and the purposes underneath these manifestations.

4. HOW TO DO THE EXERCISE

Step 1 / Preparation

Explain to the participants that the activity aims to help them see in a new way both the anger behaviours they can have in their work at school and the anger behaviours the students can have.

Practically speaking, the exercise will be divided in two parts:

- In part 1, teachers will be invited to individually answer some questions you will ask them, about an episode in their professional life when they felt angry, and then they felt guilty for their anger;
- In part 2, they will be invited to work in pairs, practising on questions similar to those they answered in part 1.

Step 2 / A story of personal anger

Give each teacher a paper sheet with the following questions:

1. *Think about an episode when something at school made you really angry and, on second thought, it seems to you that you should not have reacted that way. Describe it briefly:*
 - a. *What happened?*
 - b. *Where were you?*
 - c. *Who was with you?*
 - d. *What made you angry?*

2. *When we get angry, it means that some important values/principles/ideas have been hurt or betrayed or frustrated (otherwise, why should we get angry, right?)... So, can we say that something important to you has been hurt? What personal values of yours do you think were hurt or betrayed or frustrated in that situation, so that you became so angry?*
3. *Why are those values so important to you? How acting according to those values helps you, in your everyday professional (and personal, if you want) life?*
4. *Could we say that your anger is a way to express that you do not agree with the behaviours/actions/attitudes that happened in that episode, as they are against some important values or principles of yours?*
 - a. *If yes, are there any other ways for you to express your disappointment? Is there something you have already done, other than showing anger in the way you did? Is there something you could hypothetically do, other than showing anger in the way you did?*
5. *Could we say that some the actions you have done in the past (or have been doing so far, or could do in the future) to express your disagreement with the behaviours/actions/attitudes that made you angry, are also way for preventing other people to feel hurt or betrayed or frustrated in their important values, like you unfortunately felt?*
 - b. *If yes, what does this tell about you as a person and as a professional?*

Invite the teachers to take a moment for each question and really try to answer all of them.

Point out that their answer will remain private: they will not be obliged to share them with the other participants, as they are telling their own experience and their own unique story.

Step 3 / Reflecting on this experience

Ask the teachers just to share, if they want, their ideas and reflections on this part of the activity.

Some questions you could ask to help the discussion are the following:

- *How was it for you answering these questions?*
- *What did you find out about your anger that you did not know yet?*
- *How was it for you discovering some important values of yours?*

Step 4 / Simulated conversation

Tell the teachers that now the part 2 of the activity begins.

It consists of a simulated conversation, in which each member of the pair, in turn, takes the role of the Facilitator, the other one takes the role of the Student.

In the role of the Student, the teachers impersonate one of their students that had a manifestation of anger, towards them or towards other classmates.

On the other side, the Facilitator asks questions similar to the ones proposed in part 1 of this activity.

Clarify to the teachers that the aim of this simulation is not to make them guess the thoughts and emotions the students had during those episodes of anger, but to help them enrich their narratives and broaden the perspectives they have on those students.

Consequently, in the role of the Students the teachers are invited to think how they believe their students could answer the questions, instead of struggling to find the “true” answers the students would give.

After about 20 minutes of conversation, the teachers switch the roles and start a new conversation for another 20 minutes.

The questions for the Facilitator to ask are the following:

1. *Think about an episode when something at school made you really angry and, on second thought, it seems to you that you should not have reacted that way. Describe it briefly:*
 - a. *What happened?*
 - b. *Where were you?*
 - c. *Who was with you?*
 - d. *What made you angry?*
2. *When we get angry, it means that some important values/principles/ideas have been hurt or betrayed or frustrated (otherwise, why should we get angry, right?)... So, can we say that something important to you has been hurt? What personal values of yours do you think were hurt or betrayed or frustrated in that situation, so that you became so angry?*
3. *Why are those values so important to you? How acting according to those values helps you, in your everyday personal life?*
4. *Could we say that your anger is a way to express that you do not agree with the behaviours/actions/attitudes that happened in that episode, as they are against some important values or principles of yours?*
 - a. *If yes, are there any other ways for you to express your disappointment? Is there something you have already done, other than showing anger in the way you did? Is there something you could hypothetically do, other than showing anger in the way you did?*
5. *If you decided to express your values differently than showing anger, how would you express them?*



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- a. *If you decided to express your values in this different way, how do you think that the relationship with your classmate would change?*
 - b. *If you decided to express your values in this different way, how do you think that the relationship with your teachers would change?*
6. *Could we say that some the actions you have done in the past (or have been doing so far, or could do in the future) to express your disagreement with the behaviours/actions/attitudes that made you angry, are also way for preventing other people to feel hurt or betrayed or frustrated in their important values, like you unfortunately felt?*
- a. *If yes, what does this tell about you as a person?*

Clarify to the teachers in the role of the Facilitators that there is no right order in the way these questions can be asked. They can jump from a question to another in any way they want and in any way they believe is useful for the conversation.

Pay attention to how each pair is dealing with this exercise.
Help them if they feel stuck and do not know how to go on with the conversation.

Step 5 / Reflecting on the conversations

At the end of the established period, each pair takes 10 minutes to discuss the exercise.
Some questions you could provide in this stage to help participants reflect upon the experience might be:

- *How was it for you, in the role of the Student, developing an alternative view of your student's anger?*
- *How did the image you have of this student change, after this simulation?*
- *How was it for you, in the role of the Facilitator, asking those questions?*
- *What benefits did you find in asking those questions?*

The steps just described take as a reference a group of teachers as participants; however, this exercise can be effective and interesting by involving students as well: in case the group is composed of students only, in the second part of the activity they will take and exchange the roles of Facilitator and Teacher; in case of a mixed group (teachers/students), the second part of the activity can see teachers/students taking and exchanging the roles of Facilitator and Student/Teacher.

5. DEBRIEF

This stage is a group discussion on the activity.

The aim is to help the teachers in the group to reflect on how they could apply this methodology while working with single students or a classroom to manage both their and their students' anger for the sake of the classroom climate.

To lead the conversation, here are some example of questions you could ask:



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- *Imagine that this experience has changed the way you see the concept of anger: how might these changes help you support the students in improving the classroom climate?*
 - *If you decided to approach the classroom with an attitude that more clearly expresses your values, what is the very first thing you could do?*
 - *Since in part 2 we talked about students' values, how could you help your students express their values in a clear and more respectful way, towards you and the classmates?*

6. SPECIAL MATERIALS

- For each pair, a copy of the questions described in Step 5.
- Pens and paper sheets.

7. TIPS AND TRICKS

If the participants have not quite understood the rules of the exercise in Part 2, you can propose a short warm-up session, just to show them how the exercise works.

Feel free to take more time for this activity. If you want, you can stretch it for all the time you want. You can divide it in two sessions, one dedicated to Part 1 and another dedicated to Part 2.

8. ON-LINE VERSION

The activity can also be easily done online, using platforms like Skype, Zoom, Google Meet, etc..

For the second part of the activity, a platform like MIRO (www.miro.com), for instance, allows you to create conversation rooms where participants can work in pairs and you can access them to monitorate how they are proceeding.

9. BIBLIOGRAPHY - SITOGRAPHY

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