Keeping Well After Anger Management: Everyday Relapse Prevention (Guided Self-Help)

THE TALKING THERAPIES UK SELF-HELP SERIES



Keeping Well After Anger Management: Everyday Relapse Prevention (Guided Self-Help)

CBT skills to stay on track, respond differently in the moment, and plan for high-risk situations

A self-help workbook · 8 modules · about 8 weeks

TALKING THERAPIES UK

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First edition, 2026.

This workbook accompanies the Keeping Well After Anger Management: Everyday Relapse Prevention (Guided Self-Help) programme on the Talking Therapies UK self-help platform. Its text is drawn from the programme and is kept current with it: whenever the programme changes, the workbook is set again.

Revision 7. This printing was set on 8 November 2026 from the programme as it stood that day.

A note on using this workbook. It offers self-help based on established psychological approaches for difficulties of mild to moderate severity. It is not a substitute for assessment or treatment by a qualified professional and is not designed for use in a crisis. The examples in it are fictional; no real person appears in them. If you are worried about your safety, or your difficulties are getting worse, the page headed “When self-help is not enough” says where to turn.

Set in Poppins and Roboto, the Talking Therapies UK typefaces.

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How to use this workbook

This step-2 guided self-help programme helps you consolidate anger-management changes and prevent relapse in everyday life. Using techniques from cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), mindfulness-informed strategies, and relapse prevention principles, you will learn to spot early warning signs, manage “hot thoughts”, and recover effectively after a slip. The programme is designed to strengthen coping skills you can use at work, at home, and in relationships. Evidence base (plain language): CBT is widely supported for anger problems; mindfulness can reduce reactivity; structured relapse prevention improves long-term maintenance.

This workbook is the written form of the Keeping Well After Anger Management: Everyday Relapse Prevention (Guided Self-Help) programme on the Talking Therapies UK self-help platform. It follows the programme module by module: each part of the book is one module, and each chapter is one piece of the module’s teaching, set in the order the programme presents it.

Read the chapters of a part in order, then turn to the worksheets that follow them. The worksheets are the part of the work that changes things, so give them the time they ask for and come back to them as the weeks go on. You may copy or print the worksheets for your own use, as often as you need.

Most people work through one module a week, which takes the whole programme about 8 weeks. Go at the pace that suits you: a module done properly is worth more than two done quickly.

The check-in questionnaires let you see how things are changing. Complete each one when you reach it, note the date and your total, and compare it with the last.

When self-help is not enough

- If you are in danger now, or have seriously harmed yourself, call 999 or go to your nearest accident and emergency department.
- If you need help urgently but it is not an emergency, call NHS 111 or contact your GP surgery.
- Samaritans are there day and night, every day of the year: call 116 123 free from any phone.
- If you would rather not talk, text SHOUT to 85258 for free, confidential support at any hour.
- If your difficulties are getting worse as you work through this book, or you find yourself thinking about ending your life, stop and speak to your GP or a mental health professional. A workbook can be a good start, and some difficulties need more help than a book can give.

What this workbook will help you to do

- You will identify your personal warning signs, triggers, and typical “relapse path”. You will set clear, measurable goals for staying well and agree what success looks like week to week.
- You will map a recent anger episode into a step-by-step cycle, including thoughts, body sensations, urges, behaviours, and consequences. You will learn to recognise early points where you can intervene (before feelings fully peak).
- You will practise identifying thinking styles that fuel anger (e.g., mind-reading, threat

interpretations, all-or-nothing). You will apply CBT tools to generate more balanced alternatives and test them using brief behavioural experiments.

- You will learn a short in-the-moment sequence (pause, notice, regulate breathing/body cues, choose a response) to reduce impulsive reactions. You will practise mindfulness-based techniques such as grounding and urge surfing to ride out the peak safely.
- You will practise assertive communication skills (clear requests, respectful boundaries, using 'I' statements) and identify common communication traps that lead to anger. You will create a script for difficult conversations and rehearse a calmer response strategy.
- You will use a structured CBT problem-solving approach to break down trigger situations into options, costs, and realistic next steps. You will plan coping actions for different categories of triggers (avoidable, changeable, and not fully controllable).
- You will develop a 'slip response' plan that reduces shame, prevents spiralling, and returns you to skills within 24 hours. You will practise a review method to learn from setbacks without turning them into a full relapse.
- You will build a weekly maintenance routine, including self-monitoring of early warning signs and skill use. You will create a personalised coping hierarchy and a final relapse prevention plan for high-risk periods, so you can continue independently after the programme.

PART 1

Welcome, goals and your personal relapse plan

How relapse happens and what 'staying well' means for you

CHAPTER 1

Welcome to the programme: staying well after anger changes

This is Module 1 of “Keeping Well After Anger Management: Everyday Relapse Prevention”. Across 8 modules, you’ll build a practical set of skills to help you keep the progress you’ve already made. The focus isn’t just on stopping anger in the moment—it’s also about spotting the early signs that you’re drifting back, and knowing what to do next.

In many people’s experience, anger doesn’t “arrive suddenly”. It often builds in a predictable pattern: something happens, your mind reacts in a certain way, your body gets more activated, and then your behaviour follows. A key goal of this programme is to understand your own pattern so you can interrupt it earlier.

“Staying well” means different things to different people. For some, it’s fewer outbursts. For others, it’s more control, better conversations, or recovering more quickly after a slip. A helpful way to think about relapse prevention is that setbacks are information, not failure: you can learn from what happened and apply a better plan next time.

As you go through the modules, you’ll use tools from CBT (to notice and respond to “hot thoughts”), mindfulness-informed approaches (to create a little space before acting), and relapse prevention steps (early warning signs, specific actions, and a recovery plan).

By the end of Module 1, you’ll have a clearer picture of how relapse tends to unfold for you, and you’ll set goals that are realistic for your day-to-day life.

CHAPTER 2

Welcome: what this programme is for (and what "staying well" means)

This programme, Keeping Well After Anger Management: Everyday Relapse Prevention, is designed to help you move from "learning skills" to "using skills reliably in real life". For many people, the hardest time to manage anger is not during calm moments, but when stress builds up, plans change, misunderstandings happen, or you feel unfairly treated. The focus here is on relapse prevention: spotting when things are starting to drift, acting early, and recovering well if a slip happens.

Relapse prevention does not mean "never get angry again". It means you aim to reduce how often anger takes over, reduce how intense it becomes, shorten how long it lasts, and increase how quickly you return to your values and goals. In everyday terms, staying well might look like: you notice the early signs sooner; you pause before reacting; you speak in a calmer, clearer way; you use a coping strategy that actually fits the situation; and if you do snap, you repair the moment and get back on track without spiralling.

In CBT terms, anger is often maintained by a cycle. A trigger happens (for example, criticism, being interrupted, feeling dismissed). Then your mind creates a set of "hot" interpretations ("They're doing this on purpose"; "I can't cope with this"; "They don't respect me"). Your body responds (tight chest, heat, faster thoughts). Then behaviour follows (shouting, withdrawing, sarcasm, threats, or aggressive messages). The key relapse prevention idea is that this cycle leaves patterns. Those patterns can be tracked, and you can interrupt the cycle earlier.

Mindfulness-informed strategies support this because they help you relate differently to the sensations and thoughts that show up. Instead of treating every hot thought as a fact, you learn to notice, label, and allow the experience to pass while you choose your next step. You are not trying to "empty your mind". You are training awareness and choice.

Across the eight modules, you will build a personal plan. By Module 1, you will start to identify your own relapse pathway—how things typically progress when you are not using your skills. You will also set week-to-week goals that are measurable, so you can see progress rather than relying on mood alone.

To help you orient to the programme, think of it like a safety plan for anger. A relapse plan includes: early warning signs; personal triggers; "when-then" coping responses; and a recovery strategy for after a slip. It also includes what to do to reduce risk (sleep, workload, alcohol/drugs, time pressure, unresolved conflict) because relapse prevention is not just about skills in the moment.

A NOTE

A useful question for "staying well" is: "When I'm doing well, what do I do differently in the first 5–10 minutes after I notice I'm getting tense?" That early difference is where relapse prevention works.

You may notice that anger sometimes returns in situations that look "small" from the outside—like a text message that feels dismissive, a colleague who doesn't acknowledge you, a partner being quiet when you wanted reassurance. The programme helps you work with those ordinary moments, because that is where relapse often begins.

If you have already attended anger management, you may know many techniques. This programme aims to strengthen them into a reliable routine. We'll also make room for human reality: there may be days when you are tired or under pressure and you slip. The relapse prevention focus is on recovery—how quickly you can notice, repair, and get back into your plan.

In the next modules you will practise specific tools (for example, managing hot thoughts, using coping steps, and building mindfulness habits). For now, let's set up what success will mean for you, and why "early noticing" matters.

Worked example (overview): Imagine someone, Sam, completed an anger management course. In a busy work week, Sam feels overwhelmed and a colleague interrupts. In the early stage, Sam notices heat in the face and a "they never listen" thought. In the relapse path, Sam might respond by arguing immediately, then the body calms only after the conflict escalates. In staying well, Sam instead pauses, uses a coping step (for example, a short reset and a planned response), and then addresses the issue calmly later. If Sam does snap, a good recovery might include apologising promptly, explaining that they were overloaded, and returning to the plan. Sam is not aiming to eliminate every anger feeling—Sam is aiming to change the sequence and timing.

As we begin, it helps to hold two ideas at once: anger can be managed, and relapse is a predictable process. You are not failing if you slip—you are learning to catch the process earlier and recover faster. That is what this programme is for.