

ESCALATION PREVENTION PLAN “DE-ESCALATION STRATEGIES”

Below are some specific examples of ideas that people have come up with for the *De-Escalation Strategies* portion of their *Escalation Prevention Plans* and for their *Anger Toolboxes*. Look through the list and see if there are some ideas that you can incorporate into your own *EPP* and *Anger Toolbox*.

- Take a respectful time out
 - ...get away from the other person; leave the situation/room/house
- Call a supportive friend/class member/relative (emotionally connect with others)
- Call a crisis line to get some support
- Tune into and notice your anger cues and triggers and where you are in your escalation process (and continue to add cues, triggers, and de-escalation strategies to your *Escalation Prevention Plan* long after you have completed this workbook and program)
 - ...create mindfulness and awareness about your internal process and what you are reacting to that is going on around you
 - ...reflect on and think about what is happening so you can “respond” effectively rather than simply “reacting” to whatever the trigger happens to be
 - ...step into a “problem-solving” mode when you are confronted by difficult or frustrating situations
- Carry a small notebook to jot down triggers and cues and how you handled (or didn’t handle) them over the course of your day
- Carry your *Escalation Prevention Plan* (or a shorter version of it) with you and/or keep it in a place you will see it daily to remind you of what you are trying to do
 - ...e.g. on your night stand, on your dresser, on your desk at home, in your desk at work
- Make small signs/visual signals and write out the goals that you have for yourself related to this program and post them at various places (e.g. in your car, on the bathroom mirror or your chest of drawers at home, at your desk at work) to remind you of what you are trying to do with your anger
 - ...e.g. a stop sign that says “*Slow down*,” “*Think*,” “*Calm*,” or “*Relax*”
 - ...make up your own acronym that gets you to think about your program
 - ...one person came up with the acronym “RAKM” which, to him, meant “*Remember Anger Kills Me*” after he had read the book *Anger Kills* (from the reading list at the back of this workbook)
- Be aware of your self-talk and change the negative and vengeful thoughts to more positive self-talk
 - ...come up with some specific examples of positive self-talk to use whenever you are escalating or escalated (e.g. “*I can handle this*,” “*I will be okay in this situation*,” “*I can figure this out*,” “*I can get through this*,” “*I can’t control this person/situation. I need to let this go*”)
- Begin to engage in positive rather than negative rehearsals
 - ...i.e. recognize that an upcoming situation may be difficult and learn to come up with a positive plan to actually address it
- Work consciously at slowing yourself down as you go through your day
 - ...e.g. take deep slow breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth when you are starting to escalate
- Go for a walk

- Go to a favorite relaxing spot
 - ...e.g. your backyard, your front porch, a favorite easy chair or couch in your home
- Do non-violent, non-competitive, and aerobic exercise regularly (at least three times per week for 30 minutes)
 - ...jogging, biking, swimming, calisthenics, weightlifting, skating, rollerblading, stairmaster, elliptical machine, cross country skiing
- Work at really listening to what the other person is saying when you are angry
 - ... i.e. stop talking and simply reacting to what others say and do
- Identify and be assertive with your thoughts and feelings with others when you experience them and set appropriate and respectful limits whenever necessary
- Get enough sleep
- Be aware of what you eat and drink and eat and drink in a healthy way
- Count slowly to 10 (or 100) and focus on each number as you say it
- Have a cool drink
- Splash cold water on your face
- Sit down or stay seated during interactions and conflicts with others
 - ...don't pace, "get in another person's face," or stand over others in an intimidating or threatening way
- Take a bath, hot shower, whirlpool, or sauna
- Listen to relaxing music in the car or at home
 - ...e.g. jazz, classical (e.g. baroque), new age
- Use relaxation techniques
 - ...e.g. practice progressive muscle relaxation/yoga/t'ai chi chih; listen to relaxation tapes like nature sounds (ocean waves, a thunderstorm, jungle sounds, the wind in the trees, a "babbling brook")
- Use meditation or visualization to calm yourself
 - ...e.g. imagine yourself at a favorite spot (e.g. a beach on the ocean, on top of a mountain, walking in the woods) where you can feel peaceful, calm, centered, and "grounded"
- Distract yourself (i.e. do something else to change your focus from the escalation you are experiencing in the situation)
 - ...e.g. pick up or clean your closet, kitchen, shop, or the garage
- Spend time outside in nature
 - ...in the woods, at a park, or near a favorite lake
- Begin to look at and take clear responsibility for your "part" in the arguments and problems you have with others
 - ...look for and learn to identify things you can do differently when conflicts do not go well
- Try to see your partner's or the other person's perspective in your conflicts
 - ...learn to empathize and "put yourself in the other person's shoes"
- Use community support groups
 - ...e.g. Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Al-Anon, Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACOA), Emotions Anonymous, and other self-help programs
- Use God or a Higher Power and prayer in your life
- "Let go" of what you can't control in your day-to-day life
 - ...e.g. think about and say the *Serenity Prayer* (from AA) to yourself
 - ...Ask yourself: "*Is there anything productive and useful that I can actually do in this particular situation?*"
- Find and participate in hobbies and recreational activities that you enjoy
 - ...e.g. gardening, reading, refinishing furniture, coin collecting, playing music, fishing, knitting, sewing, scrapbooking

- Keep an *Escalation Diary* or *Anger Journal* and write about how you are feeling, what you are thinking, cues that are part of your escalation, and ways you can respond differently to those triggers in the future
- Stroke, walk, and/or play with your pets
 - ...research indicates that people who have pets have lower blood pressure, heart rate, and heart-disease risk than people who don't
- Take some time for yourself during the week
 - ...i.e. don't over-schedule yourself with only the things that you absolutely have to get done
- Whistle/sing/laugh regularly
- Identify the "game plan" you have for yourself about who you want to be and how you want to live your life
 - ...and then actually work hard to LIVE IT!
- Think about past consequences you have experienced or potential consequences that may occur in the future if you continue to be hurtful, disrespectful, and abusive to others
 - ...e.g. loss of the relationship with your partner, scaring your children or teaching them to be explosive and disrespectful themselves, losing a job
- Work on feeling a sense of gratitude for who you are and what you have in your life
 - ...recognize and acknowledge to yourself in an ongoing way the positive aspects of your life
 - ...think more about positive moments in your life and recall them at difficult times in the present
- Ask yourself:
 - ...*"In reality, how important is this situation where I'm feeling angry right now?"*
 - ...*"Is this issue or this problem really more important than the relationship I have with my partner (my child, my friend, my co-worker, my boss, my neighbor)"*

AVOID BEHAVIORS AND ACTIVITIES WHICH ARE LIKELY TO ESCALATE YOU EVEN MORE

- Avoid retaliating remarks, trying to "get the last word in," or "parting shots" in a conflict situation
- Avoid the person you are taking the time out from
- Avoid coming back too soon after you have taken a time-out
 - ...before you have calmed down and actually gotten some perspective on the situation
- Avoid blaming, cynical, hostile, judgmental thoughts and other forms of negative self-talk which can keep you "pumped up" and agitated continually and "ready to go off on someone"
- Avoid alcohol or other drugs (including too much caffeine), which can increase your physical arousal and set the stage for disrespectful and abusive anger
- Avoid driving, especially on busy streets or during rush hour, if at all possible (which can further escalate you when another driver does something you don't like)
- Avoid doing "detective work" with your partner
 - ...e.g. following them around when they leave the house; looking at the odometer on the car; checking cell phone records, e-mails, text messages, Facebook activity, or credit card accounts; tapping the phone line or listening in on their phone conversations with others
- Avoid stress-producing activities when you are angry
 - ...e.g. difficult projects, work that absolutely has to be done, competitive sports
- Avoid music that only escalates you more
 - ...e.g. rap, heavy metal, music that is demeaning to women or other groups of people
- Avoid provocative "talk radio" (in the car or at home) that is designed to get you and keep you frustrated and angry about all the "bad things" going on in the world around you