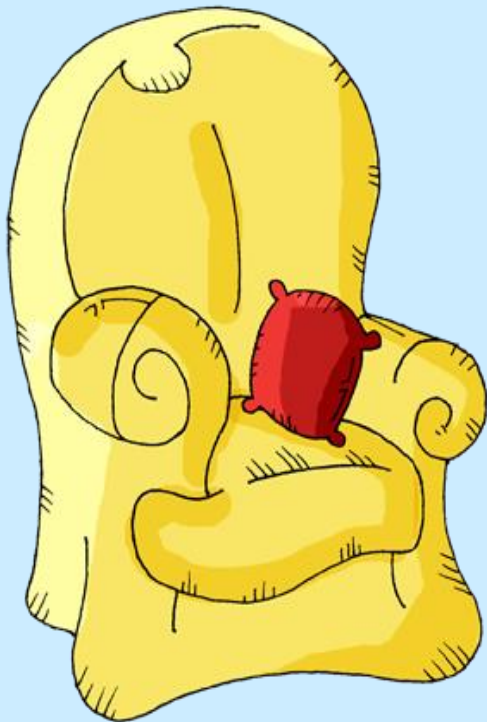


# PART NINE

## Releasing Anger & Frustration Safely



**IF YOU ARE THINKING  
ABOUT HURTING YOURSELF  
OR SOMEONE ELSE YOU  
SHOULD GET PROFESSIONAL  
ADVICE IMMEDIATELY**

# Anger & frustration release is essential

- We store anger and hurt as emotional trading stamps which we then cash in inappropriately with 'over the top' reactions to incidents.
- Unresolved anger and hurt needs to be released in ways that don't harm yourself or anyone else.



# THE CUP OF POISON



- Hanging on to anger is like sipping from a cup of poison in the hope that it will somehow even the score.
- That poison increases stress, impairs ability to manage anger and damages emotional health.

# Unresolved anger and hurt leads to 'Displacement' - also known as 'kicking the cat'

Unresolved anger and hurt is like a kind of pressurised poison gas which keeps leaking out, causing us to react 'over the top'. We find ourselves reacting aggressively at the wrong time, in the wrong place, or with the wrong person. This is known as:

**'DISPLACEMENT' or  
'KICKING THE CAT'**

Check yourself out when you are feeling angry with someone - is the way you feel directed at the right target or are you 'taking it out' on the wrong person?



# It's been said countless times. Who said it first?



I don't know, but a philosopher by the name of Epictetus is one who said, over a thousand years ago.....

'It's OK to be angry and essential to release anger, but to release it in ways which are not harmful to self or others.'

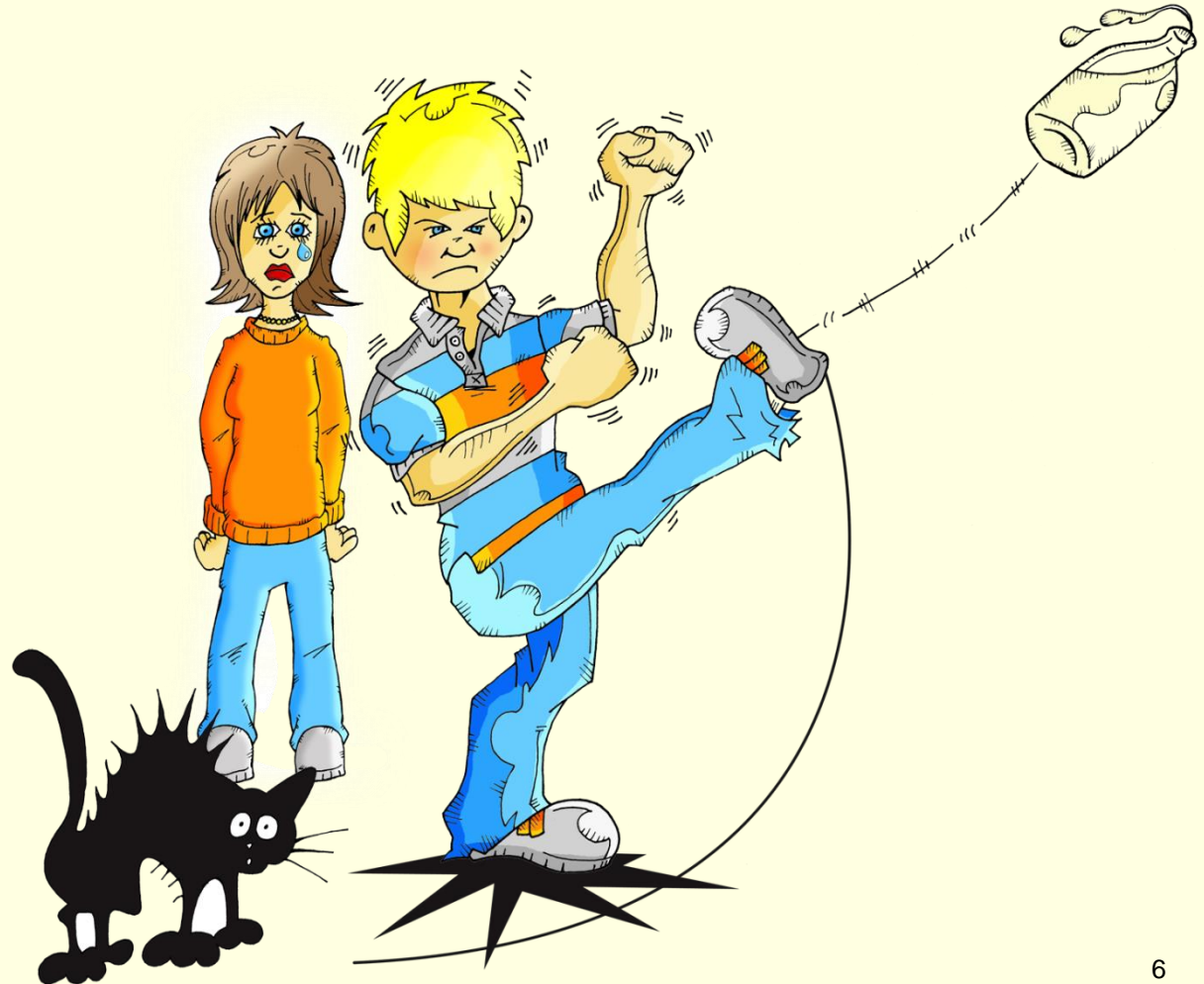
According to Epictetus safe anger release is about choosing:

- The Right Time
- The Right Place
- The Right Way
- The Right Reason
- The Right Length of Time
- The Right Person To Be Angry With

# Alcohol is the enemy of impulse control

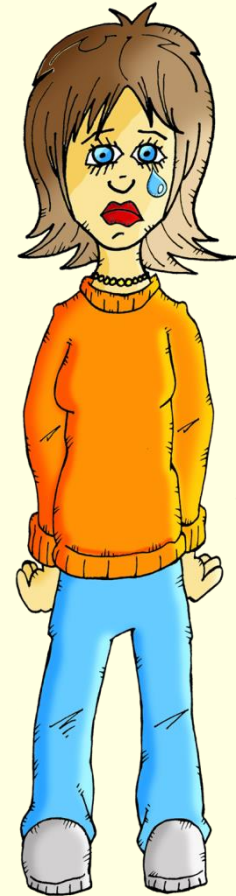
This is why excess alcohol is such a big problem. Under the influence of alcohol people often **DISPLACE** their anger and hurt stamps onto the wrong person.

**Excess alcohol +  
anger & hurt stamps  
= Big Problem**



# The release of anger must be without harm to yourself or others

- By 'harm' I don't just mean physical harm. Bullying behaviour, aggression, verbal abuse and insults can leave emotional scars which last a lifetime or destroy a relationship.
- That old saying 'Sticks and stones may break my bones but nicknames will never hurt me' is not true. Mums say that to help children deal with the pain of toxic messages.
- Toxic nicknames are also a form of harassment. There's nothing funny about them, but passive recipients smile and pretend it's OK. It isn't!



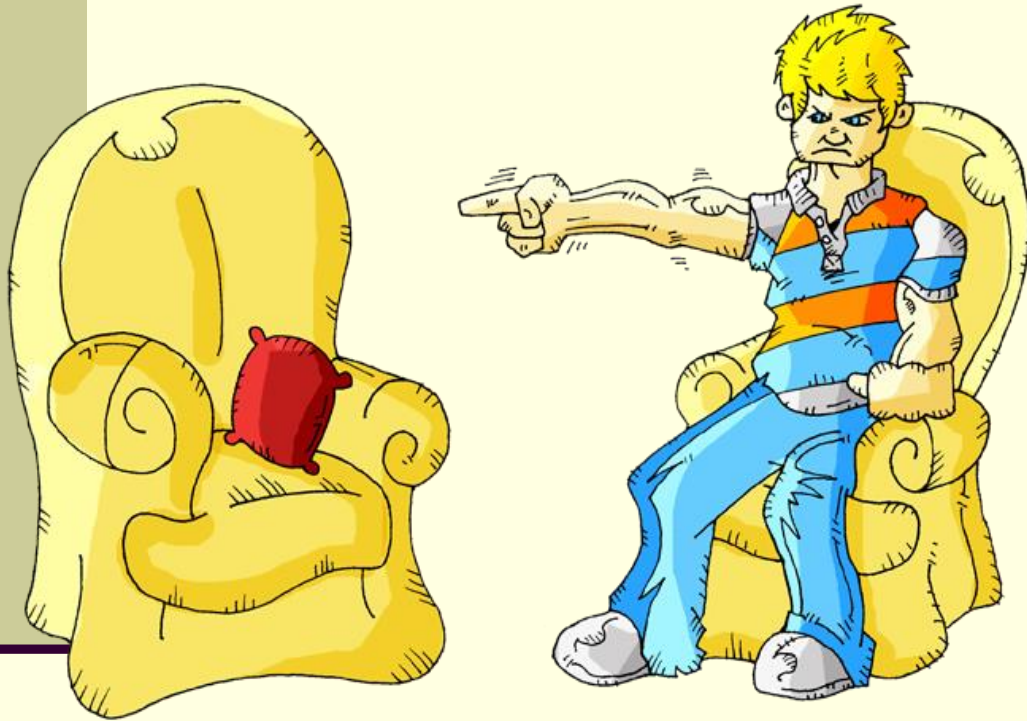
# Safe anger and hurt release methods

- Now follows a selection of safe anger and hurt release methods, including the assertiveness option.
- I find that some people prefer physical release methods, others prefer purely emotional release methods. The best methods combine both physical and emotional release.
- Choose and use the method/s which you feel most comfortable with.





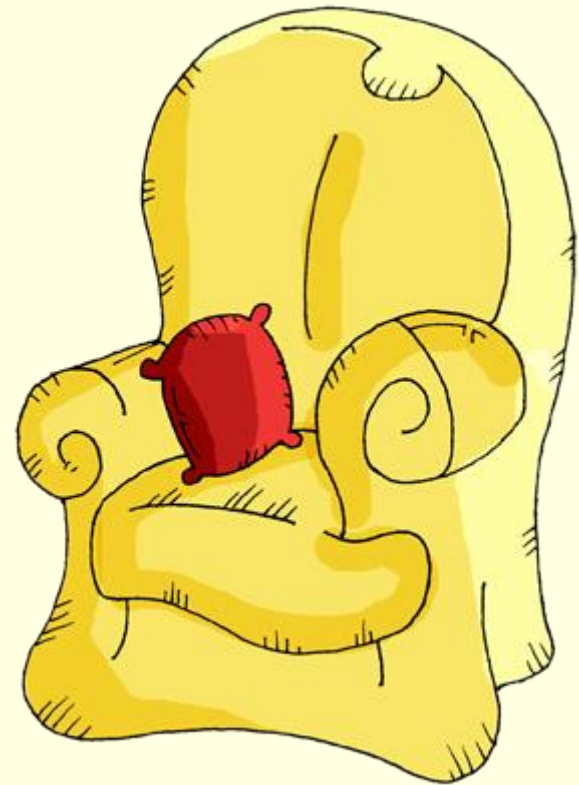
# 1. The Two Chair Method



The Two Chair method of anger and hurt release has been used for many years. Choose a time when you are alone, put a cushion on the other chair and let rip. Say everything you would like to say to the other person, but to the cushion instead. Let your anger out: foul language is essential!

# Advantages of the Two Chair method of anger release

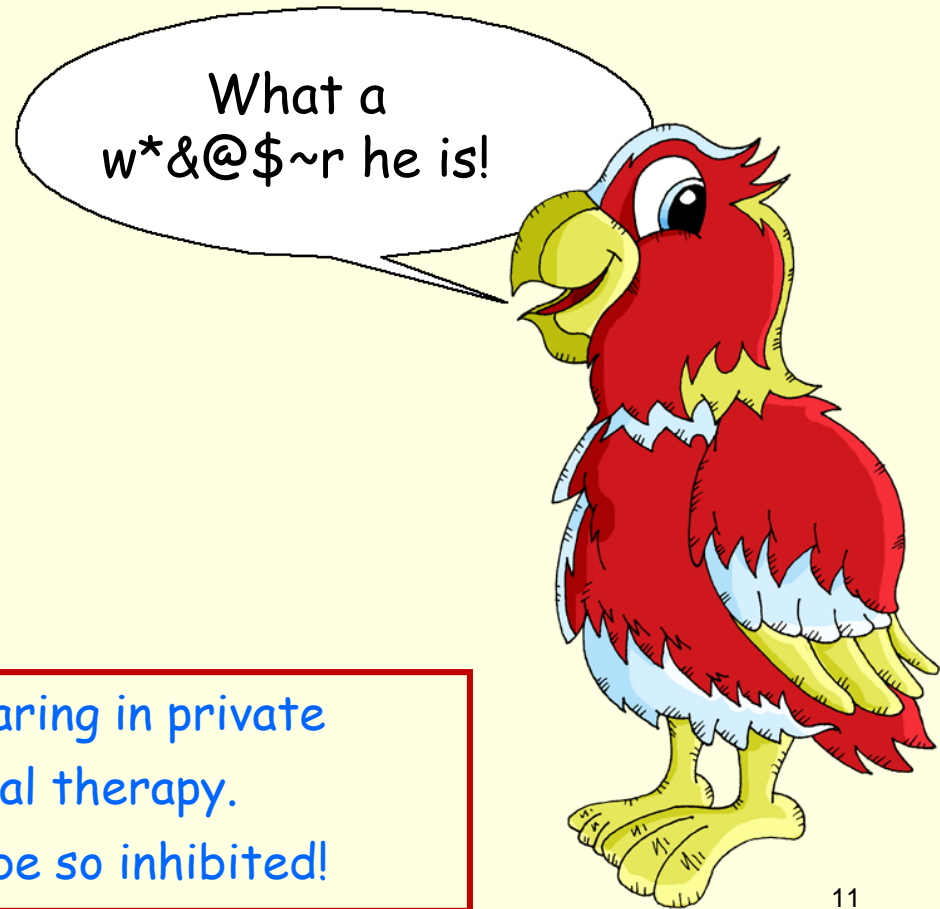
- The Two Chair method of anger and hurt release is particularly helpful when the other person is not available for you to release your anger in assertive ways - for instance, they may be dead or someone you never want to be in touch with again.
- Or it may be your boss you are angry with and you like the idea of keeping your job.



## 2. Ranting is excellent anger release..... .....but not in the street

- Ranting is very good, including lots of swearing.
- Rant at an inanimate object cushion, a photo, the telly, whatever.
- You can also express your feelings to a photo, to the cat or other family pet but, for obvious reasons, not a parrot!

If you can't do ranting and swearing in private  
you should consider personal therapy.  
It's not emotionally healthy to be so inhibited!



### 3. Write an angry letter you will never send

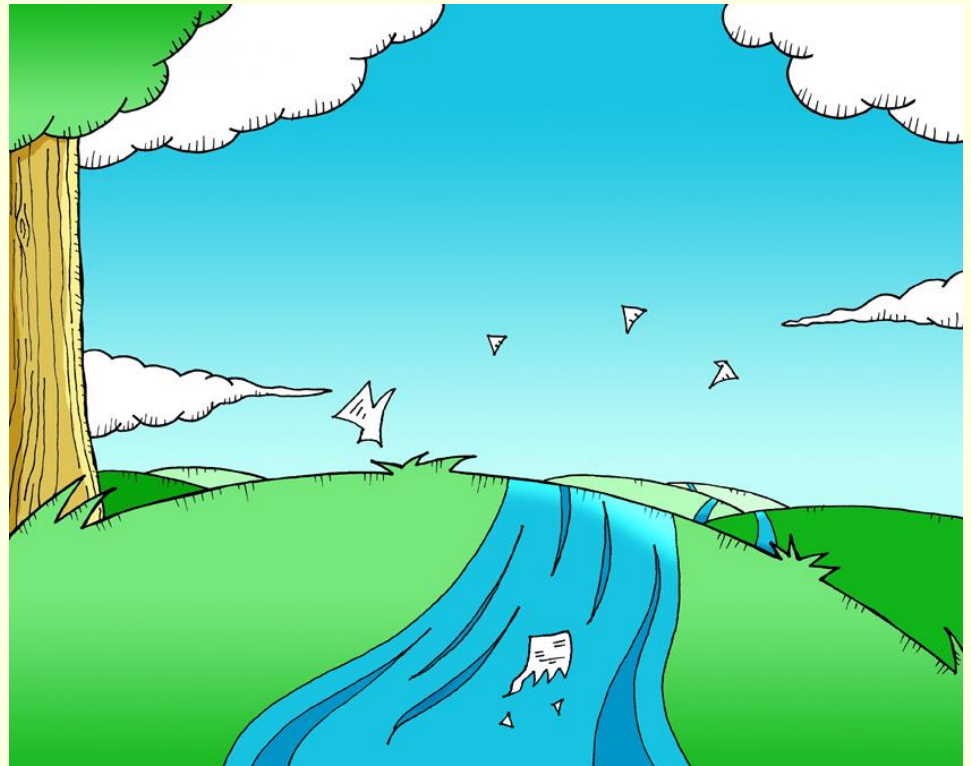
This is the written version of the Two Chair method. Instead of voicing your anger or sadness, you write the other person a letter you will never send. The letter should not pull punches. You can combine the Emotional Letter technique with Two Chair work by reading your letter to the cushion on the other chair and letting your feelings flow as you read.



Artist Barry misunderstood when I asked him to depict an angry letter and a sad letter!

# Let your anger and sadness float away with the fragments of the letter

When you are ready to let your anger and sadness go, you can go to a stream, tear the letter into bits, throw the bits into the stream and as the pieces are carried away, imagine your feelings of anger and sadness being carried away too.



Alternatively you could burn your letter and bury or scatter the ashes.

Or, tear the letter up and flush it down the toilet. It's optional whether you use the toilet before you flush the letter away!

## 4. Physical release of angry energy



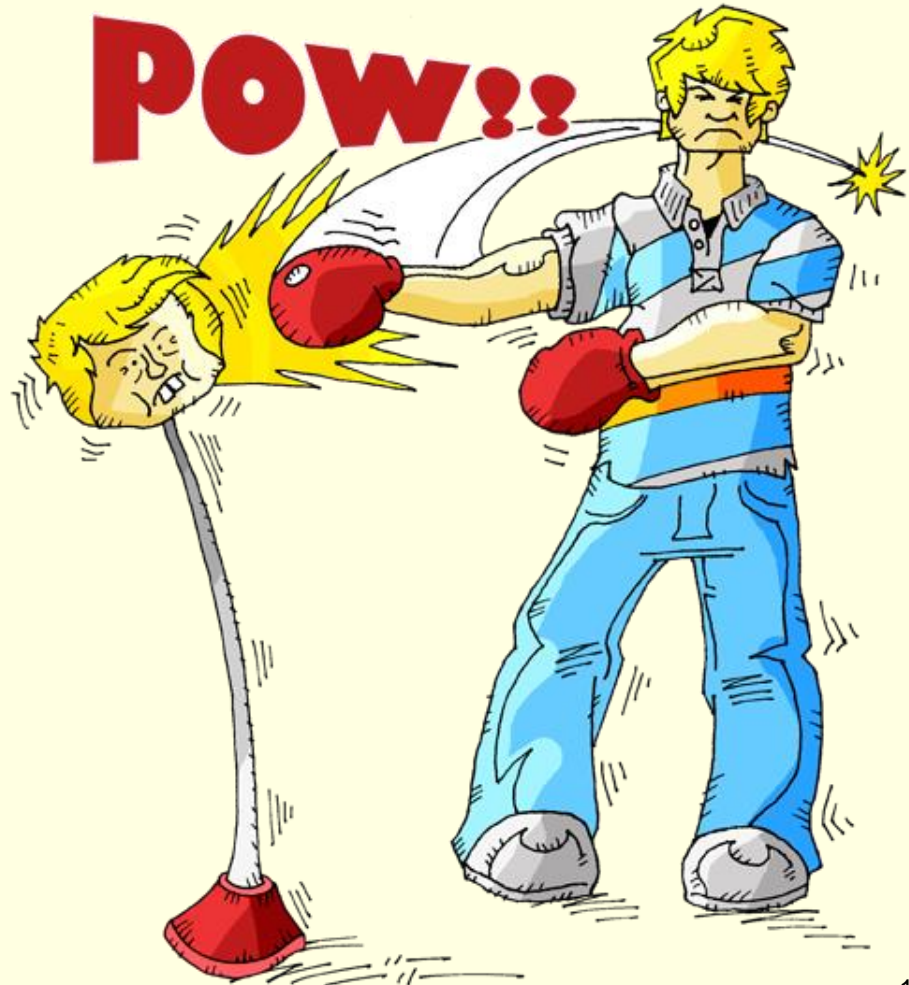
When you are feeling angry, but not angry with anybody in particular, you can release angry energy by thrashing a tree stump with a length of hose....

Or hammering nails into a piece of wood....

Or throwing raw eggs at trees.

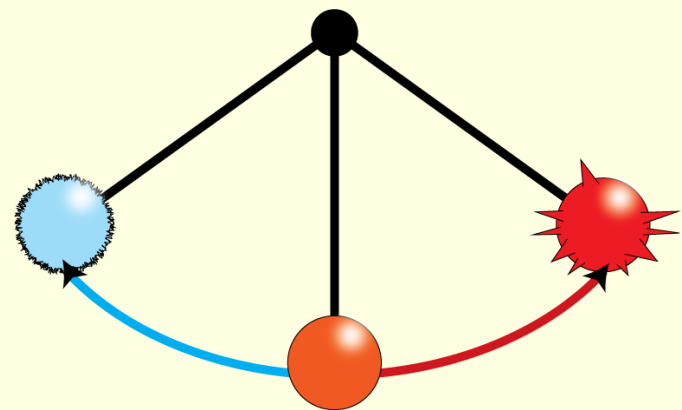
# How about getting a punch bag?

- Releasing your anger on an inanimate object is very effective. How about buying a punch bag?
- You can also do it by putting a cushion on your lap and beating it with your fists.
- It's best to rant at the same time, vocally expressing your pent-up emotions.



## 5. The assertiveness method of anger and hurt release

- The assertiveness method of anger release is about feeling heard, about not suffering in silence, about setting the record straight.
- The assertive option of expressing your feelings openly should always be considered but sometimes it may be impractical or too risky.
- The danger is that the other person will react badly and pile on more hurt. Or it may not be physically safe to express yourself openly.
- If you think you can handle it, choose the assertiveness option and arrange to talk things through with the other person; or write and say how you feel.



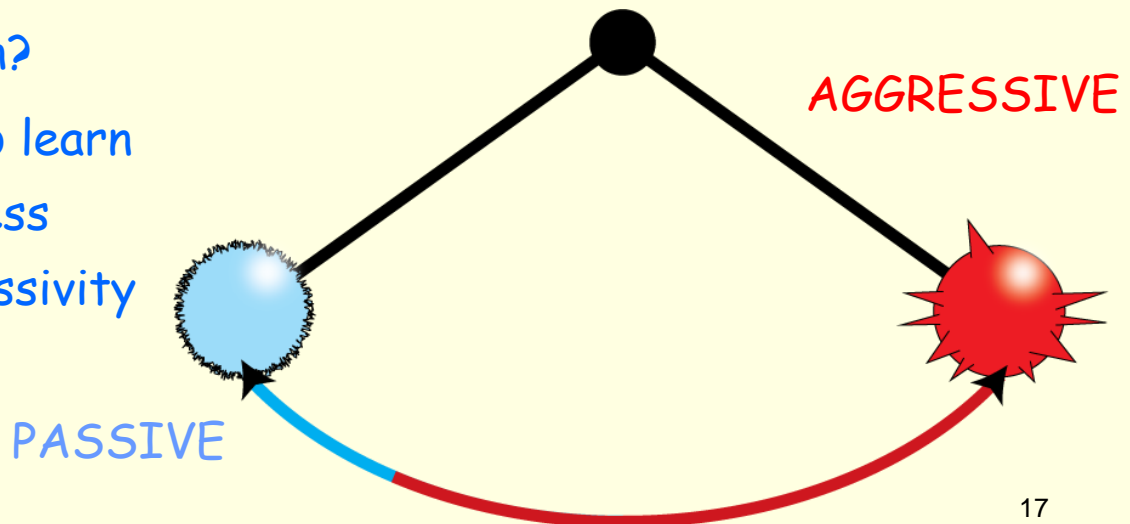


# Maybe you don't know how to be assertive ?

If you are normally a passive person [someone who usually 'lets things go'] you may be someone who switches from one extreme to the other, from passive to 'over the top' aggressive reactions when pushed too far.

- Or maybe you are someone with a naturally aggressive style of communication?
- Either way you need to learn how to use assertiveness as an alternative to passivity and/or aggression.

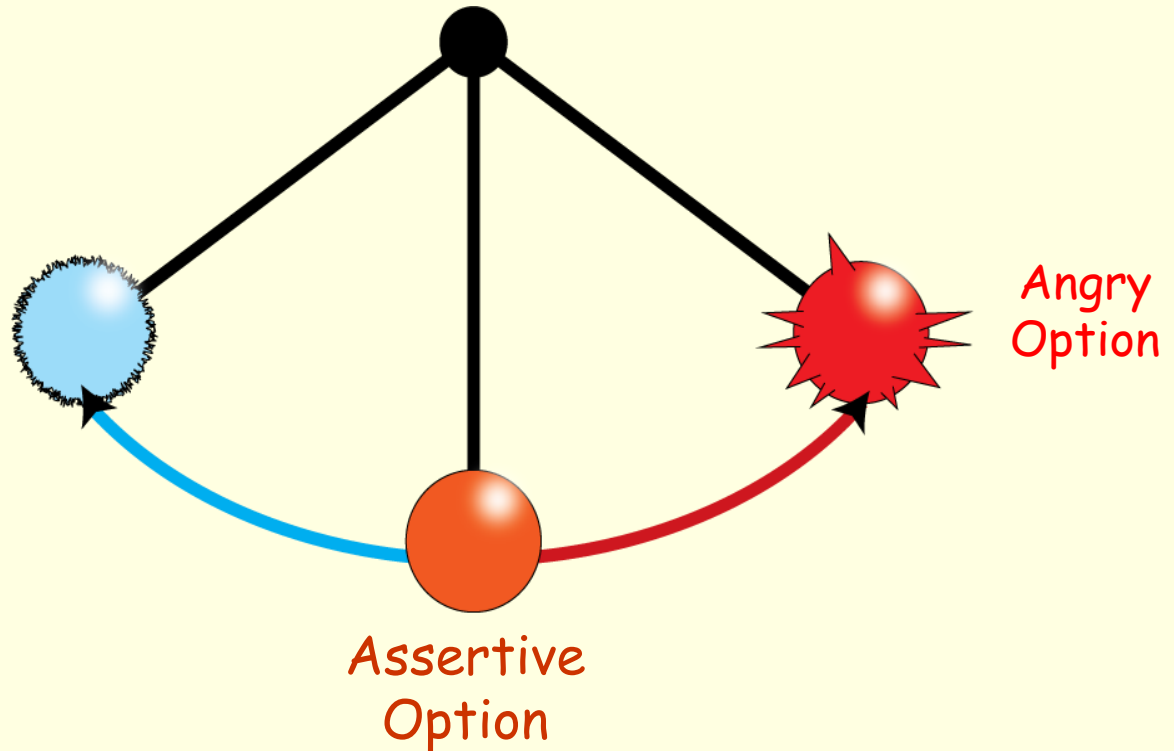
The Passive to Aggressive Pendulum



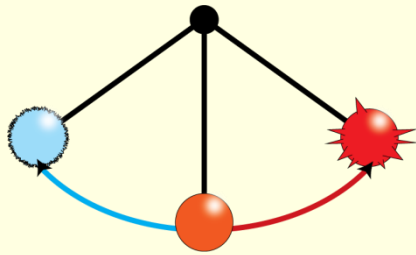
# Learn to discuss issues assertively and without anger

Assertive  
person's  
pendulum

Passive  
Option



Assertiveness means you can CHOOSE an appropriate response, passive, assertive or angry, depending on the situation.



# Assertiveness

- Lack of assertiveness is usually a big problem because passivity leads to unresolved anger, frustration, and resentment because as issues are 'bottled up' [see Anger Stamps on page 2].
- Once you have learned how to be assertive you are no longer stuck with the extremes of passive or aggressive responding.

## Assertiveness is:

- Knowing what you want.
- Asking simply and clearly for what you want
- Saying how you feel and what you think in a non-aggressive way.
- Enquiring when you are not sure what someone means.
- CHOOSING whether to react passively, assertively, or aggressively.

# 6. Accept responsibility..... .....for your contribution

- I know that it may be really hard for you to accept that part of what's gone wrong is down to you.
- But, IF you want relief from your anger and hurt that may be what you need to do.
- The problem is that our 'Empathy Switch' is in the 'Off' position when we are angry with someone and we can't [or won't] see their point of view.
- One way to turn the empathy switch back on is to sit in a chair you don't normally sit in, pretend to be the other person and tell the story out loud from their point of view.

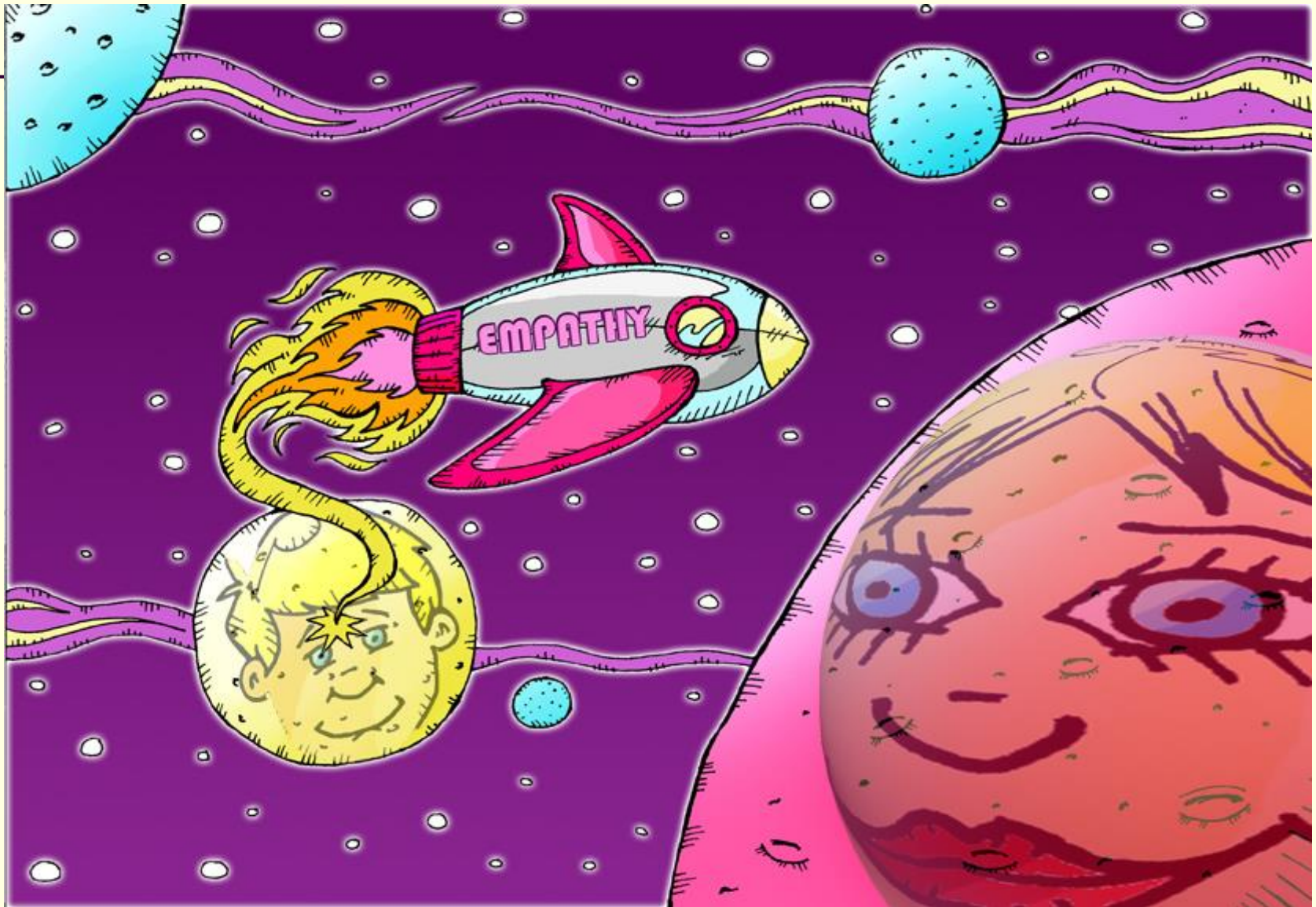


# 7. Try to be empathic, to understand the other persons point of view

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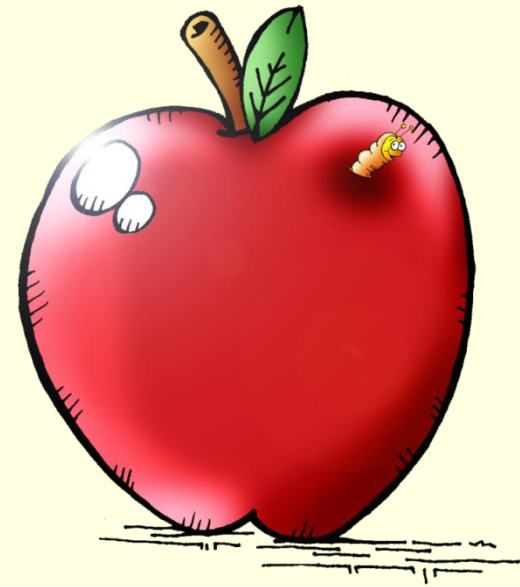
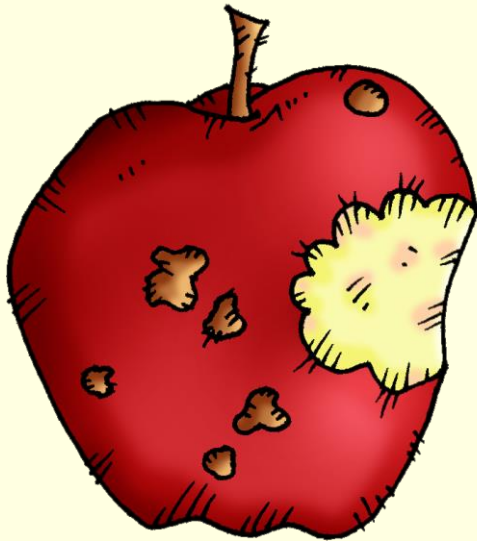
- Empathy does not mean you have to agree - it's about understanding the other person's perspective, not having to agree with it.
- Empathy is 'putting yourself in the other person's shoes and trying to understand things from their point of view even when you find it impossible to agree.
- Empathy involves trying to get inside the other person's head, entering their internal world for a while and seeing things as they see them.

# The Empathy Space Probe



# Good apple: bad behaviour? Or a bad apple?

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If you can accept someone as an OK person who did something not OK [rather than a 'bad' person] you will be able to empathise better.

# 8: Shrink old hurtful images



1. Choose an image from the hurtful memory which represents the worst part of it.
2. Imagine you are looking at that image on a large flat-screen TV.
3. As you watch, let the TV gradually move away from you. As it moves away make the TV screen gradually smaller and smaller.
4. Then change the TV to an old black and white TV and take all colour out of the image.
5. Keep shrinking the screen until it's just a few inches across and the picture is a grey and white blur.
6. Then switch off the TV so you are left with a blank screen except for a small dot in the centre.





# 9: If you are physically able you can use exercise....

- Vigorous exercise and sport are good ways of releasing angry energy, but exercise alone won't release angry energy - it needs an aggressive element!
- At the gym there may be a punch bag and you should consider getting one at home.
- Playing squash, tennis or golf - you can take your anger out on the ball.
- Jogging - you can imagine treading on various bits of the anatomy of the person you are angry with.



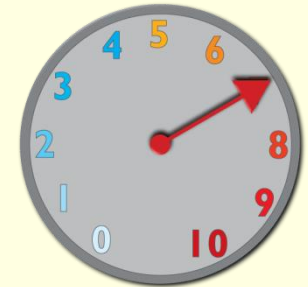
# 10. Shrink the importance of the incident using the 0 - 10 scale

Things which seemed so important at the time can be scaled downwards and then let go once your anger has cooled.

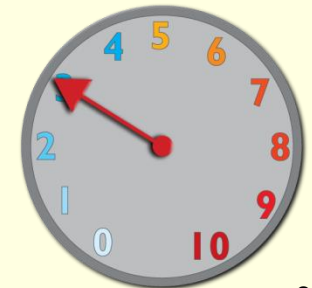
At the time score:  
10 = Big Deal



Next day's score:  
7 = Still hurting



Next week's score:  
3 = 'Not worth bothering about'

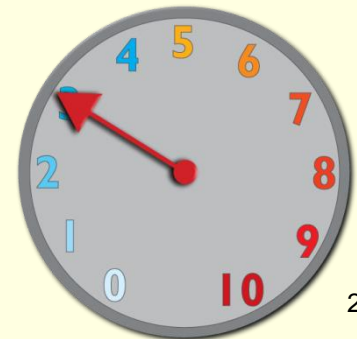


# How important now?

- One of my clients was upset that her boss had criticised her. For her, this was a definite 10 on the 0 - 10 scale of upset.
- I asked her to imagine leaving the office after being criticised and finding someone had run their car keys down the side of her new car. What score was that? 10!  
And the boss criticising her? Now 7.
- I then asked her to imagine getting a text from her husband, 'Meet me at the casualty department - urgent'.  
What score the criticism and the car scratch now? Zero!

No event has a fixed scale of importance  
- only the score we choose to give it.

It's possible to re-score most anger Triggers lower on the 0 - 10 scale when we choose to.



# 11. Reduce the power and quantity of Anger Triggers

- We all 'make mountains out of molehills' sometimes. Rate your Anger Triggers - give each of them a score on a scale of 0 - 10  
0 = 'not worth bothering about'  
10 = 'life threatening'.
- You will find that many Triggers are simply minor irritations which you let bother you.
- You can stop minor Triggers getting to you in future by deciding to not let them. Visualise yourself staying calm when they happen.
- A good tip is to expect the irritations to happen and be pleased when they don't - instead of the other way round.



# Reduce the power of Anger Triggers using humour

- When you have angry thoughts about what another person may say or do you can reduce the power of the Trigger on the 0 - 10 scale by fantasising a response which is funny.
- **Try it!** Imagine a situation where you would in the past have got angry at what someone said or did and imagine doing something slapstick.

**Don't do it!**

**Only fantasise doing it!**



# What you can laugh at, you can't feel angry about

For example: A client was getting angry about what her ex daughter-in-law might say if she ever came to her front door. I suggested she imagine the encounter but, at the crucial moment, sticking a custard pie in her daughter-in-law's face. After doing that she was able to stop worrying about the meeting and think about how to respond assertively, rather than angrily.



It's OK to fantasise harmless humiliation .....but it's not OK to actually carry it out

## 12: The fantasy Harmless Revenge method of anger release

Harmless fantasy is a good way of releasing anger and frustration towards a particular person or group. Notice I said harmless.

**For example:** you could imagine hitting someone over the head with a giant foam hammer.

